

# Press Release No. 14/2011

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## **Hazardous substances in construction products -identification soon to be easier**

### **Federal Environment Agency applauds EU Council resolution to improve labelling on construction products**

**For the first time both the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament have set up a framework with which to establish a threshold level of protection against construction products throughout Europe. The regulation is based upon the new EU Regulation laying down harmonised conditions for the marketing of construction products, which will enter into force in 2013. After July 2013 CE marking must be affixed to construction products making a declaration about substances of very high concern that they contain. The new regulation will apply to all construction products marketed on the European market, e.g. carpeting, wall covering, or concrete components.**

The Regulation bestows new powers upon the European Commission, for example to establish threshold values for hazardous substances that can be released from construction products to indoor air, soil or bodies of water, or to define emission classes for various building types that set a high standard of protection. This information might serve architects, for example, to determine whether and how volatile organic compounds (VOC) are emitted from construction products to indoor space.

"The CE marking on every construction product will make information on substances of very high concern known from the very start. Building professionals and consumers will have more transparency about the contents of construction products and be able to avert possible health risks. This duty of information now introduced is especially important as concerns construction products as they are in much longer use as compared to other products", said Jochen Flasbarth, President of the Federal Environment Agency. Although EU chemicals legislation has already established minimum requirements with respect to the availability of information about hazardous substances, the new regulation will transpose within 45 days the somewhat unwieldy right to information into a bit of required information immediately accessible to consumers. By raising statutory minimum standards, the EU will also boost the credibility of the CE marking. It is of utmost importance that the Commission does in fact assume its newly delegated powers in order to achieve the goal of providing appropriate statements on the environmental and health aspects of construction products traded on the single market.

The amendment successfully linked construction product quality standards to the current level of protection in EU environmental law. Following a proposal made by the Network of the Heads of European Environment Protection Agencies (EPA), the regulation will introduce guidelines for sustainable use of natural resources in buildings, whereby national building regulations may require of construction products on the European single market that they declare whether downstream recycling is possible or whether the construction product is composed of recycled materials.

For more information on the EU Council resolution see here:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/App/openDebates/default.aspx?debateid=1260&lang=de&id=1105>

Dessau-Roßlau, 4 March 2011