



The European Green Deal

Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability

The European Green Deal is meant to lay the foundations for a sustainable EU and promises nothing less than a major transformation of the European economy. The new growth strategy is intended to show Europe the way to a modern, resource-efficient and cycle-oriented economy while increasing its competitiveness. All this under the premise of climate neutrality by 2050. These extremely ambitious goals come with a strong pressure for change which will lastingly transform European industry.

Zero-pollution ambition

A central element of the Green Deal is the policy area of **“Zero-pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment”**. From autumn 2020, the *Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability* will set the course. Further initiatives by the European Commission have already been announced for 2021 and – in addition to the *Action Plan for Water, Air and Soil* – include a *review of the measures to address pollution from large industrial installations*.

Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability

The paint and printing ink industry and its products will be impacted by this strategy. The industry is aware of its responsibility to avoid hazardous substances in its products wherever possible. However, the roadmap for the strategy already indicates a tightening of the chemicals legislation. Particularly in complex issues concerning chemical substances (e.g. their combination effects) an increasing politicization of the discussion can be observed. A return to the matter-of-fact level, where the focus is on the benefits and the safe and, above all, sustainable use of chemical products such as paints, coatings and printing inks, would better serve the given purpose.

An approach based solely on an abstract hazard may be simpler and more transparent, but quite often only the orientation towards the real risk of occurrence enables an equally effective, efficient and proportionate approach. For some regulatory areas, straightforward hazard-based approaches might be sufficient, however, restrictions on the use of chemicals must necessarily rely on risk-based assessments. A “Risk Management Option Analysis” (RMOA) can help here.

Especially in view of the tense economic situation caused by the Covid 19 pandemic, it is important to remind the EU Commission that the political initiatives of the Green Deal should not be geared solely to the ecological dimension of sustainability. The economic and social pillars of sustainability should be in the focus too. For example, there are many indispensable chemical products such as paints, coatings and printing inks that have a high social value. The application of coating materials extends the lifespan of products, articles and infrastructures and avoids waste. Coating materials are part of the solution to establish a sustainable circular economy in Europe.

This is
what
we are
calling
for

✓ Harmonised implementation of existing EU legislation

The strictest and most progressive chemicals legislation worldwide (REACH) fulfils its purpose. The existing complexity should be reduced and not increased.

✓ Adequate, science-based chemicals management relying on risk assessment

Risk-based approaches enable an effective, efficient and proportionate handling of chemical substances. RMOA is a suitable instrument for this.

✓ Observe all goals of the European Green Deal and consistent application of a holistic approach

A holistic approach to chemicals management calls for life cycle analyses. Here, the VdL member companies are continually developing innovative solutions.

The European Green Deal
for the German paint and printing ink industry



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