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Θέμα: Socialists defend chemical safety deal

NEWS FROM THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SOCIALIST GROUP

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SOCIALISTS DEFEND CHEMICAL SAFETY DEAL

Socialist Euro MP Guido Sacconi today welcomed the many improvements likely to be adopted by the European Parliament on REACH. He stressed that a wide political agreement should be achieved on several aspects related to the public information on chemicals, the role of the future European Agency in charge of implementing the system for chemical safety, the workability of the system for SMEs and reduction of animal testing.

Mr Sacconi insisted that the most dangerous chemicals should be authorised only under strict conditions. Authorisations should be time-limited in order to encourage innovation and the development of safer alternatives.

However Socialist Euro MPs warned of a threat from hardliners and a misinformation campaign to an EU plan for ensuring the safety of chemicals.

On the eve of a crucial vote in the European Parliament, Mr Sacconi, circulated a note rebutting eight false claims about a political deal he brokered on the proposed REACH Regulation. The agreement between Socialists, EPP and Liberal groups aims to improve the proposed regulation in three key areas:

- ENSURING that it adds value to the protection of health, the environment and workers' health and safety;
- UPHOLDING the need for companies to bear the burden of proof by carrying out research on chemicals they produce or import; and
- GUARANTEEING that the competitiveness of European firms will not be threatened by bureaucratic procedures for registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals.

Said Mr Sacconi: "Unbelievable pressure is being brought to bear on MEPs by big businesses. This pressure cannot be allowed to result in the adoption of a totally inefficient REACH." He insisted that the compromise he negotiated will "secure the overall balance of the system" and that it "should command the advantage of a strong cross-party parliamentary majority":

But warning that "a great deal of misinformation is circulating about this compromise", he set out eight points of rebuttal:

- The compromise maintains the essential principle of reversal of the burden of proof.
- The compromise will NOT dramatically reduce the number of substances concerned;
- It DOES strengthen the original proposal for safety assessment of chemicals from one to ten tonnes;
- Exemptions will NOT weaken the system because industry will have to prove it is taking all necessary steps for adequate control and for protection of its workers;
- Cruel and unnecessary animal testing will NOT inevitably result because alternatives may be used;
- Small and medium sized businesses will have an easier life, NOT a more complicated one, under the compromise;
- The compromise does NOT make publicly available information confidential;
- REACH should encourage research and development "essential to the development of alternatives to dangerous substances"; and

Said Mr Sacconi: "Hard-line attacks are unjust. Claiming to rescue REACH by refusing the compromise in fact means sounding the death knell for the whole project."

He warned: "An incoherent and chaotic vote would only benefit those who never wanted REACH to success and this compromise is the only way to avoid such a vote."

The REACH regulation will apply to about 30,000 chemicals, requiring registration under specific criteria of those produces or imported above one ton per year, evaluation and authorisation of the most dangerous ones.

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