



a toxics-free future

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EU Violates REACH Principles by Authorizing Two Toxic Lead Pigments
Decision Will Thwart Lead Paint Bans Throughout the World

(Gothenburg, Sweden) The European Commission has issued a draft decision to the REACH Committee that would authorize use of two toxic lead pigments in the EU for non-consumer use, despite the availability of well-known alternatives. The decision was made over strong objections from EU governments, industry and NGOs.

“Agreement to this draft decision will send a disastrous message to countries now working to put in place meaningful restrictions on lead paint and prevent childhood lead poisoning. And it sends a clear message that lead in paint elimination is not possible even for highly industrialized countries, where bans are already in place,” said Sara Brosché, IPEN, an NGO network working to reduce and eliminate harm from toxic chemicals in more than 100 countries.

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB), The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), ChemSec and IPEN sent two letters to the REACH Committee calling on the members to reject authorization when it is put to a final vote on July 6-7.

In addition, NGOs around the world have signed a letter to the Committee highlighting the potential harmful consequences from such an authorization in non-EU countries, as lead-containing products may be exported to markets where there aren't any safeguards to prevent these hazardous products from being sold to consumers.

Dominion Colour Corporation, based in Canada, requested authorization to use the lead chromate pigments broadly in articles such as coatings, powders and plastics in 2014. From the beginning, NGOs as well as European Paint associations argued that there are well known alternatives to lead pigments and that authorizing their use is unnecessary and a violation of the substitution principle of REACH.

Members of the REACH Committee are urged to reject the authorization for the following reasons:

- The Commission's draft decision, which forms the base for the final Committee decision, disregards the fact that there are known alternatives to lead chromates available.
- The human and environmental risks entailed with authorization are high.
- Authorization would create an unacceptable precedent for REACH, and harm the global movement to eliminate lead chromates in paint.

The health impacts of lead exposure on young children's brains are lifelong, irreversible and untreatable. The World Health Organization (WHO) calls lead paint “a major flashpoint” for children's potential lead poisoning and says that “since the phase-out of leaded petrol, lead paint is one of the largest sources of exposure to lead in children.” Children are exposed to lead when painted surfaces deteriorate over time and contaminate household dust and soils. Children, ages 0-6, engaging in normal hand-to-mouth behaviors are most at risk of damage to their intelligence and mental development from exposure to lead dust and soil.

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