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Civil society demands action, not words, on nanotechnology

NGOs, consumer groups and research organisations have expressed disappointment with the European Commission’s continuing failure to propose adequate measures for the collection and publication of information about nanomaterials on the EU market after a Commission meeting with stakeholders in Brussels on Monday.

After an impact assessment process that lasted several years, and even before its finalisation and approval by the Regulatory Scrutiny Board, the Commission has decided against an EU nanomaterial registry. Instead, it has opted to task the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) to develop a nanomaterial observatory [1]. Yesterday’s meeting was supposed to provide more details about this new mechanism, but in reality it provided little hope that the observatory will be able to address the pressing information gaps about nanomaterials on the market.

Dolores Romano, EEB Senior Policy Officer Chemicals, said:

“A register is key to developing and enforcing regulations governing nanomaterials to protect the environment and the health of workers and citizens. A voluntary information platform can never replace a compulsory register. This would help generate new information and enable nanomaterials to be traceable, thereby allowing the safe use of them and giving citizens an informed choice”. [2]

David Azoulay, Senior Attorney for the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), commented:

“From the failure to adopt the REACH framework to ensure the effective collection of data about nanomaterials to the refusal to publish the catalogue of nanomaterials mandated by the EU Cosmetics Regulation, the Commission has consistently failed in its duty to collect and

make available information about nanomaterials to the public and regulators. Based on what we heard during yesterday's workshop, the future nanomaterials observatory portends to be yet another failed (and expensive) Commission nanomaterials initiative that will not change this fact."

Sylvia Maurer, Head of Sustainability and Safety at the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), added:

"The Commission sadly refuses to impose any costs on industry for the collection and provision of information about nanomaterials. Instead, it has chosen to shift financial costs and health and environmental risks on to society and consumers."

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Notes for editors:

[1] The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) will develop the observatory as part of its 2015-18 nanomaterials workplan.

[2] A [study](#) by the independent research institute Oeko Institut for the German Federal Environment Agency concluded that an EU-wide register is a both reasonable and feasible tool for political decision-makers – as well as a good basis for communicating the benefits and risks of nanomaterials to the consumers.