

Ten countries issue last-minute plea for 'ambitious' EU chemicals strategy

European Commission officials to hold final talks tomorrow

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Environment ministers from ten countries have sent an exclusive [op-ed](#) to Chemical Watch, in which they urge the European Commission to present an "ambitious" chemicals strategy, as the EU executive embarks on discussions to finalise the official text.

Chemical Watch understands that a meeting to negotiate the final details will take place on 1 October between the cabinets of Commission executive vice-president Frans Timmermans, who is overseeing the European Green Deal, and the cabinets from the environment, health and industry directorates.

According to ministry sources, several member states have held bilateral meetings with Mr Timmermans in recent weeks to outline their concerns over the strategy. The op-ed, they said, is a final attempt to influence the Commission.

Tatiana Santos, policy manager at NGO the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), said it sends a "very strong signal to the Commission that business as usual is no longer politically acceptable and that they need to be ambitious tomorrow and in the coming two weeks and to make the right political decisions at the right time.

"Otherwise (as pointed out by the member states) it will be a missed opportunity and we would have to wait another 20 years."

The op-ed was signed by ministers from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden. They previously co-wrote a letter outlining their priorities to the Commission in June, when the chemicals strategy was initially due to be published.

The member state intervention comes ahead of its expected publication on [14 October](#).

Key priorities

The ministers outline five priorities for the strategy:

- accelerate the substitution and phase-out of chemicals of concern, including for [imports](#) of articles, with hazardous chemicals only used for "essential" purposes;
- drive industry to develop safe-by-design chemicals;
- streamline legislation covering chemicals, products and waste;
- address [EDCs](#), combination effects and [PFASs](#); and
- promote the highest health and environmental standards internationally.

Ministry sources suggest parts of the op-ed are in response to leaked DG Grow [criticisms](#) of the original DG Environment draft [communication](#) on the upcoming strategy.

Urging the Commission to include “concrete actions and milestones”, the ministers ask for “clear links to other cross-cutting agendas” such as climate, [biodiversity](#) and the [circular economy](#).

A key sticking point will be the question of reforming the risk management option analysis (RMOA), which DG Grow is pushing for. Sources say this approach would reduce the ability of member states to act on chemicals of concern and hinder restriction proposals.

The ministers say they are committed to continue taking initiatives to limit the use of hazardous chemicals.

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