

# How to eliminate chemicals from consumer products?

BEUC - The European Consumers' Organisation

Sylvia Maurer

ANEC/ BEUC/ ASI-CC

« How to eliminate hazardous chemicals from consumer articles? »

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## In the area of safety we aim to...

- ✓ Improve the general safety of products sold on the EU market as well as the safety of specific consumer products, such as toys, cosmetic products and products for children.
- ✓ Raise awareness with decision makers of the risks posed by chemical substances on health and the environment.
- ✓ Minimise the exposure of consumers and the environment to dangerous chemicals in particular from consumer products.
- ✓ Adequately and urgently address the potential risks posed by nanotechnologies.



# What is the situation for consumers? I

- ✓ Consumers come in contact with a chemical cocktail everyday: parabens in cosmetics, phthalates and bisphenol A in plastics, brominated flame retardants in TVs, nonylphenol and PAH in toys.
- ✓ Consumers may come in contact with hazardous substances and mixtures e.g. when using paints and glues.
- ✓ Many consumers are unaware of chemicals in the products they use as they assume that the products on the market are safe.



# What is the situation for consumers? II



PAH



BPA



Chromium VI



Formaldehyde



Azodyes



Phthalates



Residues  
in food

Indoor and outdoor  
air pollution



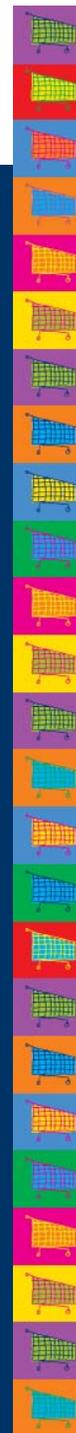
# What is the situation for consumers? III

- ✓ In 2010, 2.244 dangerous products have been notified (RAPEX) of which 19% had a chemical risk.
- ✓ Toys tested by Stiftung Warentest (Germany): 42 out of 50 tested toys for children under three contained hazardous chemicals: nonylphenol, phthalates, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH), formaldehyd, zinc organic compounds.



# The consumer's right to know I

- ✓ Insufficient transparency about chemicals in products.
- ✓ REACH introduces the consumer's « right to know », i.e. to be informed about chemicals which are on the list of Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC) above 0,1% w/w.
- ✓ The aim of the legislator was to enable consumers to make use of their demand power for more sustainable products and thereby to encourage manufacturers and retailers to stop selling products which contain chemicals of concern.



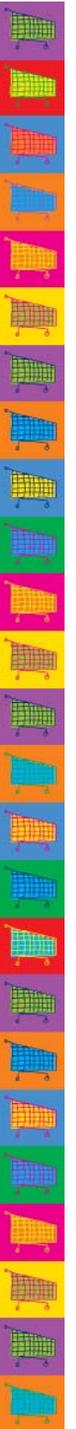
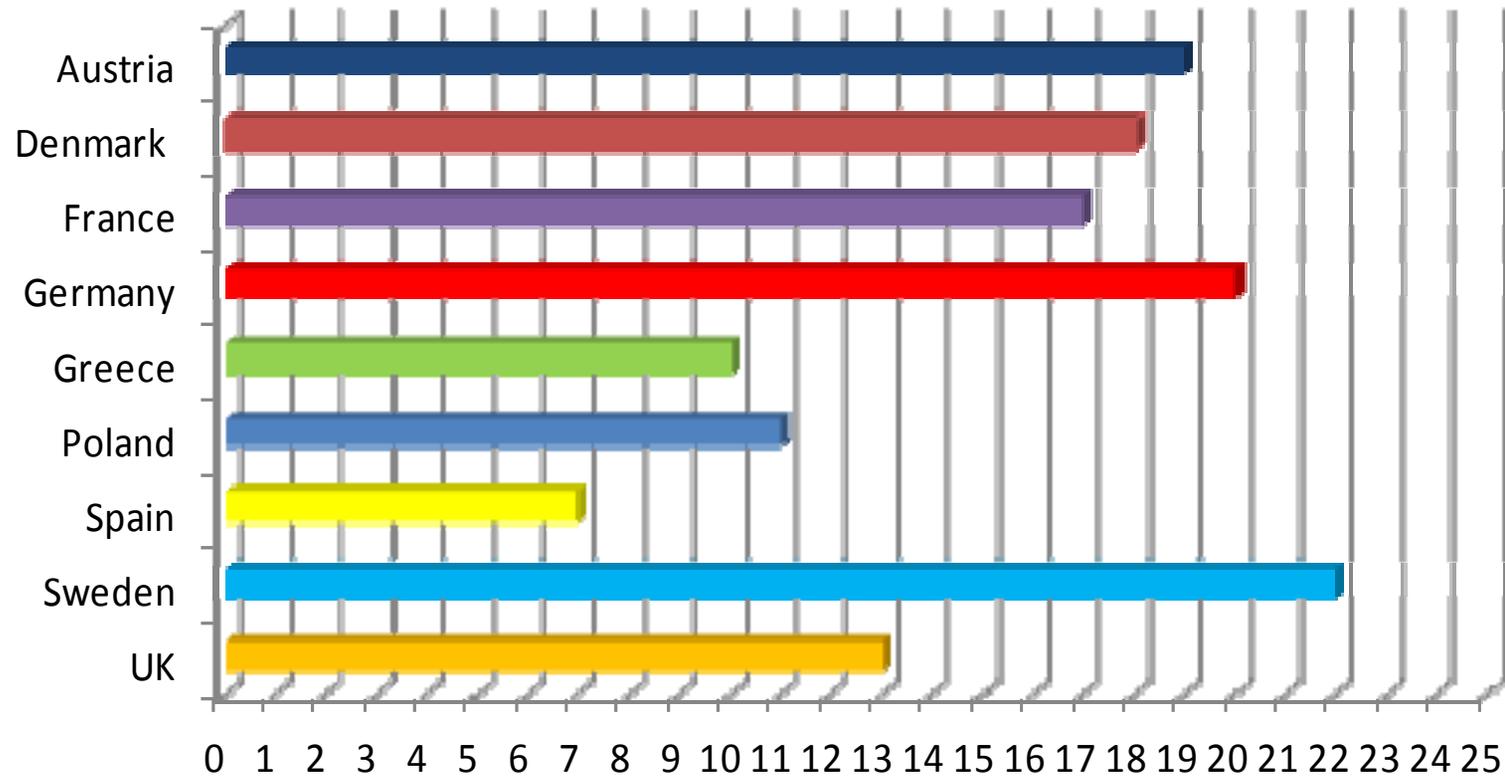
# The consumer's right to know II

- ✓ BEUC and its members sent out 25 consumer letters in Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Spain, Sweden, Poland and UK respectively asking for information on SVHC in children's and adult products such as:
  - Toothbrushes;
  - Yoga mats;
  - Shoes and textiles;
  - Carpets;
  - Shower curtains;
  - Do-it-yourself products;
  - Soft toy books.



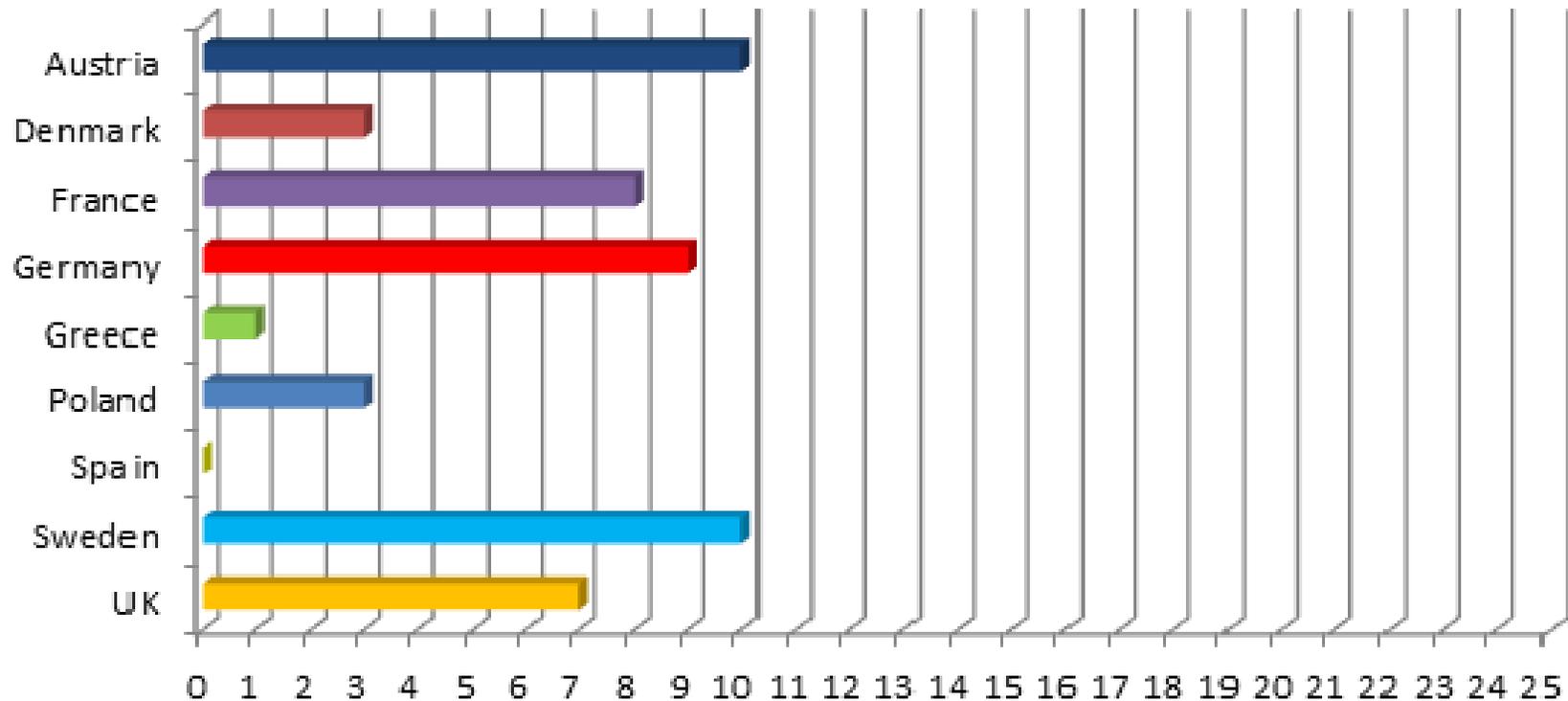
# The consumer's right to know III

## Letters received within 45 days



# The consumer's right to know IV

## Responses fulfilling the legal requirements of article 33.2 REACH



# The consumer's right to know V

- ✓ Issues of internal and external responsibility need to be addressed as consumers should receive a coordinated answer in the same language as they requested the information.
- ✓ The manufacturer/ retailer who answers a consumer request should provide information which is adapted to the needs of an average consumer, i.e. give a specific reply using non-technical language.



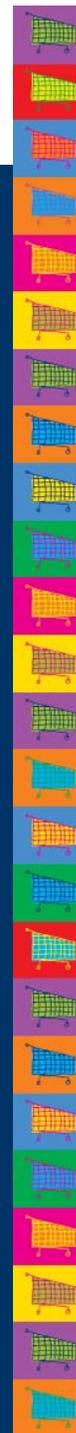
# How to remove hazardous chemicals from consumer products?

- ✓ As the right to know does not work and consumers should only have a choice between inherently safe products, a legislative framework is needed which:
  - Provides for substitution of chemicals of concern with safer alternatives;
  - Empowers consumers through transparency;
  - Addresses the cocktail effect and low-dose effects through revised risk assessment and risk management methods.



# A cross sectoral approach is needed

- ✓ As we are dealing with the same problems in different product groups, a coherent approach is needed to all consumer products, no matter if they fall into the scope of sector specific legislation or the General Product Safety Directive.
- ✓ Such an approach must cover all chemicals which have one or several of the following properties:
  - CMRs, toxic, persistent, bioaccumulative, very persistent, very bioaccumulative, endocrine disrupting or substances of similar concern.
- ✓ There must be the possibility to ban and to regulate substances of concern across sectors.



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# The European Consumers' Organisation

## Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs

Rue d'Arlon, 80 - 1040 Bruxelles

Tel: +32 (0)2 743 15 90

Fax: +32 (0)2 740 28 02

Email: [safety@beuc.eu](mailto:safety@beuc.eu)

[www.beuc.eu](http://www.beuc.eu)

Sylvia Maurer

Senior Policy Officer for Safety and Environment



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