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REACH: MEPs strike a balance between health, the environment and industry

The first step in a great legislative marathon has taken place in the European Parliament. MEPs reached their first reading position on the REACH package. The House approved a legislative package that will considerably benefit the environment and public health as well as taking the interests of industry into account. The fears of SMEs about over-regulation also found an echo with MEPs. REACH is one of the most complex issues the Parliament has ever been asked to consider.

Parliament's President Josep Borrell said, " *The European Parliament has shown that it lives up to its responsibilities and, as legislator, has responded to some of the fears of the Europeans, ensuring competitive jobs together with a high level of protection of health and the environment.*"

The main elements of the position of the European Parliament on REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals) adopted today by 398 votes in favour, 148 against and 36 abstentions (The actual vote on the report was 407 in favour, 155 against with 41 abstentions) are the following:

On registration:

The compromise reached by the PES, the EPP-ED and the ALDE groups was endorsed by plenary by 438 votes in favour, 144 against and 15 abstentions. This compromise is based on the following elements:

Introduction of a targeted approach on data requirements for 1-10 tonnes chemicals (those having been identified by the impact assessment studies as being the ones for which costs of REACH implementation would be higher)

Maintain, in all cases, the responsibility on industry to make available information on the hazards, risks, and risk reduction measures for chemicals ("burden of proof")

Application of the above targeted approach only to existing substances; new substances continue to provide full safety data. Substances of high concern and substances dangerous to human health or environment which are used in consumer products also have to provide full sets of safety data.

Introduction of the possibility of making additional tests, if this appears necessary

Introduction of the possibility of omitting certain tests ("waiving") for the substances produced/imported between 10-100 tonnes when this is justified on the basis of certain criteria (to be fixed by the Commission in comitology)

Introduction of the "One Substance, One Registration" (OSOR) approach to minimise costs, with an opt-out in specific conditions where it can be justified

On Authorisation:

The European Parliament endorsed by 324 votes in favour, 263 against and 13 abstentions the approach of the Environment Committee which is based on the following elements:

Consideration of available substitutes, innovation through time-limited authorisations (5 years), and certainty through a list of the most hazardous substances. Early registration of these chemicals.

On Substances in Articles:

The EP endorsed by 291 in favour, 290 against and 16 abstentions a slightly revised version of the approach adopted on this issue by the Environment Committee:

Equal treatment of imported articles to those produced in the EU, through simple notification requirements for articles containing substances listed as being of very high concern, and by equal application of authorisation.

For SMEs:

The EP endorsed the approach of the Environment Committee (supported also by Internal Market and Industry Committees) seeking at providing:
Helpdesks and additional guidance and tools to meet the obligations of the regulation.

On the Agency:

The EP endorsed the approach of the Environment Committee (supported by Internal Market and Industry Committees) seeking to:
Strengthen the Agency's role for evaluating dossiers and substances, while at the same time maximising the use of Member States' expertise on substance evaluation.

On animal testing:

The European Parliament endorsed the approach of the Environment Committee seeking to:
Minimise animal testing through regular adaptation of testing methods and avoidance of duplication.



adopt first reading position on REACH

MEPs

What's next?

The Council, under the UK Presidency, should reach a common position. The UK Presidency has indicated that it aims to achieve a common position by the end of the year.

Reactions of the political groups

Just before the final vote, Guido **Sacconi** (PES, IT), the rapporteur said he had asked to speak since he had feared the vote would go differently, but instead the vote had been very positive, it had strengthened the balance of the regulation, especially concerning authorisation. Overall, the vote had been very strong.

Ria **Oomen-Ruijten** (EPP-ED, NL) said that they won concerning registration but lost concerning authorisation, a very narrow majority had been reached concerning the most important points.

Lena **Ek** (ALDE, SE) said that the ALDE was happy since the environmental aspects had been strengthened.

Hartmut **Nassauer** (EPP-ED, DE) said that he could not support the vote on authorisation, but he supported the vote on registration - the only subject which had been adopted with qualified majority; he rejected the vote on authorisation, which, he said, had to be corrected by Council.

Jonas **Sjöstedt** (GUE/NGL, SE) said that the vote was too weak, especially concerning the compromise on registration, but on authorisation it was positive. As he put it, better a weak REACH than no REACH.

Carl **Schlyter** (Greens/EFA, SE) said that the outcome of the vote on authorisation was a positive result, but he feared that it would be changed in Council; the majority of his group could not vote in favour of the report.

Johannes **Blokland** (IND/DEM, NL) said that the majority of his group would vote against the report.

Alessandro **Foglietta** (UEN, IT) said his group was happy with the registration part but not with the authorisation section of the report.

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More:

Chemicals : classification, labelling, packaging, adaptation to the REACH regulation (amend. direct. 67/548/EEC)

[A6-0285/2005](#)

Chemicals : REACH system and European Agency (amend. direct. 999/45/EC, regul. on persistent organic pollutants)

[A6-0315/2005](#)

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Midday Express of 2005-11-18

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MIDDAY EXPRESS

News from the Press and Communication Directorate General's midday briefing

- **REACH : Commission reaction to first reading in European Parliament (17/11)**

"The European Commission welcomes the fact that the European Parliament has completed its first reading on REACH. By supporting the Sacconi/Nassauer compromise on registration the EP strikes a very good balance between the health, environment and competitiveness goals of REACH. The Commission will carefully assess the European Parliament's position on the other issues. This vote opens the way to a balanced agreement in Council by the end of the year. The Commission will continue to play a constructive role as facilitator in order to achieve a compromise that makes REACH more effective and more workable, while preserving a high level of protection for health and the environment", the responsible Commissioners Günter Verheugen (Enterprise) and Stavros Dimas (Environment) said on 17 November.



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Beating global climate change Wednesday 16 November 2005 European Parliament resolution on "Winning the Battle Against Global Climate Change" (2005/2049(INI))	P6_TA-PROV(2005)0433
Decommissioning nuclear power plants Wednesday 16 November 2005 European Parliament resolution on the use of financial resources earmarked for the decommissioning of nuclear power plants (2005/2027(INI))	P6_TA-PROV(2005)0432
Digital switchover Wednesday 16 November 2005 European Parliament resolution on accelerating the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting	P6_TA-PROV(2005)0431
Northern dimension Wednesday 16 November 2005 European Parliament resolution on the future of the Northern Dimension	P6_TA-PROV(2005)0430
Bohunice V1 * Wednesday 16 November 2005 European Parliament legislative resolution on the proposal for a Council regulation on the implementation of Protocol No 9 on the Bohunice V1 nuclear power plant in Slovakia, as annexed to the Act concerning the conditions of accession to the European Union of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia (COM(2004)0624 – C6-0205/2004 – 2004/0221(CNS))	P6_TA-PROV(2005)0429
Information to air passengers ***I Wednesday 16 November 2005 European Parliament legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the information of air transport passengers on the identity of the operating carrier and on communication of safety information by Member States (COM(2005)0048 – C6-0046/2005 – 2005/0008(COD))	P6_TA-PROV(2005)0428
Social dimension of globalisation Tuesday 15 November 2005 European Parliament resolution on the social dimension of globalisation (2005/2061(INI))	P6_TA-PROV(2005)0427
Privileges and immunities Tuesday 15 November 2005 European Parliament resolution on a possible infringement of the Protocol on the privileges and immunities of the European Communities by a Member State (2005/2187(INI))	P6_TA-PROV(2005)0426
European eels Tuesday 15 November 2005 European Parliament resolution on the development of a Community Action Plan for the recovery of European eels (2005/2032(INI))	P6_TA-PROV(2005)0425
Social security schemes ***I Tuesday 15 November 2005 European Parliament legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71 on the application of social security schemes to employed persons, to self-employed persons and to members of their families moving within the Community and Council Regulation (EEC) No 574/72 laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71 (COM(2004)0830 – C6-0002/2005 – 2004/0284(COD))	P6_TA-PROV(2005)0424

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