

ANEC President's introduction notes

Hazardous chemicals in products

The need for enhanced regulations

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European Economic and Social Committee – EESC, Brussels

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As ANEC President, it is a pleasure to welcome you all on behalf of ANEC - the European Consumer Voice in Standardization, and ASI CC - the Austrian Standards Institute Consumer Council. I welcome you to this landmark conference on chemicals that may come into contact with consumers, especially from consumer products.

Thank you all for coming here today. I am sure we are all looking forward to the interesting presentations and debate. However, let me take a few moments to explain who we are and what leads us here today.

As I said, ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation. This means we represent the European consumer interest in the creation of technical standards, especially those developed to support the implementation of European laws and public policies. ANEC represents European consumer associations from 33 European Union and EFTA countries¹ as well as Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.

ANEC has for long been actively involved in the standardisation and policy work related to hazardous chemical substances in consumer products; an area of increasing concern because of the growing evidence of risks posed to the health of consumers and to the environment. We advocate a horizontal regulatory approach to address chemicals in products in a systematic way at the European level. The ANEC position in this area has been developed mainly based on the results of the studies "*Chemical requirements for consumer products*", commissioned by the ANEC Environment WG Chaired by Dr Franz Fiala, of the Consumer Council of the Austrian Standards Institute (ASI CC).

I am particularly delighted to be taking part in this conference as I am, by designation, a "European Chemist" and have a background in negotiating Harmonisation Directives on materials and articles in contact with food, including ceramic products and for cosmetic products. This on behalf of the United

¹ Iceland, Norway and Switzerland

Kingdom Government. In fact Dr Fiala and I go back a long way, many years ago working together on the release of phthalate plasticisers from PVC, including licking and sucking experiments – he reminds me, and these were the first ones worldwide.

I hereby congratulate Franz for his great efforts and investment of resources in the realisation of today's event. Not only because ASI Consumer Council's work and experience on *Chemical requirements for consumer products* inspires the programme of today's conference, but also because it is thanks to him we have the honour of our event being supported and held in co-operation with seven national authorities from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden:

- Austrian Ministry of Health (BMG)
- Austrian Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMASK)
- Belgium Public Service (FPS) Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment
- Danish Environmental Protection Agency (Danish EPA)
- Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment
- German Federal Environment Agency (UBA)
- Swedish Chemicals Agency (KEMI)

In this same room in October 2011 ANEC and ASI Consumer Council organised jointly with our sister consumer organisation BEUC a conference on "*How to eliminate hazardous chemicals from consumer articles?*".

The aim of the previous event was to discuss and warn about the flaws in existing European legislation (e.g. the Toy Safety Directive) and its inability to ensure a high level of protection to consumers.

In 2011 we identified some options for improvement.

However, a comprehensive and systematic approach to address chemicals in products is still missing and, with today's follow-up conference, we aim at identifying concrete options for regulatory action.

Hence, this brings me to the purpose of today's conference.

Product safety is a great concern to consumers, and we feel sure that it is of great concern to all of you as well.

The focus of the valuable speakers who join us today is on those fields where national regulations (e.g. on materials in contact with water or food, or on material emissions to indoor air) or other relevant rules (e.g. Council of Europe) are already available or in preparation and could be easily transformed into European legislation.

We consider it is now urgent to address the gaps in existing product legislation and adopt a coherent horizontal approach to chemicals in products in order to ensure the high level protection that consumers deserve.

I am sure all of you will have the chance to realise and exploit the opportunity to learn and be inspired by today's interventions. We have here a tremendous breadth of experience and expertise in a wide variety of fields.

So let us get started with today's debates, in order to make this conference productive and relevant with the aim for the European Union to become a society where health and wellbeing are a given.

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