

Notes Meeting Kristin Schreiber with Economy Minister [REDACTED] of North-Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) 14.03.2023 – by videoconference

Participants:

NRW :

[REDACTED] Wirtschaftsministerin Nordrhein-Westfalen
[REDACTED] Covestro und [REDACTED] VCI-
Ausschusses Klima, Energie und Rohstoffe),
[REDACTED] ([REDACTED] Henkel),
[REDACTED] ([REDACTED] Jowat SE),
[REDACTED] ([REDACTED] VCI NRW) sowie
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Bayer-Division Crop Science).
[REDACTED] ([REDACTED] Currenta GmbH & Co. OHG)
[REDACTED] NRW Büro Brüssel

European Commission:

Kristin Schreiber (GROW F)
[REDACTED] (GROW F1)
[REDACTED] (GROW F1)

Introduction:

Minister [REDACTED] underlined the general approach to the REACH revision and the importance of a sound proposal, which promotes substitution of the most hazardous chemicals where possible and where alternatives are available but called for reasonable and practical solutions where chemicals are still needed such as enzymes in detergents.

NRW participants introduced the concern that the broad PFAS restriction (10000 single substances) risked to affect a very wide range of activities, many of which are important for societal goals such as the production of hydrogen and chlorine chemistry. In their view it is also important to differentiate between different types of PFAS, and to take a different approach on less harmful substance groups such as fluoropolymers. They recognised the possible role of exemptions for essential uses but asked about who will decide on essentiality. This broad approach on grouping on PFAS was compared to the potential impacts of extending GRA.

There were concerns whether GRA would simplify issues and whether extending the approach to professional uses would not rather create additional burden and risk banning needed substances even where risks could be controlled. They were also worried that concerns of SMEs would not be properly taken into account, as the focus in big legislative processes would be on matters of interest for the larger companies.

Ms Schreiber underlined the Commission's ambition to make sure that not only the health and environmental ambition is reflected in the revision proposal but that we achieve a real simplification compared to the current REACH regulation, in particular in areas such as authorisation where current approaches are not workable. This simplification could help SMEs. Our approaches should also encourage innovation and substitution in Europe and not drive industry out of the EU. This can also give important business opportunities, including for SMEs.

Concerning GRA, the Commission will aim to give planning security to industry through work plans, where the focus will be on confirmed hazards in uses where exposure is high (in particular consumer uses). For professional uses, priority will be given to uses with similar exposure patterns as consumer uses (e.g. general cleaning services) but there is no intention to include uses where staff has training or means to control exposure.

All sides agreed on the usefulness of the exchange and that this should be repeated in a few months time.