



Contact: Chiara Giovannini: +32 (0)2 743 24 70
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ANEC Statement

The European Commission needs to define what nanomaterials are in order to offer consumers effective protection

ANEC welcomes the "Safety for Success Dialogue" high-level international conference, hosted by the European Commission in Brussels today, as a means of taking stock of the fast-advancing science needed for appropriate and effective policies. However, we believe that the starting point of any sound regulatory approach is agreement on a definition of what exactly nanomaterials and nanotechnologies are.

ANEC calls on the Commission to adopt - without further delay - the definition of nanomaterials contained in the draft Recommendation sent to public consultation at the end of last year. We support the proposed science-based approach according to which the size distribution of a material should be presented as size distribution based on the number concentration (i.e. the particle number), and not on the mass concentration of a nanomaterial product. This is because a small mass concentration may contain the largest number fraction. Furthermore, we suggest that the definition not be restricted to the size range of 1-100 nm but be broadened to include, for example, nanomaterials used in medical applications, currently in the size range of 1000 nm.

Nanotechnologies use materials on incredibly small scale. One nanometre is one millionth of a millimetre. Materials on this scale present different properties compared with 'bigger' particles (e.g. greater reactivity and mobility in the body) and are increasingly being used to create new products. Products claiming to contain nanomaterials are already widely available on the European market and it is imperative to ensure that they are safe for consumers to buy¹.

The lack of an agreed definition for regulatory purposes creates legal uncertainties, and hinders the development of adequate safety test and measurement methods. Moreover, it has the possibility to delay the development of truly innovative products for consumers.

¹ <http://www.anec.eu/attachments/ANEC-PT-2010-Nano-017.xls>