

EU REACH

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Industrial chemicals are all around us, from dyes in fabrics to sealants in buildings or the chemicals used to make till receipts. The [REACH Regulation](#) is the EU's main law for regulating these chemicals, and it is the most advanced framework for chemical safety in the world. It has provided more information on chemical properties and uses than any other system and has made progress in controlling the most harmful chemicals. It has also encouraged the innovation of safer chemicals.

Yet, serious problems remain. Many substances on the market lack basic safety data, and regulatory action remains [far too slow](#). On average, it takes six years to restrict a single harmful substance. Harmful chemicals are still commonly found in everyday products, exposing people and wildlife to a cocktail of many different harmful chemicals that can have [additive effects](#). The ongoing PFAS pollution crisis provides a stark example of REACH's shortcomings, demonstrating its failure to prevent widespread and lasting contamination.

Nearly two decades after its introduction, it is clear that REACH must be updated to improve its effectiveness and efficiency. In 2020, under its [Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability](#) (CSS), the EU committed to reforming REACH, and this process is underway. A more responsive and effective system is essential to properly protect human health and the environment and to promote innovation to safer chemicals.

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About REACH

REACH stands for Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals. The main aim of the REACH Regulation is to protect humans, wildlife and the environment from the threat of industrial chemicals, whilst not undermining the competitiveness of the chemical industry.

REACH came into force in 2007, replacing a previous system where older chemicals could stay on the market without adequate safety data, just because they had been around for a long time. Under REACH, a level playing field was established so that new and old chemicals were supposed to have the same and appropriate safety information as a precondition to marketing (no data no market principle). REACH shifted the burden of proof from authorities to the chemical industry in requiring the demonstration of safe use prior to placing on the market as well as making the use of specific substances of high concern subject to an authorisation – which should only be granted if industry

either demonstrates the risks can be adequately controlled or the benefits outweigh the risks.

One of the reasons REACH has fallen short of its objectives is that a significant number of companies have failed to fulfill their responsibilities. Had they done so, the severity of the forever chemicals crisis could have been considerably mitigated.

Implementation and improvement of REACH is a key part of CHEM Trust's work. We are trying to ensure it is implemented effectively and that the revised REACH is stronger and faster to better protect human health and the environment. We are an accredited stakeholder at the [European Chemicals Agency](#) (ECHA), and a member of their [Endocrine Disruptor Expert Group](#).

Read more about REACH on ECHA's webpage '[Understanding REACH](#)'.

Policy timeline



What do we want to see in the revised regulation?

In CHEM Trust's view, simplifying REACH is an excellent opportunity to address its problems. Simplification must mean doing more with less, closing the loopholes, and maximising effectiveness while minimising the burden for all actors. The revision needs to make REACH:

1. **Simpler** in generating and communicating the information that is needed so that all chemicals with the most harmful properties are known to authorities and industry, avoiding costly clean-up or the reformulation of products:

CHEM Trust calls for a smarter, more efficient REACH—one that **digitalises supply chain communication** and chemical safety assessment to ensure up-to-date

information on chemical hazards and regulatory status is communicated across the supply chain. In addition, REACH should introduce a **Mixture Assessment Factor (MAF)** into chemical safety assessment to account for real-world exposure to mixtures of harmful chemicals and associated health effects. This approach offers a simpler, more cost-effective solution than requiring each company to conduct complex and costly chemical mixture assessments.

2. **Faster** in controlling the most harmful chemicals and thus boosting the market for safer alternatives:

The revised REACH must speed up the regulation of harmful chemicals by grouping substances and **expanding REACH's fast-track process for controlling Carcinogens, Mutagens and Reproductive Toxins ('GRA') to cover more hazard classes, including known and suspected endocrine disruptors**. CHEM Trust also suggests setting a clear target for **toxic-free consumer products by 2033**. This will better protect the European population while driving innovation and ensuring regulatory clarity. Banning the most harmful substances from consumer products is only the first step—a phase-out in non-consumer uses must complement it.

3. **Bolder** in enforcing the rules, avoiding future problems, and protecting the internal market, people and nature:

A bolder REACH means **stronger protection** and **tougher enforcement**. CHEM Trust advocates for updating REACH data requirements to ensure harmful chemicals such as endocrine disruptors can be identified and rapidly replaced. Non-compliant companies should be named and shamed with effective penalties enforced, and **data on polymers should be made more transparent** by requiring manufacturers to report basic safety information to ECHA.

Read more about these key asks in our briefing '[REACH revision 2025: simpler, faster, bolder](#)'