

Sehr geehrte Frau Bundesministerin Warken,

Sehr geehrte Frau Scholz,

Da Sie leider nicht an unserem Webinar zu gesunden Menstruationsprodukten teilnehmen konnten, sende ich Ihnen eine kleine Dokumentation des Webinars zu (auf Englisch), inklusive eines Links zur Aufnahme und die Präsentationen zweier Speakerinnen (im Anhang).

Wir würden uns sehr freuen, wenn Sie den gerechten Zugang zu giffreien Menstruationsprodukten in Ihr Bemühen um eine geschlechtersensible Gesundheitsvorsorge miteinbeziehen würden und stehen Ihnen gerne für Informationen und Austausch zur Verfügung.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Simona Zimmermann für WECF



Dear participants and interested,

We are happy that 183 people attended while 248 people signed up, from at least 41 countries, to our Webinar last week. Thank you for your interest in the urgent need to regulate menstrual products!

You can find the recording here: [The urgent need to regulate menstrual products: Webinar mit Dr. Kathrin Schilling, Tripti Arora und Justine Okolodkoff | Videos & Filme auf Vimeo](#)

Attached you find the presentations and below some of the questions with answers and comments to think further.

The Webinar showed that there is reason as well as possibilities to take regulatory action against harmful chemicals in menstrual products.

The message from the speakers was clear: there is enough evidence of harmful chemicals in menstrual products and injustices resulting from stigma in order to take legal and political action. For many of the chemicals, heavy metals and pesticides [found in menstrual products](#) by scientific and NGO testing (e.g. lead, parabens, phthalates), there is enough scientific evidence for their adverse effects on health justifying protective measures

These measures need to be based on scientific findings, but we also need to apply the precautionary principle - when there is a hazard identified, the protection of health needs to be prioritized. It is only now that ongoing research shows that heavy metals pass through all layers of vaginal cells and are likely to enter the blood stream. In order to further close the gender health and data gap, independent research must be funded. But based on existing research and the precautionary principle, politics can already act now - we urgently need regulation for all period products in order to assure safe access to safe menstrual products for all those who menstruate in every part of the world.

Questions were asked about how governments' assessments of safety conclusions differ so much with those from the research communities. NGOs and Civil Society play a crucial role in bridging the knowledge gap between sciences and politics, especially by introducing the lived experiences and needs of women, girls and those who menstruate into policy making. Taken seriously, this interplay can lead to regulations that protect the health of all those who menstruate from stigma, exclusion and harmful chemicals.

Thank you very much and we hope to see you again to continue this important conversation

WECF & Wen

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Some of the questions asked and their answers by the panel

Question 1 - Do you know of any studies of menstrual products in the EU?

Helen: Here is a list of all the studies we know of to date

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1xSN7rxyrX7EckpyZOaZBis7Whc9VQ8_G/edit?rtpof=true&sd=true&gid=1087552935#gid=1087552935

Justine : We tried to be as exhaustive as possible in our study. There are also a few works in progress ([PERIODS / Horizon funding / Spain; Nicolas Tessandier & team at Université de Montpellier](#)).

Question 2 - Thank you so much Kathrin for sharing such important information. I work with young women so what is your suggestion for the best menstrual product to buy for periods?

For single use pads and tampons: Choose certified organic products by a recognized certifier ie the [Soil Association](#) in the UK and [GOTS certified products](#). In the EU look for any of the Cosmos partners in the EU (<https://www.cosmos-standard.org/en/>) note the cosmos certifies cosmetics or products under the [EU eco label](#) -

- For period pants: opt for natural materials where possible, avoid any trade marked ingredients relating to anti-odour, anti-microbial or stain resistant claims. If in doubt, contact the company.
- For menstrual cups and discs: Should be 100% medical grade silicone. No additives ie in relation to self cleaning (these could be anti-microbials)
- For reusable pads: 100% organic cotton where possible.

Some manufacturers claim to have PFAS-free products. You can look out for them.

Question 3 - Is there any tolerable maximum level of these toxic chemicals that we can consume via the period products or are we aiming for 0% for all the toxic chemicals mentioned? (Obviously the less chemicals the better!)

Helen: Zero would be wonderful! For many of the chemicals found in period products there are no safe levels ie Endocrine Disrupting chemicals (EDCs), certain heavy metals like lead and PFAS.

Kathrin: We need to put a lot of things in consideration in terms of safety levels of chemicals and the cocktail of chemicals we can find and it might vary by product type.

Question 4 - Thank you so much to all the great speakers. The UK government also considered REACH regulation of period products but concluded there was no great risk - how can it be that policy makers interpret the same research so differently from academics and activists?

Helen: Great question! We need to see the government literature review for that, we think. We have asked for a copy, and were told this might be a possibility. It would be great if we could get the researchers whose papers were reviewed to comment if we do get sight of this literature review.

Tripti: The data is obviously differently interpreted by different policy makers. And that's where we have observed that civil society comes in. So we work with the regulators, we show them that there is data, we show them there is evidence, we show them there's

presence of chemicals and there's evidence of impacts. We try to work with the manufacturers as well. And the pressure also comes from the consumer, so people like us who are participating today feel the need to know which chemicals are there in our products and which product is safer. This is how you raise the questions, and this is how you put pressure on the governments and also on the manufacturers to give us information, to give us disclosure, and to also regulate the products that are on the market. So I've seen that approach is very helpful. When we ask for our rights, and when we put pressure, we demand for answers, it leads to a better framework.

Justine: In 2025, about 40 MEPs submitted 2 written questions to the Commissioner for Equality, Hadja Lahbib, asking if the commission would (re)evaluate potential risks due to toxic substances in menstrual products. The two answers from the Commissioner highlight what you are pointing out: that the lack of great risk, or imminent emergency does not seem to be a risk at all, and that, as long as these products are covered by the GPSR and REACH, there is no need for a stronger regulation. I think that some political priorities are very far from better transparency and environmental health, so as long as there is nothing perceived as a scandal on governments side, the regulation needs seem low.

Question 5 - We need to understand how this links to the National Women's Health Strategy? How do we ensure that the VCSE sector is represented at the round table with the Department of Business and Trade?

Helen: There is very little in the Women's Health Strategy on this specific issue.

We urge everyone to respond to the OPSS consultation on the [General Product Safety Framework consultation](#) which closes on the 23rd of June. We will provide sample answers for any one who needs them. Also we suggest initially speaking/writing to your MP, to explain your concerns. Perhaps getting a parliamentary question or two. In terms of the roundtable - we have put that question to the OPSS and are awaiting the response.

Question 6 - Did anyone look at potential environmental impacts of these chemicals in menstrual products?

Helen: Although there have been a couple of life cycle analyses, the chemical content of period products has not really been assessed or included. This is mostly because we don't know what is in the majority of the products - due to industry lack of transparency and also the unintentionally added chemicals can't be qualified or quantified. This is a [list](#) of all the research papers that we know of, that have looked at the chemicals in period products. These are two research papers which may be of use. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666789422000277> and <https://www.lifecycleinitiative.org/library/single-use-menstrual-products-and-their-alternatives-recommendations-from-life-cycle-assessments/>

Also there is research on the microplastics in period products found near sewage outlets. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0043135420305583>

Justine: A 2021 UNEP meta-study found that tampons and pads rank among the most polluting single-use plastics globally, alongside cigarette butts and food packaging. In addition to plastic pollution, menstrual products contribute to chemical contamination: bleaching processes and additives release. “Forever chemicals” contaminate soil and water systems, persisting for decades and re-entering human exposure cycles through food and drinking water.

Efforts to recycle menstrual waste remain rare and technically complex. Innovations are emerging, (start-ups that convert used sanitary pads into hygienic pulp or plastic granules), yet these remain experimental and unscalable within current EU waste frameworks. The Stockholm Environment Institute stresses that without extended producer responsibility (EPR) mechanisms, municipalities bear the full cost of menstrual waste collection and processing. A circular approach to menstrual health requires systemic reform, aligning product design, collection, and recycling under an integrated EU waste and chemical policy.

Question 8 - What is the suggested communication / advocacy / messaging strategy timeline between #1 period poverty reduction (education and access) and product safety advocacy (education and safer alternatives), because I've experienced that its IMPOSSIBLE to try and tackle #2 before #1 has been inculturated into the population that we are working in?

Justine: When it comes to regulations, processes are so long that I think it's necessary to address all points at the same time, on a parallel timeline: regulation of menstrual products at the same time as ending period poverty. When we are talking about EU level advocacy (but also national level advocacy quite often) entry points and people we talk to are not the same (and sometimes don't communicate between each other), so the more people you can talk to and address the stakes to, the more chance you often have to end up meeting with someone who actually cares and wants to address the topic. I think it does also help to understand what will prevent them from acting, as it is often the same things (scientific evidence when it comes to products toxicity, lack of harmonised data when it comes to period poverty for example).

Tripti: Of course it is very important that both of these go hand in hand. And a very good example is what I shared in my presentation earlier, that when we were just providing access, we were actually also giving a solution like the on-site incinerators further deepening the issue rather than actually creating a solution. So if both issues go hand in hand, we actually give access to safer products and real solutions rather than solutions which further deepen the issue.

Helen: In the UK we are calling for a [Menstrual Health Dignity and Sustainability Act](#) which addresses all aspects of menstruation.

Question 9 - From a human rights language / frame perspective, I always say that menstrual health is a MATTER of human rights because it is so deeply tied up with the rights to education, health, dignity, safety, sanitation, etc., so it's difficult for me to get on board with the phrase 'MH is a fundamental right'. How can we reckon with this seeming misalignment moving forward?

Thanks for highlighting that distinction. From a legal perspective, menstrual health is best understood as a matter of human rights because it's deeply interconnected with rights to health, education, dignity and sanitation. When people refer to it as a 'fundamental right', it's often a way of emphasising its importance rather than making a strict legal claim. Going forward, we can be more precise by saying that menstrual health is a fundamental condition for the realisation of multiple human rights — which becomes even more critical when we consider issues like exposure to harmful chemicals in period product

Question 10 - How will you share the details on the UK consultation and please can Saira share more about other actions being taken. Will any of the roundtables be viewable by the public?

Helen: I am not sure will there be remote access to the roundtable? We can suggest experts so I have put your name forward.