



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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COMPET 620**

NOTE

from: General Secretariat
to: Delegations

Subject: Need for coherent Union legislation on hazardous substances in textiles
- Information from the Swedish delegation

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Swedish delegation on the above mentioned subject, which will be dealt with under "other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 25 October 2012.

Need for coherent Union legislation on hazardous substances in textiles

Information from the Swedish delegation

The Swedish government would like to use this opportunity to focus on the need for coherent Union legislation on hazardous substances in textiles.

Large amounts of chemicals are used in the manufacture of textiles and many of them may remain in the finished textile product. According to some estimates, as much as 4 kg of chemicals are used to produce 1 kg of t-shirts.¹ Not all chemicals used in the manufacture and processing of textiles are hazardous for the environment and health, but there are many examples of substances with hazardous properties. These may range from substances that are carcinogenic, mutagenic, reproductive or endocrine disruptors, to substances that can cause allergic reactions by skin contact or inhalation, to environmentally hazardous substances. Certain groups of the population are particularly vulnerable, including children and people whose work involves handling large quantities of textile goods.

Although there is EU legislation applicable to hazardous substances in textiles, we are concerned at the lack of coherent legislation at EU level regulating the impact of textile chemicals on health and the environment. The current voluntary environmental labelling schemes for textiles and the restrictions individual companies impose on chemicals that may or may not be used in their textile products are commendable, but this cannot replace the need for common rules. Fragmentation of requirements concerning hazardous substances in textiles in the EU market, as well as a variety of similar specifications, pose difficulties for stakeholders. Common rules would also simplify the communication of requirements to textile manufacturers outside the EU, for example in Asia, and thus benefit free trade.

¹ [Swerea report 09/52.](#)

The development of coherent legislation on requirements concerning chemicals in textiles should therefore be considered at European Union level, and, as a second step, also at international level. The Swedish government will send a letter to the European Commission urging the Commission to take action in this respect.
