

[eu-LISA successfully launches SIS II AFIS Phase One](#)

After a little less than two years of intense efforts, the eu-LISA Internal Security Systems Sector successfully launched the first phase of the SIS II AFIS platform. The platform enables the identification of a person from his/her fingerprints alone. The introduction of a biometric search capability in SIS II was achieved by eu-LISA in tight cooperation with ten Member States who showed both interest and willingness to use biometric queries once deployed at the Central System level. Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia will soon be followed by more Member States.

The aim of SIS II AFIS is to allow all the Member States to leverage on a centralized policing-oriented database. As such, it will strengthen the fight against crime within Europe which is a mission we should bear in mind each day. Using the platform to locate those who either lie about their identity or changed it to avoid detection is paramount to Europe's security.

SIS II AFIS Phase One entered into operation on 5 March 2018 at 22:00 CET. The entire project was performed without any deviation from the timescale and in full compatibility with the requests from eu-LISA's Governing Bodies.

"This is an important milestone in the evolution of SIS II. With its new biometric search capabilities the system becomes an even more important platform for law-enforcement cooperation and information exchange. At the same time, this is a great achievement for the Agency as a whole, demonstrating again our agility and ability to deliver towards the needs of eu-LISA's stakeholders." said Krum Garkov, Executive Director of eu-LISA.

Background

Articles 22 (c) of the SIS II Decision and the SIS II Regulation have foreseen an evolution towards the normal law enforcement practice of comparing a person's fingerprints to the many sets of prints stored in SIS II ('one-to-many' search) to identify the person solely on the basis of his/her fingerprints.

However, this can only be achieved by using an Automatic Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS).

Links

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[Environment ministers discussed the Circular Economy and the Plastics Strategy](#)

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Urgent action is needed to protect our oceans and seas from an invasion of plastics

At today's Environment Council, ministers exchanged views on the package presented by the Commission on 16 January 2018, which aims at delivering on the circular economy action plan. The package consists of the following elements:

- European strategy for plastics in a circular economy
- a Monitoring framework for the circular economy
- Implementation of the Circular Economy package: options to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation

They based their debate on a note prepared by the Presidency and took into account the interventions of Commissioners Vella and Arias Cañete, who were present.

Ministers agreed that they welcome the presentation of the new EU plastics strategy. They highlighted the need to move forward with the plastics strategy as it aims to improve how we use and recycle plastics. Plastics have been instrumental in achieving the economic and social standards we have today. However, in recent years marine littering and other undesirable consequences linked to the use of plastic have been a concern to environment ministers. All Ministers welcomed the Commission package and called for an urgent implementation of concrete measures, in particular to increase the recycling of plastics, find solutions to the widespread use of single-use

plastic and to find a holistic approach to the value chain of plastic production. Eco-design for plastic products can play a very important role here. In their exchange of views, ministers mentioned several other possible actions to be taken at EU or at national levels:

- campaigns for raising consumer awareness
- increasing the quality of recycled products through setting standards
- green public procurement
- the use of the rules on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), similar to the one which was agreed recently in the waste package, together with financial incentives and voluntary commitments by the industry.

Finally, ministers agreed that they are all looking forward to the Commission legislative proposal on single use plastics.

We need to protect our environment from plastic pollution. We also need to protect our seas from microplastic particles. Today we have made a very important first step towards commitments which will enable us to deliver on our promise to protect the environment and the health of our citizens.

Neno Dimov, the Bulgarian Minister for Environment and Water

On the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation, many ministers highlighted the need for availability of information on substances of concern in products. According to several speakers the same rules should apply to the content of hazardous substances in primary and in secondary raw materials, which underlines the importance of the substitution of such substances as far as possible. A number of speakers also addressed the need for more harmonised end-of-waste rules throughout the EU.

While many Ministers focused in their interventions on the plastics strategy and the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation, as suggested by the Presidency, several speakers also highlighted the importance of another element of the package, namely the monitoring framework regarding progress towards a circular economy. The proposed indicators were generally welcomed, but some ministers asked to broaden the scope of the indicators to other areas than the waste sector. In this context, they stressed the substantial contribution which the circular economy can make to the fulfilment of the climate commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Finally, Environment Ministers underlined the need to fully involve other Council formations in the discussions and the work on circular economy throughout different sectors.

The Bulgarian Presidency is planning to have Council conclusions adopted on the above topics in June.

[Visit the meeting page](#) [Download as pdf](#)

[EU Cities for Fair & Ethical Trade Award](#)

For the first time, the European Commission will grant an EU city with a Fair and Ethical Trade Award.

The aim of the Award is to highlight the important role of cities in providing platforms for fair and ethical trade schemes. The contest was officially launched in Brussels on 7 December 2017 and applications will be accepted until 13 April 2018.

Source: <http://www.trade-city-award.eu>

What is the EU Cities for Fair & Ethical Trade Award?

The Award is part of the EU's efforts to raise awareness about how purchasing decisions of EU consumers can affect the environment and livelihoods of people in other countries – and the role that cities and local authorities must play.

Help your city apply!

Civil society organisations, NGOs and other stakeholders are welcome to complete city applications with the approval, in the form of a Mayoral Declaration, of the relevant municipality authority.

Applications are open to all EU cities that contain at least 20.000 inhabitants.

You will find all the relevant information regarding the contest here <http://www.trade-city-award.eu>

[REACH Review](#)

What is REACH?

REACH stands for Regulation on Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals ([EC 1907/2006](#)). This key EU legislation on chemicals aims to improve the protection of human health and the environment, promote alternative methods to animal testing as well as ensure the free circulation

of substances in the internal market while enhancing innovation and competitiveness of the EU chemicals industry.

The four processes of REACH are the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals:

- **Registration:** Manufacturers and importers of chemicals must identify and manage risks linked to the substances they produce and market. By 31 May 2018, all existing chemicals manufactured, imported or placed on the EU market above 1 tonne per year will have to be registered. Without registration, substances cannot be manufactured or imported into the EU.
- **Evaluation:** The information submitted to register chemicals can be checked by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). Member States evaluate substances for specific concerns regarding human health and the environment.
- **Authorisation:** This procedure ensures that the risks of substances of very high concern (SVHC, for example carcinogenic, mutagenic or reprotoxic substances) are properly controlled and that those substances are progressively replaced by suitable alternatives. Those substances may be listed on Annex XIV of the REACH Regulation and then companies need to obtain an authorisation to continue to use these substances.
- **Restrictions:** Restrictions on the manufacturing, use, or placing on the market of substances are designed to manage unacceptable risks to human health or the environment that are not addressed by the other REACH processes or by other EU legislation. EU countries or the European Commission may propose EU-wide restrictions.

How has REACH helped protect human health and the environment to date?

So far, the REACH **registration procedure** allowed gathering information on more than 17,000 substances. 65,000 registration dossiers of the main chemicals manufactured and used in the EU were submitted since 2010 and allowed the EU to build the most comprehensive database on chemicals in the world. It improved the protection of human health and environment through a better knowledge and risk management of chemical substances by industry.

As regards the **REACH authorisation** procedure, a recent [study](#) published by the Commission, shows substantial results. So far, 181 chemicals that can have serious effects on human health and the environment have been identified as such and 43 are included in the "REACH authorisation list". This also means that companies are progressively replacing them when suitable alternatives become available.

For example, the **substitution** of arsenic trioxide used for the production of traditional glass in the Venice area was triggered by the REACH authorisation requirement. The traditional glassmakers had to find safer alternatives to arsenic trioxide, while maintaining the quality of their glassware. Joint efforts have led to alternatives that cover 95% of the production and that have reduced workers' exposure. Moreover, this has also improved air quality in the region, as arsenic concentrations in the air have decreased substantially.

Finally, the **restriction procedure** has led, between 2012 and 2016, to banning or limiting further the use of 18 chemical substances, including groups of substances, benefitting directly to people's health and environment. As an example, the restriction of chromium VI in leather articles enabled an estimated 1.3 million people with chromium allergy to use leather articles and reduces the number of new cases of chromium allergy by approximately 10,800 per year.

Another concrete example is the restriction of the use of lead in the EU. Lead causes damage to the central nervous system and is therefore banned in jewellery since October 2013 and, in many other consumer products, since June 2016. In particular children are at danger as they might put products directly in their mouth. Thirteen million children below the age of 3 have today a reduced exposure to lead which will have positive long-term effects for their neurological development.

In addition, the restriction of groups of substances such as perfluorocompounds, protects the environment (and wildlife) as well as humans (exposed through the environment) from the risks associated with toxic substances that are persistent and accumulate in living organisms.

Can REACH be further simplified and what is the Commission proposing?

The second REACH review has identified a number of areas which could be further simplified, including information requirements, extended safety data sheets, the authorisation process and the requirements for substances in products. The Commission therefore proposes the following:

- **Improving compliance of registration dossiers:** data gaps in registration dossiers need to be addressed through improved compliance and evaluation procedures.
- **Simplification of the authorisation process:** authorisation is still a relatively new process under REACH that has faced challenges as it became operational and it needs to become easier and predictable for companies.
- **Ensuring a level playing field between EU and non-EU companies:** EU manufacturers are at a disadvantage compared to non-EU companies when producing products containing Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC) that are subject to authorisation. The Commission is looking into ways of addressing this disadvantage.
- **Enhancing enforcement** by national authorities, including import controls by customs authorities.
- **Coherence** by clarifying the interface between REACH and the worker protection legislation (OSH) as well as with waste legislation.
- **Supporting compliance by SMEs:** There are concerns about the vulnerability of SMEs. The Commission requests ECHA and Member States to step up their efforts to develop tailored guidance and support instruments focused on the needs of SMEs to help them comply with the REACH requirement.

I am an entrepreneur. How does REACH affect my company?

In line with “the polluter pays principle”, REACH shifted the burden of proof to industry, making it responsible for the safety of chemicals along the supply chain.

To comply with the regulation, companies must identify and manage the risks linked to the substances they manufacture and market in the EU. They have to demonstrate to ECHA how the substance can be safely used, and they must communicate the risk management measures to the users. REACH requires new forms of cooperation among companies, enhancing communication along the supply chain, as well as developing tools to guide and assist companies and public authorities in its implementation.

Companies also need to comply with the requirements resulting from the evaluation, authorisation and restriction chapters of REACH.

How do costs and benefits of REACH compare?

The main direct costs for companies incurred under REACH so far are associated with registration and the communication of information along the supply chain. These are estimated at €2.3-2.6 billion for the first two registration deadlines. The estimated scale of potential benefits for human health and the environment are estimated at €100 billion over 25-30 years (since the entry into force of REACH).

The Commission assessment of the first ten years of REACH acknowledges the costs related to its administration and the impact on companies, especially on SMEs. This is why it adopted and encourages further measures to help companies comply with REACH requirements such as ECHA and Member States tailored guidance and support instruments for SMEs.

What has been the effect of REACH on the internal market and in the competitiveness and innovation of EU industry? What does the Commission envisage?

REACH aims to ensure the free movement of chemicals in the internal market, as well as to promote the competitiveness and encourage innovation, by for example facilitating the development of safer chemicals to replace hazardous substances. While REACH has further harmonised the internal market for chemicals, its effects on the competitiveness and innovation of EU industry are complex and depend on other factors, such as global market trends. The actions proposed by the Commission will further improve the implementation of REACH, easing compliance by companies and ensuring that EU manufacturers do not face competitive disadvantages.

What is the public perception of chemicals in Europe?

The Commission ran a Eurobarometer survey on the public perception of chemicals at the end of 2016. Europe’s citizens are concerned about being exposed to hazardous chemicals in their daily life and REACH responds directly to these concerns. The perception of chemical safety has improved in the last 10 years, although the perceptions of safety vary also between Member States and citizens will need further reassurance.

- 44% of EU citizens consider that safety of chemicals contained in products has improved in the last 10-15 years.
- They also have more confidence in products manufactured in the EU compared to those imported from outside.
- The main sources of information used by the public to get such information are product labels and media.

What are the overlaps identified by the review between REACH and other EU legislation dealing with chemical risk?

The REACH Review did not identify major incoherencies between REACH and other EU legislation. Some inconsistencies have already been addressed in the past years on the interface between REACH and POP and REACH and ROHS, while others are still requiring attention.

Although there are some synergies between REACH and the Occupational, Safety and Health (OSH) legislation, efforts are needed to address the diverging ways in which the two Scientific Committees, (RAC and SCOEL), provide opinions on workplace exposure limits.

The issue of determining when recycled materials cease to be waste and become subject to REACH again is being tackled in the context of the Circular Economy.

Can the role of the European Chemicals Agency evolve in the implementation of REACH?

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), founded in 2007, has a key role in the successful implementation of all REACH processes. ECHA hosts the world's largest database on chemicals and enables an easy online access to chemical safety data. Efficiency has improved over time both within ECHA and how ECHA works with Member States and other stakeholders.

ECHA has built-up a significant competence in chemicals management and is expected to become a European and global reference centre for the sustainable management of chemicals, capable of serving the implementation of other EU legislation should the Commission make a proposal to this effect.

What can REACH help to achieve at a global level?

The implementation of REACH positions the EU as a global frontrunner towards achieving the 2020 World Summit on Sustainable Development Goals. REACH concretely implements the SDG target "to achieve by 2020 sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle and of hazardous waste in ways that lead to minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment".

For More Information

[Press release](#)

[Chemicals and the Environment](#)

[Chemicals and Enterprise and Industry](#)