



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
ENVIRONMENT

The Director-General

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Ms Anne-Sofie Bäckar
Executive Director
ChemSec
Första Långgatan 18
SE-413 28 Göteborg
Sweden

Dear Ms Bäckar,

I would like to thank you for your letter of 12 December 2019 concerning the future of the EU chemicals policy and the need to protect citizens and the environment from hazardous chemicals. President von der Leyen asked me to reply to you on her behalf.

European citizens have a strong interest in the environmental factors affecting their health and expect Europe to act forcefully in this area. Chemicals are cross-cutting and represent a specific challenge. That is why the Commission has committed in the European Green Deal adopted on 10 December 2019 to come forward with a Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability to ensure a Toxic-Free Environment.

The policy evaluations recently concluded by the European Commission in the area of chemicals provide a very complete picture of the achievements and gaps of the EU chemicals policy. They show that in the EU we have probably the most advanced and protective chemicals legislation in the world, which is the result of over 40 years of joint efforts and commitments to protect health and environment from chemical risks.

However, we are well aware of the gaps and challenges that risk undermining our policy objectives, some of which have also been described in your letter. Those include inter alia issues in the implementation and enforcement of chemical legislation, burdens and pace of procedures, transparency of safety information to citizens, consistency and effectiveness of risk assessment and management processes, the capacity to deal with emerging chemical risks and challenges in global competitiveness and sustainability.

The new chemicals strategy for sustainability will aim at addressing those challenges and we will work with all stakeholders and Member States to combine a stronger health and environmental

protection with global competitiveness and leadership in sustainable chemicals management. We see a need to simplify and strengthen the legal framework, in particular to rapidly reflect scientific evidence on the risk posed by endocrine disruptors, hazardous chemicals in products including imports, combination effects of different chemicals and very persistent chemicals. We need to review how to use better the EU's agencies and scientific bodies to move towards a process of 'one substance – one assessment' and to provide greater transparency when prioritising action to deal with chemicals. Finally, we need to encourage innovation for the development of safe and sustainable alternatives, to catalyse the shift towards sustainable chemistry for the benefit of citizens, the environment and EU industry.

The chemicals strategy will also be instrumental to deliver on other important European Green Deal objectives, in particular the shift towards a circular and climate neutral economy, biodiversity protection, and the sustainability and competitiveness of EU industry, in particular SMEs. It will also aim at ensuring a stronger and more harmonised implementation and enforcement of the EU chemicals legislation across Europe, including for imported goods and online sales. The strategy will also be developed in line with the overarching Sustainable Development Goals, and will strengthen the EU's commitment to the sound management of chemicals globally.

The Roadmap for the chemicals strategy will be published in the coming weeks, and stakeholders will be invited to give their input. I am looking forward to receiving your contribution and to strengthening the collaboration with you on those crucial issues in the coming months.

Yours sincerely,

(e-signed)

Daniel Calleja