



# **Safeguarding human rights in simplification: EU's Omnibus VI Package on Chemicals**

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## Safeguarding human rights in simplification: EU's Omnibus VI Package on Chemicals

The European Union has made regulatory simplification a core priority to strengthen competitiveness and reduce burdens on businesses. As part of this effort, it aims to cut EU reporting obligations by 25 per cent for all companies and 35 per cent for SMEs, targeting savings of over €37 billion annually.

Building on this broader objective, the European Commission is taking action in key industrial sectors. On 8 July 2025, the European Commission adopted its “European Chemicals Industry Action Plan” (Communication COM (2025) 530) which aims to strengthen the competitiveness and modernize the European chemical sector, with a particular focus on supporting energy transition and decarbonization, creating a market for green products and innovation, and simplifying the regulatory framework, while maintaining a high level of safety of chemicals and their mixtures for consumers in the EU market.

As part of the Plan, the Commission adopted a sixth simplification package (Omnibus VI) to clarify and reduce the administrative and financial burden on the chemical industry. The Omnibus VI legislative proposal ([COM \(2025\) 531](#)) proposes amendments to three key regulations:

- Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 on Classification, Labelling and Packaging of substances and mixtures (CLP Regulation);
- Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009 on Cosmetic Products (Cosmetic Products Regulation); and
- Regulation (EU) 2019/1009 on EU Fertilizing Products (Fertilizing Products Regulation)

In this context, the UN Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes issued an official communication ([OL OTH 120/2025](#)) addressing the Omnibus VI package on chemicals.

This Note is prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Regional Office for Europe and presents the key proposed amendments to the above-mentioned regulations, examines the implications of those proposals on the realization of human rights, and offers recommendations to ensure alignment with international human rights standards.

# 1. Classification, Labelling and Packaging of Substances and Mixtures

The objective of Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 (the CLP regulation) is to ensure a high level of protection of health and the environment, as well as the free movement of substances, mixtures and certain articles. The CLP regulation implements the United Nations' Globally Harmonised System (GHS) and establishes legally binding hazard identification and classification rules.

## Key proposed amendments (extracted from [COM \(2025\) 531](#))

- Simplification and increased flexibility in the formatting of hazardous chemical labeling :  
"The amendment to Article 29(2) and section 1.5.2.4 of Annex I simplify and clarify provisions allowing for derogations from labelling requirements for small packaging, especially for very small containers under 10 ml".
- Exemptions from labeling requirements for smaller packages:  
"The amendment to Article 29(2) will allow economic operators to reduce information required to be provided on the label for packaging containing smaller quantities of chemical substances or mixtures without the need to prove that this packaging is either in such a shape or form or is so small that it is impossible to meet full labelling requirements."
- Removing the deadline of six months for updating labelling information:  
"The amendment to Article 30(1) removes fixed deadline for the obligation to update the label, as it appeared to not be feasible to comply with due to the complexity of supply chains."
- Limiting the scope of the CLP Regulation's provisions on advertising and distance selling:  
"The amendment to Article 48 of CLP Regulation limits the scope of provisions on advertising and distance selling of hazardous chemicals and their mixtures. Specifically, it requires the phrase 'Always read the label and product information before use' to appear on the product, replacing the requirement to indicate the danger symbol and further information on the hazards in the advertisement and distance selling."
- Easing obligations for advertising of chemical substances and their mixtures:  
"The amendment to Article 53 authorizes the Commission to adopt delegated acts to include elements that may be placed on a digital label only, subject to such elements not being required to appear on the physical label under the Globally Harmonized System (GHS)."

**The proposed amendments could have implications and a potential impact on the daily lives of people and their human rights. To illustrate these potential effects, we have developed a fictional case study with the assistance of AI.**

Tom has lived with dyslexia since childhood, and over time he developed strategies to manage daily tasks that many others take for granted. When it comes to buying household and self-care products, he is particularly cautious because he is highly sensitive to certain ingredients. Even a small exposure to allergens or irritants can cause his discomfort or health issues, so he cannot afford to take chances.



To shop safely, Tom depends on more than just written information. He relies heavily on clear visual cues, such as hazard pictograms, bold color contrasts, and safety symbols. Consistency in label structures is also essential: when product packaging follows a predictable order he can navigate labels more accurately. Finally, familiar and legible fonts make a significant difference.

But when regulations allowed companies greater flexibility in label formatting, Tom began to struggle with the growing inconsistency across brands. What had once been straightforward hazard information became obscured. The reminder to “Always read the label and product information before use” felt almost ironic, as the labels themselves had become less accessible to him. The consequences were real: on one occasion, Tom mistakenly used a cleaning product containing a strong irritant, believing it was a milder variant because of the confusing packaging.

## Human rights implications

- Right to health

Everyone has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), article 12). The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has clarified this right further in [General Comment No. 14](#) and interpreted the right to health as an inclusive right extending not only to timely and appropriate health care but also to the underlying determinants of health, such as access to health-related education and information ([General Comment No. 14](#), para. 11). Furthermore, the right to health in all its forms and at all levels contains the element of information accessibility which includes the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas concerning health issues ([General Comment No. 14](#), para. 12).

- Right to access information

All persons have the right to access information about hazardous substances that may affect them. The right to information is a right in and of itself and one of the rights upon which free and democratic societies depend. The right to information derives from the right to freedom of expression and the right to take part in public affairs stipulated in articles 19 and 25 respectively of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Similar provisions are also found in several international and regional human rights instruments such as article 4 of the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (“Aarhus Convention”) as well as in national constitutions and laws.

However, adequate information about potential exposure to hazardous substances is not accessible to many of those affected by them, in particular by persons, groups and people in vulnerable situations. Access to information is necessary to evaluate the implications of hazardous substances with respect to groups that are at higher risk of harm from hazardous substances (see generally, [Key Message: Human Rights and Hazardous Substance](#)). Low-income or minority communities, indigenous peoples and other groups may be disproportionately at risk of adverse impacts owing to higher levels of exposure ([A/HRC/30/40](#), para. 29). Furthermore, children are often exposed to higher levels of hazardous substances than adults and this exposure comes during critical periods of development, when children are at greatest risk of adverse impacts from carcinogens, hormone disrupting chemicals, mutagens, reproductive toxicants and other hazardous substances ([A/HRC/30/40](#), para. 30).

- Economic, social and cultural rights

Accurate information on the environmental health impacts of hazardous substances is critical to empower all people to avoid exposure to hazardous substances in consumer products, at the workplace, in their homes and communities, or via food, water, air or other sources and to seek remedy when they suffer harms from such exposure. Concerns have been raised that, in many countries, people lack basic information about and influence over the quality of their drinking water, the air they breathe, the land they live on and the food they eat (see ECE/MP.PP/2014/27/Add.1, para. 16). In this context, better access to information can enable the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, the right to food, the right to safe drinking water and sanitation, and the right to a healthy environment. ([A/HRC/30/40](#), para. 23).

- Right to remedy

Furthermore, information gaps regarding hazardous properties, uses and exposure to hazardous substances, together with latency periods, genetic variation, lifestyle choices and other variables, create a complex array of uncertainties and unknowns that can obstruct access to an effective remedy for victims.

### **Human rights recommendations**

#### *Recommendation 1 – How should the information be available?*

Accurate information on the environmental health impacts of hazardous substances must be readily available, in an accessible format and appropriate context, to all, in particular consumers, workers and other rights-holders with particular attention to the specific needs of those in vulnerable situations (see [A/HRC/30/40](#), paras. 32 – 36).

- Availability: Information is available when current reliable information has been generated and collected in a manner adequate to assess the magnitude of potential adverse impacts on the rights of people from hazardous substances.
- Accessibility: Information about hazardous substances is accessible when everyone can seek, obtain, receive and hold available information, unless there is an overriding legitimate public-interest justification for non-disclosure.
- Functionality: Information should be fit for its intended purpose. Making information available or accessible does not necessarily make it functional. To be functional, information should be scientifically accessible, imparting knowledge with a reasonable degree of effort on the part of the intended user. Certain professionals will always require substantially more technical information about hazardous substances and wastes than potentially affected consumers and community members. For example, the technical information about hazardous substances appropriate for regulators and researchers is not user-friendly for consumers at the point of purchase. Technicalities must be translated into a language that is functional, to enable individuals and groups of individuals to make informed choices. In doing so, underlying data from which conclusions are drawn should be accessible to ensure the veracity of such conclusions.

#### *Recommendations 2 – Who makes the information available?*

States have a duty to effectively disseminate information to everyone who may be adversely affected by the production, storage, use, release and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes. This includes the obligation to communicate information both actively and on demand, and to make information functional.

Businesses have a responsibility to publicly communicate information about the risks created by their activities and how they mitigate and address both actual and potential human rights impact with which they might be involved, including businesses that use, produce and release hazardous substances. As indicated by Guiding Principle 21 (UN [Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#)) , these communications should:

- a) Be of a form and frequency that reflect an enterprise's human rights impacts and that are accessible to its intended audiences;
- b) Provide information that is sufficient to evaluate the adequacy of an enterprise's response to the particular human rights impact involved;
- c) In turn not pose risks to affected stakeholders, personnel or to legitimate requirements of commercial confidentiality.

## 2. Cosmetic Products Regulation (EC No 1223/2009)

Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009 on cosmetic products applies to all cosmetic products made available on the EU market either manufactured in the EU or entering the EU market from third countries. The regulation impacts manufacturers, importers, distributors, and consumers by ensuring that all cosmetic products in the EU are safe for use and that the rules for selling them are consistent across countries.

### **Key proposed amendments** (extracted from [COM \(2025\) 531](#))

- Establishment of a procedure for the permissibility of certain colorants, preservatives and UV filters: "The new Article 14a seeks to address the current lack of specific procedure according to which colorants, preservatives, and UV filters could be added to the relevant Annexes IV to VI to the Cosmetic Products Regulation. The new Article specifies different steps of the procedure, outlines the role of the European Commission and reaffirms the responsibility of the SCCS in assessing the safety of any proposed colorant, preservative or UV filter."
- Amendments and simplifications in the application of the derogation criteria for carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic for reproduction (CMR) substances: "The changes to Article 15 of the Cosmetic Products Regulation streamlines the derogation criteria for substances classified as CMR category 1A or 1B, namely the criterion that the application must be made for a particular use of the product category with a known exposure has been merged with the current criterion (d) requiring the SCCS opinion."
- Abolishing the obligation to notify the Commission twice for cosmetic products containing nanomaterials: "The amendments to Article 16 of the Cosmetic Products Regulation seek to remove the prenotification obligation as it is no longer justified. The cosmetic products containing nanomaterials should not be considered less safe than other cosmetic products as they are subject to the appropriate safety assessment under the responsibility of the responsible person."

**The proposed amendments could have implications and a potential impact on the daily lives of people and their human rights. To illustrate these potential effects, we have developed a fictional case study with the assistance of AI.**

Six-year-old Mila loves her strawberry-flavored toothpaste, especially because of the glittering shimmer that made brushing feel like a magical game. She would only use that special toothpaste to brush her teeth, refusing any other kind. Her parents joined in the magical game, making brushing a fun and motivating routine every morning and night.

The strawberry-flavored toothpaste was selling so rapidly that the manufacturer saw a profitable opportunity to enhance it. They reformulated the product with more sparkle using new ingredients, including a shimmering additive which required a new preservative. Thanks to the fast-track process, the updated product was launched without clear warnings or proper public oversight.

Mila continued to use her favorite toothpaste and she was thrilled to discover a new version. What her parents did not realize, however, is that the toothpaste contained a preservative flagged as a Category 1B carcinogen. They only learned about the presence of the preservative in the new version of the toothpaste after a consumer rights group publicly raised the alarm. But this was already several months after Mila had used the toothpaste.

### **Human rights implications**

- Right to a healthy environment – “non-toxic environment”

The right to a non-toxic environment in which people can safely live, work, study and play a substantive element of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, including clean air, a safe climate, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, safe and sufficient water and healthy and sustainable food (see generally, [A/HRC/49/53](#)).

Exposure to hazardous substance affects the life, health, wellbeing, dignity and rights of all people everywhere, in particular persons, groups and peoples in vulnerable situations. Exposure to hazardous substances threatens a wide range of other rights including rights to life, bodily integrity, health and a healthy environment. Failure to take effective measures to limit the harmful effects of exposure to hazardous substances on human health and wellbeing represents a breach of State obligations to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights.

- Right to health including right to sexual and reproductive health

Exposure to toxic substances raises the risks of premature death, acute poisoning, cancer, heart disease, stroke, respiratory illnesses, adverse effects on the immune, endocrine and reproductive systems, birth defects and lifelong negative impacts on neurological development. One quarter of the total global burden of disease is attributed to preventable environmental risk factors, the overwhelming majority of which involve exposure to pollution and toxic substances ([A/HRC/49/53](#), para. 12). These exposures can also severely affect sexual and reproductive health, leading to infertility, complications during pregnancy, and intergenerational health impacts (See generally, [A/79/163](#)).

- Right of the child

Children are affected by their direct exposure but also prenatally impacted by chemicals found in cosmetic and personal care products as exposure can occur during foetal development. Due to their smaller bodies, rapid growth and behavioral habits such as hand-to-mouth activity, children are disproportionately affected by hazardous substances.

Childhood exposure to toxics occurs without the child's (or parent's) consent. Even if a parent were somehow able to identify every product and possible source of exposure to toxics that might harm their child, they are often powerless to do anything about it, particularly when it involves food, water or air pollution. Young children lack the physical and/or mental ability to vocalize opinions and understand the dangers and potential consequences of toxics until long after harm has been inflicted. This, for example, is why children are not allowed to buy cigarettes or alcohol until a certain age in many countries and are prohibited from working in hazardous conditions ([A/HRC/33/41](#), para. 30).

### **Human rights recommendations**

#### *Recommendation 1 – Precautionary approach*

Knowledge about pollution and toxic substances will never be complete, necessitating recourse to the precautionary principle, which holds that where there are threats of harm to human health or the environment, lack of full scientific certainty must not be used as a reason for postponing preventive action ([A/HRC/49/53](#), para. 56). States and businesses should apply the precautionary principle throughout the lifecycle management of hazardous substances, e.g. in their production, licensing, use, trade and disposal. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible harm to human health or the environment, lack of full scientific certainty must not be used as a reason for postponing preventative action. Furthermore, impact assessments should prioritize the most severe human rights risks and focus on impacts on individuals and groups at heightened risk of vulnerability and marginalization.

#### *Recommendation 2 – State obligation*

As a corollary to the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, States and businesses have a comprehensive suite of corresponding obligations and responsibilities. States should apply a human rights-based approach to all laws, regulations, policies and actions governing the production, import, sale, use, release and disposal of substances that may harm human health or the environment, to eliminate negative impacts on human rights ([A/HRC/49/53](#), para. 48). States should establish or strengthen legislation, regulations, standards and policies to prevent exposure to toxic substances, and develop action plans for preventing pollution, eliminating toxic substances and rehabilitating contaminated sites ([A/HRC/49/53](#), para. 50).

#### *Recommendation 3 – Business responsibility*

As recognized in the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#), States are obligated under international law to protect against human rights abuse within their territory and/or jurisdiction by businesses. States must take appropriate steps to prevent all business-related human rights harms including those related to hazardous substances and, where such harms do occur, to ensure access to effective remedies including through judicial processes.

At the same time, businesses have an independent responsibility to respect human rights. Through policy commitments and human rights due diligence, businesses should identify and address negative human



rights impacts connected to hazardous substances (such as harms relating to the health of people or planet) with which they are involved, including through their own activities as well as throughout their entire value chains. Where businesses cause or contribute to such harms, their responsibility to respect human rights requires active engagement in remediation. One means of enabling remediation should be through effective operational-level grievance mechanisms that are accessible to affected persons.

### 3. Fertilising Products Regulation (EU 2019/1009)

The general objective of the Regulation (EU) 2019/1009 is to incentivise large scale fertilising products production in the EU from domestic organic or secondary raw materials by creating a regulatory framework granting such fertilising products easier access to the internal market.

#### Key proposed amendments (extracted from [COM \(2025\) 531](#))

- Removing the extended REACH registration requirement for substances contained in fertilizer products: " The amendment to Annex II, Part II, component material category (CMC) 1, point 2, seeks to remove the requirement that all substances incorporated into an EU fertilising product, on their own or in a mixture, except polymers, shall have been registered pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006"
- Allowing the Commission to define criteria and methodologies for the evaluation of microorganisms by manufacturers: "In Article 42, a new paragraph is inserted to empower the Commission to set out criteria and a methodology for the assessment of micro-organisms. Those criteria and the methodology should allow manufacturers and notified bodies to demonstrate and verify that microorganisms used in a microbial plant biostimulant, other than those listed in CMC 7, do not present a risk to human, animal or plant health, to safety or to the environment, and ensure agronomic efficiency"
- Abolition of the so-called "separation clause" requiring the Commission to adopt separate delegated acts for each category of constituent materials: " Article 43 is deleted to enable the Commission to adopt delegated acts which amend several component materials at the same time."

#### Human rights implications related to fertilizers

- Right to a healthy environment – "food"

Healthy and sustainable food as one of the substantive elements of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, including clean air, a safe climate, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, safe and sufficient water and healthy and non-toxic environment (see generally, [A/HRC/49/53](#)). Industrial agriculture contaminates air, water, soil and the food chain with toxic substances – pesticides, herbicides, synthetic fertilizers and drugs – harming human and ecosystem health.

- Right to food

The regulation and use of fertilizers are intrinsically linked to the realization of the right to food as fertilizing practices contribute to availability of food (raised productivity); accessibility (rural poverty); sustainability

(sustainable agricultural productivity and the prevention of environmental harm) (see generally, [A/HRC/16/49](#))

- Rights of the child

Exposure to toxic substances, including chemical fertilizer and water pollution, specifically agrochemicals pose dangers to children's health and increase child mortality, especially among children under 5 years of age. Furthermore, early exposure to those hazardous substances contributes to the prevalence of disease, impaired brain development and subsequent cognitive deficits ([General Comment no. 36](#), para. 40). Early exposure of children to nitrates in water contaminated by agricultural fertilizer run-off can stunt their growth and affect brain development.

#### **Human rights recommendations on usage of fertilizers and agrochemicals**

States should strengthen the implementation of laws and other measures to ensure that the negative impact of “agrochemicals on underlying determinants of health, such as food, safe drinking water and sanitation, is minimized and that the entities responsible are held accountable and victims afforded effective remedies”.

### **4. Consultation process**

On 16 May 2025, the European Commission held a Reality Check, aiming to gather practical feedback on the revised CLP Regulation. It was held online and drew over 570 participants from industry, consumer and environmental groups, legal practitioners, and national authorities. The event focused on identifying opportunities for simplification following the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2024/2865, while keeping the same level of protection of human health and of the environment. Stakeholders were invited to share concrete experiences and proposals on how to make the new rules more workable, particularly in operational and multilingual contexts.

On 16 May 2025, the European Commission held a Reality Check on Cosmetics Product Regulation where approximately 268 stakeholders registered for the meeting and about 226 eventually joined the online meeting. By 6 June 2025, written feedback was received from 51 stakeholders.

On 7 May 2025, the European Commission held a Reality Check Fertilising Product Regulation as part of the Commission Expert Group meeting on fertilising products. Approximately 135 stakeholders registered for the meeting and 91 eventually attended. By 6 June 2025, written feedback was received from 26 stakeholders.

Several NGOs have raised concerns related to the participation process ([Client Earth](#)) and to the proposed amendments ([joint input](#) from NGOs, [analysis](#) and [press release](#) from HEAL, submission from [CRIN](#)).

## **Human rights implications**

- Right to participation

International environmental law and human rights law as well as sound development policy mandate meaningful and informed participation including in environmental decision-making. The right to participation is reflected in human rights instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the UN Declaration on the Right to Development, the Human Rights Council Guidelines on participation ([A/HRC/39/28](#)), and the UN Framework Principles on human rights and the environment ([A/HRC/37/59](#)) as well as environmental instruments such as the Aarhus Convention.

## **Human rights recommendations**

State actions and decisions related to the use of hazardous substances must involve the informed participation of affected persons. They also should do so because drawing on the diverse interests, needs and expertise of all people, including local communities and indigenous peoples, offers important insights for inclusive and sustainable environmental action enhancing the quality and implementation of decisions concerning the environment and health.