

WebEx meeting - Commissioner Virginijus SINKEVIČIUS with CEFIC - 10/06/2020

Commissioner SINKEVICIUS met the representatives of the chemicals industry Members of CEFIC to hear their views on the upcoming Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability (CSS).

CEFIC emphasised the economic importance of the chemicals' sector for EU's economy and their commitment to contribute to accelerate the investments needed under the Commission's European Green Deal (EGD) agenda. On the chemicals strategy they stressed the following points:

- Their awareness of the environmental impact of chemicals and the need to achieve carbon neutrality. Their endorsement of the Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) especially regarding plastic recycling, and the importance innovation funds for recycling technologies including chemical recycling, but also renewable energy i.e. hydrogen.
- Stressed the importance of waste policies and a single market for secondary raw material to deliver economies of scale, as well as the need for enforcement and transparency on the composition and the history of the material/waste for ex. through block chain technology.
- They highlighted the need for a sectorial Green Deal as part of the CSS and a coherent legal framework to enable the transition and develop the next generation technology. They expressed willingness to cooperate on the CSS and promoted the idea of a regular strategic dialogue, in particular on safe and sustainable by design, low carbon transition and sustainability.
- Recalled the importance of chemicals for the pharmaceutical industry and suggested introducing the notion of circularity and recycling (ex. solvents) into the pharmaceutical legislation.
- Agreed with the zero pollution ambition of a toxic free environment and highlighted industry's capability of creating non-toxic materials and deal with hazards through risk management processes.
- Acknowledged the challenges, e.g. chemicals mixtures, micro plastics, and the role of ECHA for "One substance one assessment" and pointed to existing good risk management processes.
- They highlighted the recovery package as an opportunity to kick-start chemical recycling and as a way to take the "legacy" substances out of the system.

The Commissioner welcomed the discussion and underlined the following points:

- The need for the chemical industry in the context of the EGD to lead the technological transformation, shift to new processes while protecting the environment and human health.
- The role of the CEAP and the upcoming CSS, to protect citizen and the environment while promoting innovation and competitiveness, the objectives of closing the loop and transition to toxic-free cycles, to deliver secondary raw materials as safe as primary ones.
- The need to substitution of Substances of Concern, of decontamination technology, minimum recycled contents, and the use of Green Public Procurement.
- He concurred that information on substances in products is essential and that a product passport system was under development and confirmed enforcement and full compliance is key.
- He outlined the priority objectives of the upcoming CSS planned for September, stressed the importance of consultations, and input from stakeholders and invited CEFIC to provide feedback to the roadmap.
- On the "zero pollution ambition", he stressed the Commission will address better monitoring, looking at all policies, and in particular pollution to air water and soil with an action plan, addressing notably identified concerns such as micro-plastics and persistent compounds.