

## A proactive sustainable development policy: a REACH label

A REACH label could provide European chemical industry companies with a strategic opportunity as a means of differentiating and leveraging products on the world market. The REACH label would stand for the efforts companies were making to be transparent and improve the quality of their products. REACH has the qualities necessary – independence, expertise and transparency – to give the certification process public credibility. The future central chemicals agency could be the European one-stop shop for label certification and awarding.

But a series of constraints need to be overcome for a REACH label to be effective:

- **The scope of the label:** there are two possible scenarios. The REACH label applies only to chemical substances (the information is intended for user companies). This scenario flouts the spirit of REACH, which is based on the need to inform the public about the health and environmental risks of substances contained in consumer products (floor coverings, paint, detergents, etc.). The REACH label applies to chemical substances and the finished products that contain them. This goes beyond the central agency's powers, since it would mean certifying many categories of products in sectors downstream from the chemical industry. It would mean setting up several certification bodies which might, for example, be approved by the central agency.
- **The meaning of the label:** REACH labelling could operate at several levels: REACH 1 for registered substances, REACH 2 for authorized substances and, possibly, REACH 3 for particularly innovative substitutes.
- **Consistency between the REACH label and the Ecolabel set up in 1992:** the Ecolabel goes beyond the REACH system as currently planned and takes account of the entire product life cycle. Considerations of effectiveness and cost to companies clearly argue in favour of looking at ways of bringing the two labels together.
- **Promoting a REACH label worldwide:** the REACH label will deliver a competitive advantage in quality on the world market only if the European benchmark becomes the accepted standard. This is not an unrealistic aim, given the influence of the European chemical industry on the world market. Promoting REACH certification would therefore have to be largely a proactive policy by the industry, supported by all stakeholders in the system (government, NGOs, trade unions). This should then create leverage to bring the rest of the world chemical industry into line with European standards.

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The full text can be consulted on our website:  
[www.etui-rehs.org/hesa](http://www.etui-rehs.org/hesa) > Main topics > Chemicals