

ECHA/PR/12/01

Communication on the safe use of chemicals

By the date set in the Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) Regulation, the European Chemicals Agency submitted to the European Commission its study on communication of information on the safe use of chemicals to the general public.

Helsinki, 23 January 2012 - The study provides insights on how to further improve hazard communication to EU citizens. It highlights the following key points:

- Awareness amongst the general public of the new international hazard labels which appear on the packaging of chemical substances is mostly low but consumers rarely purchase these chemicals, the labels are relatively new and awareness will surely grow. However, work is needed at national, industry and EU level both to raise awareness and, crucially, understanding of what the labels mean.
- The perception of hazardousness varies between countries as well as between specific sub-groups of the general public. Awareness-raising activities therefore need to address national hazard perception patterns as well as the differing approaches to hazards exhibited by specific audiences such as families, single households, workers, school children, etc.
- Most people make their choices on the safe use and storage of household chemical products on the basis of their acquaintance with the product as well as other emotional drivers which rely more on experience than on information found on the package. Awareness-raising activities therefore also need to take into account these emotional and experience-based drivers.
- A further analysis of the impact of the hazard labels on EU citizens' behaviour and understanding could be useful after 2015 – the date by which new labels must have replaced the old ones on all chemical mixtures like paint and glues for example.

Additional information on product packaging

- Industry should be encouraged to bring product appearance and packaging more in line with the hazard information on labels, making use of behavioural drivers to amplify the label's message, thereby promoting the appropriate safety behaviour in consumers.
- Changes to the CLP labels themselves are not recommended as it is more beneficial to allow the public to get used to the new system – now in use globally – steadily improving their overall understanding of the hazards posed by chemicals and encouraging a safer use of

household chemicals in particular.

According to Article 34 of the CLP Regulation, the European Commission will, on the basis of the study, submit a report to the European Parliament and the European Council in order to, if justified, present a legislative proposal to amend the Regulation.

Further information

Study on Communication on the safe use of chemicals to the General Public, submitted to the European Commission on 20 January 2012:

http://www.echa.europa.eu/documents/10162/17203/clp_study_en.pdf

Risk Communication Network (RCN):

<http://echa.europa.eu/en/web/guest/about-us/partners-and-networks/risk-communication-network>

Article 34 of the CLP Regulation:

<http://echa.europa.eu/web/guest/regulations/clp/legislation>

