

10 September 2008

Precautionary Principle versus Scientific Evidence

10 September 2008, Launch of the REACHforLIFE Campaign at the Bibliotheque Solvay

Facing the revision of the Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS), a new campaign was launched on 10 September to tackle alleged irregularities in EU-related decision-making processes. REACHforLIFE, initiated by chemical producers Albemarle, Chemtura and ICL-IP, claims that scientific evidence is being ignored by EU decision-makers when banning, for instance, widely used flame retardants such as 'deca-BDE'.

The start of the campaign was marked by a lively debate between Prof. Dr. Martin van den Berg (University of Utrecht), Chris White (EU Reporter), Martin Margodt (European Burn Casualties Association), Axel Singhofen (Greens/EFA), Dr. Juergen Troitzsch and Willem Hofland (REACHforLIFE Spokesman).

"The aim of the REACHforLIFE campaign is to ensure that decision-makers abide by the rules they themselves have put in place," Hofland contains. Apparently, there is no satisfactory scientific proof that 'deca-BDE' does actually harm the human organism, and yet it has been banned as sort of a precautionary measure.

It is this grey area between scientific proof and political decision-making that the campaign is aiming at, demanding fair treatment in a decision-making process in which nuances may

cause fundamental changes to a large industry. The panellists' discussion was later marked by some controversy, when Greens/EFA advisor Axel Singhofen made a clear statement in favour of the precautionary principle.

REACHforLIFE is making a strong statement about the (non-)accountability of European policy making – probably the reason why the conventional industry voice, CEFIC (European Chemical Industry Council), remains suspiciously silent about this. The variety of stakeholders that support the arguments of REACHforLIFE shows, however, how important it is to lead this debate – it surely will not be the last of its kind.



Host



REACH for life

Links

<http://www.reachforlife.eu>

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/reach/reach_intro.htm

<http://echa.europa.eu/>

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/reach/index_en.htm