ECHA’s committees finalise evaluation of bisphenol A restriction proposal

ECHA/PR/15/16

**ECHA’s Committee for Socio-economic Assessment (SEAC)** has concluded that the socio-economic benefits of restricting bisphenol A (BPA) in thermal paper are unlikely to be higher than the socio-economic costs. SEAC also noted that there are other considerations in favour of the restriction that should be taken into account by the European Commission in making their decision. The Committee for Risk Assessment (RAC) had previously concluded that the risk for workers handling thermal paper was not adequately controlled.

**Helsinki, 7 December 2015** – In May 2014, the French authorities submitted a proposal to restrict BPA because of health risks for pregnant workers and consumers exposed to it in thermal paper - for example when they handle cash register receipts. The population identified as being at risk is unborn children, who are exposed in the uterus.

RAC agreed with the French proposal that BPA may have effects on the mammary glands, as well as on reproduction, metabolism and neuro-behaviour. In addition, and in line with the opinion of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), RAC also considered the effects on the immune system.

In September 2015, RAC concluded that the risk for the unborn children of female workers e.g. cashiers handling thermal paper, is not adequately controlled. However, the Committee did not identify a risk to consumers in handing receipts.

In its opinion of 3 December 2015, SEAC considered that the socio-economic benefits were unlikely to be higher than the socio-economic costs of the proposed restriction. However, they also noted that there could be other considerations in favour of the restriction that should be taken into account by the European Commission in making their decision. These included that a relatively small population with low incomes are at risk – cashiers – whereas the costs of the restriction would be spread across all EU consumers in the EU. If the costs of a restriction were translated into increased prices, the amount per working EU-citizen would amount to only about €0.20 – €0.60 per person per year. This was considered affordable by SEAC.

The two committees are required to analyse the restriction from different perspectives and their opinions together provide a scientific basis for the decision-making by the European Commission.

**Next steps**

ECHA will send the RAC and SEAC opinions to the European Commission. The Commission needs to decide whether to add BPA to the list of restrictions (Annex XVII of REACH). The REACH Committee - consisting of Member States - assists the Commission in this decision.