

**Joint letter**  
**Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Luxembourg,**  
**The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden**

**To: Mr Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal & Climate Action; Mr Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries; Ms Stella Kyriakides, Commissioner for Health; Mr Thierry Breton, Commissioner for Internal Market; Mr Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights;**

**Subject: Member States' appeal for the implementation of the Council Conclusions towards a Sustainable Chemicals Policy Strategy of the European Union**

We would like to congratulate you with your appointments as Executive Vice-President for European Green Deal & Climate Action and as Commissioners for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries; Health; Internal Market; Jobs and Social Rights, respectively. We are looking very much forward to working with you in the coming years.

The following joint letter has been signed by ministers/secretaries of state of the member states listed in the annex (hereafter "the signatories").

We welcome the European Green Deal and the zero-pollution ambition and embrace these as an opportunity for renewed impulse in the area of chemicals policy, also in the view of its potential contribution to other policy domains, i.e. climate change, biodiversity, circular economy, emission policy, health and agriculture.

The Council conclusions "Towards a Sustainable Chemicals Policy Strategy of the Union" adopted on 26 June 2019 provide a robust basis for achieving a zero-pollution ambition. The part related to the REACH legislation in particular will be crucial to ensure a high level of protection of human health and the environment by providing safe products and reducing use and exposure to problematic substances through different pathways. The Council Conclusions also call for further action outside the REACH legislation as there is still much to do to ensure the transition to a more sustainable chemicals policy. We wish to highlight some elements below which are particularly important.

Noting the substantial delays in the implementation of the 7th Environment Action Programme (EAP), notably in regard to chemicals, and keeping in mind the upcoming 8th EAP, a renewed momentum is necessary for the Commission to complete actions. The signatories recall the commitment of the Commission made under the 7th EAP and urge the Commission to present a Union strategy for a non-

toxic environment without any further delay and before the end of 2020 at the latest. This strategy should be in line with the 2030 Agenda and contain effective measures to fulfil the long-term objectives.

With regard to endocrine disruptors (EDs), we are eagerly awaiting the results of the fitness check to be transmitted by early 2020. The signatories agree with the Commission that the use of EDs should be regulated taking into account the precautionary principle. The signatories further support the application of one set of hazard-based criteria for the identification of EDs across all relevant legislations. We call upon the Commission to develop an action plan with clear and concrete measures including horizontal hazard-based criteria to minimize exposures to EDs.

We call on the Commission to develop a simple methodology to take into account combination effects (“cocktail effects”) and introduce legal requirements to address consistently these effects in all relevant chemicals and emissions legislation. Risk analysis should include combination effects of different substances and different exposure pathways, and acknowledge the specific uncertainties related to assessing risks from these substances.

Furthermore, in view of the objective to place all relevant substances of very high concern (SVHC) on the REACH candidate list by 2020, we urge the Commission to take measures to speed up the identification of SVHC (i.e. through a grouping approach), including substances with endocrine-disrupting properties, as set out in the 7th EAP.

We call for an EU action plan to address the large group of fluorinated substances (PFAS) which are of great concern due to their extreme persistency and our advancing knowledge of their adverse effect on human health and the environment. This action plan, with the goal to eliminate all uses of PFAS, should be ready before mid-2020. Management and remediation strategies for PFAS contamination already present in soils and drinking water resources should be included.

We call upon the Commission to strive for an ambitious global beyond-2020 framework for the sound management of chemicals and waste. In this regard, the signatories recognize the vital role of further collaboration and engagement in the High Ambition Alliance on Chemicals and Waste. The Commission should also endeavour through international cooperation to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition to implement CLP or segments thereof. REACH provides a peerless knowledge database on chemicals, which should contribute to any science-policy interface developed under the new framework.

Our legislation and policy instruments should be further developed to support innovation and the transition to green and sustainable chemistry and technologies in order to support the competitiveness of EU industries. The principles of safe-by-design (of chemicals, materials and products) and substitution, including non-chemical alternatives, should be key elements of the new integrated product policy framework. This requires stable and long-term financing of the relevant European agencies and the research and innovation framework program.

The same principles should apply to trade agreements in order to protect consumers. A current example is the growing e-trade by consumers, which could result in circumventing current Union policies regarding

the control of chemicals. We therefore urge the Commission to promote higher international standards to ensure that the trade and use of chemicals are adequately managed.

We call on the Commission to continue to tighten gaps that allow products, including by e-trade, to enter the European market without complying with our chemicals legislation. It is important to identify solutions to prevent import of products into the EU that contain substances which are regulated under the REACH authorization regime. Thus, the role of enforcement authorities should be facilitated to the benefit of the environment and European competitiveness.

In conclusion, we look forward to Commission initiatives to implement the Council Conclusions “towards a Sustainable Chemicals Policy Strategy of the Union”, and we are ready to cooperate with you on these issues. In particular, the following points should be addressed without delay :

- Present a Union strategy for a non-toxic environment before the end of 2020 at the latest
- Develop an action plan with clear and concrete measures including horizontal hazard-based criteria to minimize exposures to EDs
- Address combination effects of different substances in all relevant chemicals and emissions legislation
- Take measures to speed up the identification of SVHC
- Develop an EU action plan to address the large group of fluorinated substances (PFAS)
- Following up on the challenges identified in the non-REACH Fitness Check, including developing a coherent and consistent chemicals *acquis* which also covers ensuring social justice to better protect EU citizens and in particular vulnerable groups
- Develop the principles of safe by design chemicals and substitution, including non-chemical alternatives, as key elements of innovation policy and the new integrated product policy framework, and thus facilitate and accelerate the transition to green and sustainable chemistry
- Ensure timely regulation to restrict hazardous chemicals in imported products and promote ambitious standards beyond the Union and at international level to ensure safe management of chemicals and to preserve European competitiveness.

## Annex with the signatories

**Maria Patek**

Federal Minister for Sustainability and Tourism, Austria

**Zuhail Demir**

Flemish Minister for the Environment, Belgium

**Lea Wermelin**

Minister for the Environment, Denmark

**Brune Poirson**

Secretary of State to the Minister for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition, France

**Carole Dieschbourg**

Minister for the Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development, Luxembourg

**Stientje van Veldhoven-van der Meer**

Minister for the Environment and Housing, The Netherlands

**Ola Elvestuen**

Minister for Climate and Environment, Norway

**Teresa Ribera**

Minister for Ecological Transition, Spain

**Isabella Lövin**

Minister for Environment and Climate and Deputy Prime Minister, Sweden