



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL MARKET, INDUSTRY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AND SMES
Chemicals and Consumer Industries
Chemicals and Plastics Industries

DG GROW – DG ENV meeting Cefic

29 November 2019
Report

Participants:

GROW: [REDACTED]

ENV: [REDACTED]

Cefic: [REDACTED]

Discussion:

GROW and ENV confirmed that if the Green Deal announces a new chemicals strategy, both DGs will work jointly to deliver it. ENV stressed the need for an overarching and cross-cutting strategy. GROW agreed and explained that President von der Leyen wants to have a holistic approach on all files. Regarding enforcement in particular, there is a strong wish to fight social dumping and foreign subsidies to ensure a level playing field for European industry, including for the chemicals sector. However, regarding the chemicals strategy, services are still waiting for political guidance. ENV indicated that the new Circular Economy Action Plan and the Industrial Strategy will have a strong focus on sustainability and digitalisation. These two initiatives might have sector specific actions.

CEFIC thanked both DGs for the meeting. CEFIC listed a number of priority topics for the chemicals sector:

1. Enforcement (imports of banned substances e.g. HFC, online sales, enforceability and practicality of measures e.g. toys, microplastics, cooperation with customs, involving ECHA);
2. Single market for waste in Europe;

3. Investments in European recycling capacity, including in chemical recycling to clean up and decontaminate waste;
4. Innovation for substitution/safe-by-design – prepare the “next generation” of chemistry;
5. Development towards Africa on capacity building and promoting REACH/EU regulatory approach;
6. Bringing the production of active pharmaceutical ingredients back to Europe.

CEFIC also stressed that achieving the zero pollution ambition will be extremely challenging, in particular for SMEs. In Europe we might end up with having only big companies as SMEs struggle to keep up with regulatory requirements and remain competitive. Access to EU funds for SMEs should be facilitated as they are available but how to use tools to access funding is not very well understood. Smaller companies tend to rely more on foreign investments. GROW stressed that there are some good examples such as BBI JU with a relatively high participation of SMEs (41%).

ENV recognised that enforcement is a challenge. A “smart approach to checks” is needed and using the available digital technology could help. Chemical recycling is promising but we need to pay attention to its energy consumption and whether it actually leads to recycling (instead of simply transforming waste into fuel). It needs to be complementary to mechanical recycling. The Sewage Sludge Directive will be revised and will thus allow to address pollution from sludge. The COM needs also to be strong on innovation and international dimension to ensure a level playing field and competitiveness of European companies in global markets. ENV agreed that a well functioning European market for waste is paramount. ENV invited CEFIC to help to gather and improve knowledge on chemicals fate to understand where they end up e.g. through biomonitoring programmes and tracking, by using PFAS as a pilot.

GROW informed that a study on enforcement of REACH requirements by customs will be launched in 2020. Regarding skills, GROW asked CEFIC to provide information on what is needed to produce more sustainable chemicals. GROW informed that there will be a follow up to the Blueprint for Skills. Another aspect that warrants further attention is how to improve the communication about chemical safety of products to consumers. One way forward is digital labelling. CEFIC expressed its readiness to cooperate.