

Restrictions on the marketing and use of perfluorooctane sulfonates

2005/0244(COD) - 05/12/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to place restrictions on the marketing and use of perfluorooctane sulfonates and amend Council Directive 76/769/EEC.

PROPOSED ACT : Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTENT : Perfluorooctane sulfonates (PFOS) are anions that are commercially available in the form of salts, derivatives and polymers. The major uses for PFOS-related substances were in providing grease, oil and water resistance to materials such as textiles, carpets, paper and in general coating. The substances used in these areas were largely PFOS-polymers for fabrics and PFOS-substances for paper treatment and coatings. Other smaller volume uses are in chromium plating, photography, photolithography, fire fighting foams and in hydraulic fluids for aviation.

Recent studies have shown PFOs to be persistent in the environment, bio accumulative and toxic to mammalian species.

The risk assessment identified a need for reducing the risks to health and the environment from PFOS. The risk reduction strategy recommended marketing and use restrictions for certain uses. The proposed Directive would cover the great part of the exposure risks by preventing the use of PFOS in carpets, textiles, upholstery, leather, apparel, paper, packaging and other applications. These uses seem already to be phased out and the proposal would prevent their reintroduction. There are some further smaller and specific uses in chromium plating, photography, photolithography, fire fighting foams and in hydraulic fluids for aviation. The volumes used in these limited areas, and the emissions into the environment, would need to be further assessed, but they are currently expected to be very small. The advantages and disadvantages of regulating these uses would have to be subject to impact assessment.

Council Directive 76/769/EEC on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States relating to restrictions on the marketing and use of certain dangerous substances and preparations should therefore be amended accordingly.

The objective of the Directive would be to introduce harmonised provisions with regard to PFOS, thus preserving the internal market whilst ensuring a high level of protection of human health and the environment, as required by Article 95 of the Treaty.