



REACH in transition – more regression than progress?

The REACH Regulation is the most advanced chemical regulation in the world and has made a significant contribution to ensuring the safety of human health and our environment since its introduction in 2006. The revision of this major regulation must focus on reducing unnecessary obstacles and, in particular, acknowledging the concerns of “downstream users” far more than before. Coatings, paints and printing inks are enablers of the transformation to a sustainable society and require a sufficient range of chemical substances to ensure that they fulfill the required functionalities. The revision of the REACH regulation has been announced as a “targeted revision”. Accordingly, we expect that changes will only be made where the current system has serious shortcomings. We oppose any kind of expansion of the requirements that are not scientifically justified.

These include:

Mixture Allocation Factor (MAF)

One measure that would particularly affect the paints, coatings and printing ink industry as a formulating sector with many substances is the “Mixture Allocation Factor” (MAF). In all chemical risk assessments under REACH, an additional safety factor would be applied to account for “cocktail effects”. This would mean that a very rare effect would be taken into account across the board and without differentiation for a huge number of chemical substances. This approach is scientifically controversial and would lead to the elimination of many essential raw materials.

Generic risk management approach (GRA)

There are obviously still plans to introduce a general, hazard-based approach to risk management to a substantial extent in REACH. Unlike the risk-based approach, this approach only examines the hazard potential of a substance - regardless of actual exposure. Although it previously only applied to CMR substances of category 1, there are now discussions of applying it to other hazard classes. This would amount to a general ban on products for consumer use, without assessing socio-economic consequences, actual risks or possible alternatives. This has the potential of disproportionate effects on companies, such as time-consuming substitution procedures even in the case of safe use or complete discontinuation of use.

Registration of polymers in line with REACH

Another measure that would also affect the paints, coatings and printing ink industry would be the planned requirement to register polymers. It is foreseen to track polymers with a production or import volume of more than one metric ton per year in order to enable a comprehensive “mapping of the polymer world”. Polymers Requiring Registration (PRR) would then be identified based on certain hazard criteria. It is feared that paint and coatings manufacturers may also be required to register for the first time. However, this neglects the fact that the existing practice of categorizing polymers by registering their structural components, the monomers, is more than sufficient for consumer and environmental protection. A polymer registration therefore appears neither proportionate nor effective.

Essential Use Concept (EUC)

In addition, it is currently being examined whether the “Essential Use Concept” (EUC) could contribute to streamlining the REACH procedures. Particularly hazardous chemicals should only be allowed to continue to be used if they are necessary for an essential function and no suitable, safer alternatives exist. In practice, however, such a system would probably not simplify or speed up the procedures - rather, there is a risk of additional complication and uncertainty in the selection of suitable regulatory instruments. It is questionable whether legislators or the administration would be able to determine which applications are “essential” and which are not, given the complex circumstances to be assessed.



What we advocate for

Prioritization of relevant substance/usage combinations:

Given the growing number of substances that need to be assessed, the development of a structured prioritization for relevant substance-usage combinations is essential to enable companies to plan and use their resources strategically and with foresight.

No obligation to register polymers

Polymers are already characterized in accordance with the current REACH requirements via the registration of their constituent monomers. With this in mind, any potential future obligation to register such polymers is not acceptable. At best, it must be scientifically justified why registration is necessary for specific polymers.

No implementation of a „Mixture Allocation Factor“ (MAF)

Cocktail effects are already taken into account within the framework of the existing risk assessment by means of sufficient safety parameters. A MAF is scientifically controversial and has serious consequences for the paints, coatings and printing ink industry due to the immense effort required for reformulations, producing chemical safety reports and risk assessments as well as the discontinuation of numerous products.

No extension of the GRA to additional hazard categories and beyond end-user applications

A blanket ban on use, without a formal process to account for socio-economic impacts, real risks or available alternatives, can have severe and disproportionate consequences. Manufacturers of coatings, paints and printing inks rely on a broad range of chemical substances in order to ensure the usual array of high-quality and specialized products in the future. We therefore strongly oppose an extension of the hazard-based approach under Article 68(2) to other hazard classes and beyond the area of consumer applications.

Ensuring equal opportunities

Varying regulations within and outside the EU and inadequate market surveillance of non-European goods lead to distorted competition. While EU companies go to great lengths to ensure the conformity of their products, non-compliant imported products often reach the market uncontrolled.



Aline Rommert

+49 (0) 69 2556 1705

rommert@vci.de

