



Council of the  
European Union

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**NOTE**

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| From:    | General Secretariat of the Council                                                          |
| To:      | Delegations                                                                                 |
| Subject: | The need for a coordinated action against PFAS<br>- Information from the Belgian delegation |

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Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Belgian delegation on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 6 October 2021.

**The need for a coordinated action against PFAS****- Information from the Belgian delegation -**

As recognised in the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability<sup>1</sup>, pollution from PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) can cause severe and, in most cases, long-lasting environmental damage and can have potentially adverse health impacts on our citizens. Many Member States, including Belgium, have to deal with this type of pollution. As highlighted in the Chemicals Strategy, this issue requires special attention and specific measures as specified, in particular, in the document accompanying the Strategy<sup>2</sup>.

In addition to this strategy, it seems essential to adopt strong policies as soon as possible to avoid the above environmental damage and adverse health impacts, but also to support Member States in taking protective, remedial and clean-up measures.

First of all, we insist on the importance of adopting proactive measures at both international and European level. Thus, at international level, we call on the Commission to raise the level of ambition by supporting the listing of Perfluorohexanesulfonic acid (PFHxS) and to list other PFAS in the Stockholm Convention and to further engage in the SAICM Emerging Policy Issues and Other Issues of Concern, in particular relating to Perfluorinated Chemicals (PFCs). At European level, we urge the Commission to take swift and ambitious action and to make progress on the much-awaited REACH restriction proposal, soon to be tabled by some of our colleagues. We also believe that steps should be taken to ensure the traceability of PFAS and to develop methods to ensure compliance checks and enforcement for those PFAS the use of which would still be essential and which cannot currently be substituted by safe and sustainable alternatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Doc. 11976/20 - COM(2020) 667 final.

<sup>2</sup> Doc. 11976/20 ADD 5 - SWD(2020) 249 final.

In addition to the above measures, we stress the importance of having stringent BREFs for industrial sectors using PFAS; to exchange information and best practices regarding environmental permits; to harmonise emission limits linked to remaining essential uses as much as possible; to set harmonised additional environmental quality standards for soils, surface water, ground water and drinking water; to ensure coherence with other policies (e.g. food policy); to develop an ambitious framework regarding soil protection including polluted soils and excavated land uses. This should set out the approach, applicable standards and the framework for assessment, but also guidelines to enable prioritisation in relation to the relevant approaches.

Furthermore, we call on the Commission to ensure a long term and coordinated European Human Biomonitoring programme.

Finally, in a broader sense, we invite national, European and international authorities, companies, investors and researchers to provide full support for the transition towards safe and sustainable -by-design approach to chemicals. It is up to us to invest massively and collectively both in financial and political terms in this long-term and more sustainable production model.

Norway also noted the importance of the actions outlined in the note and indicated its willingness to continued cooperation with the EU in combating PFAS pollution.