

## ROADMAP

Roadmaps aim to inform citizens and stakeholders about the Commission's work in order to allow them to provide feedback and to participate effectively in future consultation activities. Citizens and stakeholders are in particular invited to provide views on the Commission's understanding of the problem and possible solutions and to make available any relevant information that they may have.

<b>TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE</b>	Chemicals strategy for sustainability
<b>LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT</b>	DG ENV- B2 Sustainable Chemicals
<b>LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE</b>	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions
<b>INDICATIVE PLANNING</b>	Q3 2020
<b>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION</b>	-

This Roadmap is provided for information purposes only and its content might change. It does not prejudice the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content. All elements of the initiative described by the Roadmap, including its timing, are subject to change.

### A. Context, Problem definition and Subsidiarity Check

#### Context

As announced in the [European Green Deal](#) and in the context of its zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment, the Commission will present a Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability. The Strategy will build on recent policy evaluations and initiatives associated with the EU chemicals legislation - in particular the [second REACH Review](#), the [Fitness Check of the most relevant chemicals legislation \(excluding REACH\)](#) and the [Communication on options to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation](#) - but also on specific policy evaluations carried out in the area of environmental and health protection, products, food and workers' protection. Those have identified a number of gaps, weaknesses, overlaps, and challenges that the EU chemicals policy needs to tackle in order to fulfil its policy objectives and to support and contribute to other policy areas. The current COVID-19 crisis increases the urgency to step up action in the chemicals area in order to ensure that stronger protection of citizens' health will also enable and support the socio-economic recovery of the European industry producing and using chemicals, and promote EU's strategic autonomy for those chemicals essential to society and health (e.g. for the production of pharmaceuticals or disinfectants). Addressing current and future challenges within the EU chemicals policy and developing a strategic approach to chemicals has also been the focus of a number of Resolutions by the European Parliament ([resolution of 17 April 2018 on the implementation of the 7th Environment Action Programme](#) , [resolution of 13 September 2018 on implementation of the circular economy package](#)) and of Conclusions by the Environment Council ([Conclusions on Circular Economy of 25 June 2018](#), [Conclusions on a Sustainable Chemicals Policy Strategy of 26 June 2019](#)).

#### Problem the initiative aims to tackle

Chemicals play a fundamental role in modern societies. They have contributed to our current well-being, longer life expectancy and comfort and are crucial for many manufacturing industries - such as pharmaceuticals, medical equipment or automotive - as well as for agriculture and services. Moreover, they can play an important role to develop and deploy technologies necessary to achieve a circular and climate-neutral economy.

However, chemical pollution causes direct harm to health and the environment, leading to major economic, societal and environmental costs, which often materialise only after considerable time. In 2018, chemicals with properties hazardous for human health still represented 74% of the total chemical production in Europe, a percentage overall unchanged since 2004 ([Estat](#)). A growing number of hazardous chemicals are found in human blood and body tissues as well as in ecosystems, and some 3.5 million sites around Europe are contaminated by hazardous substances, including very persistent substances, with wide-ranging economic and social consequences ([Commission study, 2017](#)). 84% of Europeans are worried about the impact of chemicals present in everyday products on their health, and 90% are worried about the impact of chemicals on the environment ([Eurobarometer 2017](#)). Also in light of the current COVID-19 crisis, protecting both human and planetary health with the use of safe chemicals becomes increasingly important to promote societal resilience

from interconnected threats, and to build economies that create wellbeing and improve quality of life.

Chemical production is expected to double globally by 2030 ([Global Chemicals Outlook II, 2019](#)), and that increase needs to be managed through adequate policy measures to prevent exacerbating harm to humans and the environment. Most production – in particular of basic chemicals - is happening outside the EU. This increases the EU's dependency on imported chemicals, in particular on critical products such as pharmaceuticals or disinfectants, as highlighted by the recent events linked to COVID-19 pandemic. Increasing production of chemicals in Europe could boost economic growth and job creation as part of the post COVID-19 recovery and promote EU's strategic autonomy for those chemicals which are essential to society. To achieve a twin green and digital transition, Europe needs an innovative, responsible and sustainable chemicals industry and needs to strengthen its capacity to produce chemicals in a sustainable and competitive way. Global governance on the sound management of chemicals is also extremely fragmented, and health and environmental standards for chemical production and use greatly vary across countries leading to different levels of protection for humans and the environment.

A comprehensive regulatory framework for chemicals in the EU is already in place. It has developed over the past 50 years through different streams and needs, and includes over 40 pieces of legislation. It has successfully reduced risks to humans and the environment and has strengthened the EU internal market by ensuring the free movement of chemicals across the EU. Various actors are involved to assess and regulate chemical substances and their presence in products, as well as to protect workers, consumers and the environment from hazardous chemicals, on the basis of a comprehensive knowledge base on the properties and risks posed by chemicals. However, there are a number of gaps, overlaps and inconsistencies, along with new scientific evidence on the risks posed by chemicals to humans and the environment, which require policy action. The regulatory framework on chemicals needs to be strengthened to further increase the level of protection of human health and environment - in particular from exposure to endocrine disruptors, combinations of chemicals, hazardous chemicals in products including in imports, and very persistent chemicals - and to be able to rapidly react to emerging chemical risks and new scientific evidence. Other key challenges relate to the need to address the complexity, consistency and pace of procedures for assessing and managing chemicals and to provide greater transparency and better predictability for long-term investments in Europe. Insufficient enforcement and poor compliance are also major bottlenecks, preventing existing legislation from attaining its full potential. Moreover, production of safer chemicals, products and materials in Europe is not sufficiently incentivised, and frontrunners developing and using safer and more sustainable chemicals, modernising existing or developing alternative technologies and business models are struggling to be competitive vis-a-vis incumbents.

#### **Basis for EU intervention (legal basis and subsidiarity check)**

The initiative is based on Art. 191 TFEU and on Art. 3(3) TEU by which the EU environment policy shall aim at ensuring a high level of protection of the environment and of human health based on the precautionary principle and on the principles that preventive action should be taken, that environmental damage should as a priority be rectified at source and that the polluter should pay. The Strategy is also based on Art. 26 and 27 TFEU by which the EU shall ensure the functioning of the internal market. The EU chemicals policy aims at both ensuring a high level of protection and the efficient functioning of a single market for chemicals, while enhancing competitiveness and innovation. Chemical substances are already regulated by EU legislation in light of these EU-wide objectives.

The Strategy is also based on Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 20 November 2013 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 'Living well, with the limits of our planet', which calls for a Union strategy for a non-toxic environment that is conducive to innovation and the development of sustainable substitutes.

#### **B. What does the initiative aim to achieve and how**

The Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability will both **help to protect citizens and the environment better against hazardous chemicals and encourage innovation** for the development of safe and sustainable alternatives. It will set a vision and a comprehensive framework for action where all parties - including industry - should work together to combine better health and environmental protection and increased global competitiveness.

This can be achieved by **simplifying and strengthening the legal framework**. The Commission will review how to use better the EU's agencies and scientific bodies to move towards a process of **'one substance – one assessment'** and to provide **greater transparency** when prioritising action to deal with chemicals. In parallel, the regulatory framework will need to rapidly reflect scientific evidence on the risk posed by **endocrine disruptors, hazardous chemicals in products** including imports, **combination effects** of different chemicals and **very persistent chemicals**.

The Strategy will also support **EU's strategic autonomy** in the production of essential chemicals across key sectors and promote research and development for the **sustainable transformation of the chemical industry**

## **and the creation of green and sustainable manufacturing capacity in Europe.**

This Strategy is delivered within the framework of the European Green Deal, as a first step to move towards a zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment, in synergy with the Zero Pollution Action Plan (planned in 2021). The zero pollution ambition complements initiatives foreseen under the European Green Deal to protect biodiversity and to move towards a climate-neutral and circular economy. The Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability will also support other priorities of the European Commission, in particular the digital transition, strengthening EU's competitiveness as well as its industrial and strategic autonomy, fighting cancer, ensuring Europe's manufacturing and supply of safe and affordable medicines, developing markets for innovative companies, exploiting digitalisation for societal solutions, ensuring strict enforcement of EU's legislation and promoting the highest standards of environmental and health protection globally to also ensure safety and sustainability of chemicals and products imported into the EU.

## **C. Better regulation**

### **Consultation of citizens and stakeholders**

Several consultations targeting stakeholders, experts and the public at large have already taken place and provided extensive input on challenges to address and on the way forward for the EU chemicals policy to deliver its full potential. Recent consultations on policy areas relevant to the Chemicals Strategy took place notably for:

- The fitness check of all chemicals legislation (excluding REACH)
- The second REACH Review (REACH REFIT Evaluation)
- Options to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation

A high-level conference on the 'EU Chemicals Policy 2030' took place in June 2019 where over 300 stakeholders were consulted on their vision, objectives and recommended actions for the future of the EU chemicals policy, building on the results of the policy evaluations.

No additional consultation is therefore needed. Stakeholders are invited to submit feedback to this roadmap through the 'Have Your Say' website.

### **Evidence base and data collection**

The Strategy will build on an extensive evidence base gathered during recent policy evaluations and chemicals related initiatives, in particular the second REACH Review (REACH REFIT Evaluation), the findings of the fitness check of the most relevant chemicals legislation (excluding REACH) and identified challenges, gaps and weaknesses, the Communication on options to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation and the ongoing Fitness Check on endocrine disruptors. It will also build on past and ongoing evaluations of related legislation – in particular in the areas of environment, products, workers' protection and food – as well as on the 'Study for the strategy for a non-toxic environment of the 7th Environment Action Programme' carried out on behalf of the Commission.

No impact assessment is needed for the Strategy. Actions developed under the strategy with expected significant impacts will be subject to an impact assessment, in line with the Commission Better Regulation guidelines.