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Deutsche Sozialversicherung
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Opinion from German Social Insurance issued 2 December 2025

on the proposal for a Regulation on the European Chemicals
Agency

I. Preliminary remark

The legal framework for chemicals in the European Union is among the most comprehensive in the world. It provides a high level of protection for human health and the environment against the harmful effects of chemical substances. Since its establishment in June 2007, the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) has played a key role in implementing this framework. Originally created under the Regulation on the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), its remit has expanded significantly over the past two decades. Today, ECHA performs additional technical, scientific and administrative tasks. These tasks have been assigned to the Agency through, among others, the Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) Regulation, the Biocidal Products Regulation (BPR) and the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Regulation. In addition, ECHA's role has been expanded through an ad hoc agreement for preparing scientific opinions on occupational exposure limits, the implementation of the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability and the concept of "One substance, one assessment".

The German Social Security (DSV) expressly welcomes the fact that an independent legal basis is to be created for the ECHA in future.¹ A clearly defined legal framework can help strengthen ECHA's leadership and governance structures and enable it to continue carrying out its steadily growing responsibilities efficiently and independently. Consolidating all ECHA-related provisions, which are currently spread across different legal acts, is also a sensible step. At the same time, the various interests at stake – particularly in health, occupational safety, environmental protection and the economy – must be taken into account in a balanced manner.

From the DSV's perspective, the following aspects should be given particular consideration during the further legislative process:

- _ clear anchoring of occupational safety and health in ECHA's basic regulation so that it is systematically taken into account in decision-making,
- _ systematic involvement of experts with occupational safety competence in the committees and in the Management Board,

¹ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Chemicals Agency and amending Regulations (EC) No 1907/2006, (EU) No 528/2012, (EU) No 649/2012 and (EU) 2019/1021.



- _ binding and institutionalised cooperation between ECHA and the European Commission and its agencies, particularly the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), and
- _ strengthening the Agency's independence through the expansion of adequate personnel and technical resources.

II. Opinion

1 _ Anchoring occupational safety and health in the ECHA basic regulation

The DSV calls for occupational safety and health to be established as an integral part of the ECHA basic regulation so that it is systematically taken into account in all decisions. Chemicals legislation and the safety and health of workers are inseparably linked. This is evident, in particular, from regulations such as REACH, CLP and BPR, which also contain mechanisms for protecting workers from hazardous chemicals. Moreover, occupational exposure limits are increasingly being set at EU level, and these limits generally have to be adopted as such at national level. Since the setting of occupational exposure limits is also to be regulated as a task of the Committee for Risk Assessment (RAC) in the Basic Regulation, it is all the more important to ensure early and substantive involvement of the Member States and relevant specialist institutions in the European decision process. The need for protection from exposure to chemicals or hazardous substances varies depending on the target group, for example, between the general population, vulnerable individuals, workers or the environment. A blanket assessment without considering the specific exposure situation and the actual risk should be strictly avoided. Instead, national experience and scientific evidence should be incorporated into the setting of limit values to ensure that occupational exposure limits provide the required level of protection while remaining feasible in practice.

2 _ Professional and balanced composition of ECHA bodies

The DSV calls for the composition of ECHA's bodies – in particular the Management Board and the scientific committees – to reflect the necessary professional expertise and therefore to include adequate representation of experts from the field of occupational safety. For a sound and reliable assessment of substances, the committees must include specialists in occupational medicine, toxicology, exposure assessment and epidemiology.



As the Agency's responsibilities continue to grow, strengthening the personnel capacities of the committees is essential. Even today, bottlenecks exist, for example, in the scientific evaluation of occupational exposure limits in the RAC. In the DSV's view, the appointment of experts must be possible at short notice and on a topic specific basis to increase the quality and flexibility of scientific work. In addition, continuous training of committee members should be mandatory.

In the Management Board, it must be ensured that the interests of occupational safety are appropriately represented. The current distribution of seats does not sufficiently reflect this perspective. Article 6 governs the composition of the Management Board and states in paragraph 3 that the representatives of stakeholders, selected by the Commission, must come from industry, trade unions, environment, health and consumer protection. The DSV considers it essential to add occupational safety to the list of areas mentioned in Article 6(3). Furthermore, the DSV suggests increasing the number of members appointed by the European Commission in accordance with Article 6(1)(b) and, in this context, also stipulating the areas of expertise in a binding manner, similar to Article 6(3). This would allow for broader professional representation. From the DSV's perspective, the number of these members should be increased from six to twelve: six members from the European Commission and six representatives from each of the defined fields. This would ensure more balanced representation and strengthen the necessary professional diversity on the Management Board.

3 _ Cooperation and scientific exchange between EU agencies

The DSV strongly advocates that ECHA cooperate with the European Commission and its agencies in a binding and permanent manner, particularly with EU-OSHA. Only this can ensure that occupational safety-related perspectives are regularly and systematically integrated into ECHA's work. Tasks such as reviewing safety data sheets, developing exposure scenarios for mixtures or deriving scientific proposals for limit values could thereby be carried out more efficiently and consistently.

The DSV also stresses the importance of close cooperation among the European agencies to ensure reliable and scientifically sound decisions. Different scientific perspectives should not be viewed as a contradiction or problem but as a strength. Diverging scientific assessments reflect a vibrant scientific discourse and make a significant contribution to the quality and transparency of regulatory decisions. Procedures must therefore be designed in such a way that differing positions are systematically incorporated into the work of ECHA's committees and used as a basis for forming a common, scientifically robust position.



4 _ Strengthening governance, funding and independence

The DSV calls for strengthening the governance and leadership structures, improving the funding model and ensuring the professional and institutional independence of ECHA. Independent funding is crucial for the Agency to operate effectively, transparently and free from political influence. It is especially important to strengthen ECHA's independence and provide it with sufficient professional and personnel resources so that it can fulfil its additional responsibilities in the future. The Agency should only take on new tasks if it has adequate capacity and expertise. Furthermore, democratic participation processes for all relevant stakeholders – including Member States, the scientific community, industry and occupational safety institutions – must be ensured. Only under these conditions can ECHA continue to serve as a credible, science-based and independent pillar of European chemicals legislation in the long term.

About us

The German Federal Pension Insurance (DRV Bund), the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV), the National Association of Statutory Health Insurance Funds (GKV-Spitzenverband), the national associations for statutory health and long-term care insurance funds at the federal level and the Social Insurance for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture (SVLFG) have joined forces to form the "German Social Insurance - Working Group Europe" (Deutsche Sozialversicherung Arbeitsgemeinschaft Europa e. V.) with a view to their common European policy interests. The association represents the interests of its members vis-à-vis the bodies of the European Union (EU) as well as other European institutions and advises the relevant stakeholders in the context of current legislative projects and initiatives. As part of the statutory insurance system in Germany, health and long-term care insurance with 75 million insured persons, pension insurance with 57 million insured persons and accident insurance with more than 70 million insured persons in 5.2 million member companies offer effective protection against the consequences of major risks of life.