

Control of chemicals placed on the market

An essential part of the Sound Management of Chemicals

There are a number of reasons to control the continuous placing of chemicals on the market in countries, in addition to other measures controlling exposure to hazardous chemicals. This folder briefly explains how this works and what countries gain from it.

Chemicals contribute in many ways to an improved standard of living, but some of them are hazardous and can have serious adverse effects on human health and the environment. Human health and the environment must be protected from exposure to hazardous chemicals.

Exposure to hazardous chemicals can occur in the workplace, through emissions to the outdoor environment, through major accidents at facilities or during transportation. In many countries measures have been taken to reduce such exposure. However, hazardous chemicals are also present in products that are sold to professional users and private consumers in everyday life. Chemicals control focuses on the control of placing on the market of chemical substances and mixtures as well as other products that contain chemicals.

Basic principles of chemicals control

A systematic approach is needed to protect human health and the environment from adverse effects from chemicals.

We need:

- Knowledge on health and environmental hazards from chemical substances
- Information on hazards, risks and precautionary measures accompanying the chemicals when supplied to professional users and private consumers
- To phase out the most hazardous substances
- To use chemicals and other products in a safe way

Control of chemicals can be achieved by legislation and other kinds of measures. A legal framework that defines roles and responsibilities is a fundamental starting point.

Chemicals legislation regulates responsibilities for importers and producers

Chemicals legislation requires that producers and importers assess hazards and risks and communicate this information down the supply chain together with information on precautionary measures. It is advisable to make the Globally Harmonized System (GHS) on classification and labelling of chemicals mandatory. Information is thereby passed from the chemicals manufacturer or importer to the chemicals user, in an internationally standardised way, through labelling and safety data sheets, allowing for informed choices and facilitating safe handling.

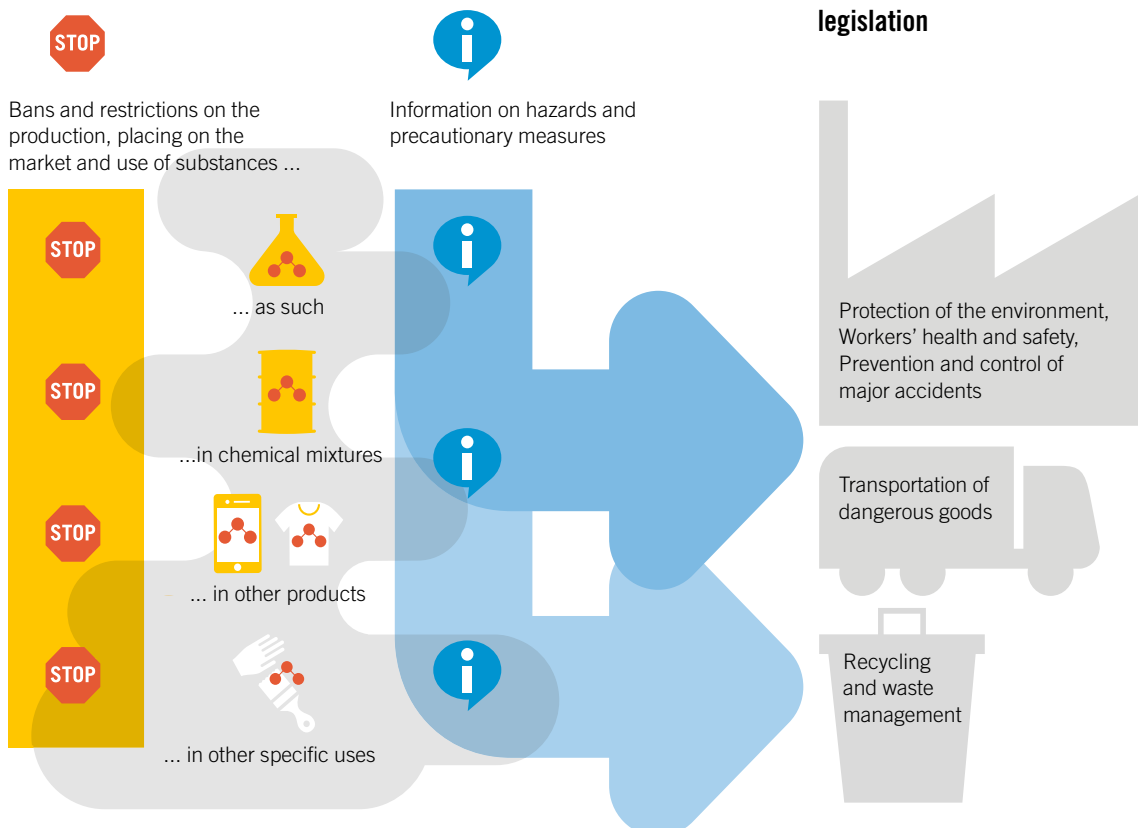
Chemicals legislation can also limit free access to particularly hazardous chemicals, by bans and restrictions, approval systems or other means. Requirements on restrictions from international conventions should be implemented and measures could be taken on additional chemicals which are of particular concern nationally.

Chemicals control supports other measures to reduce risks from chemicals

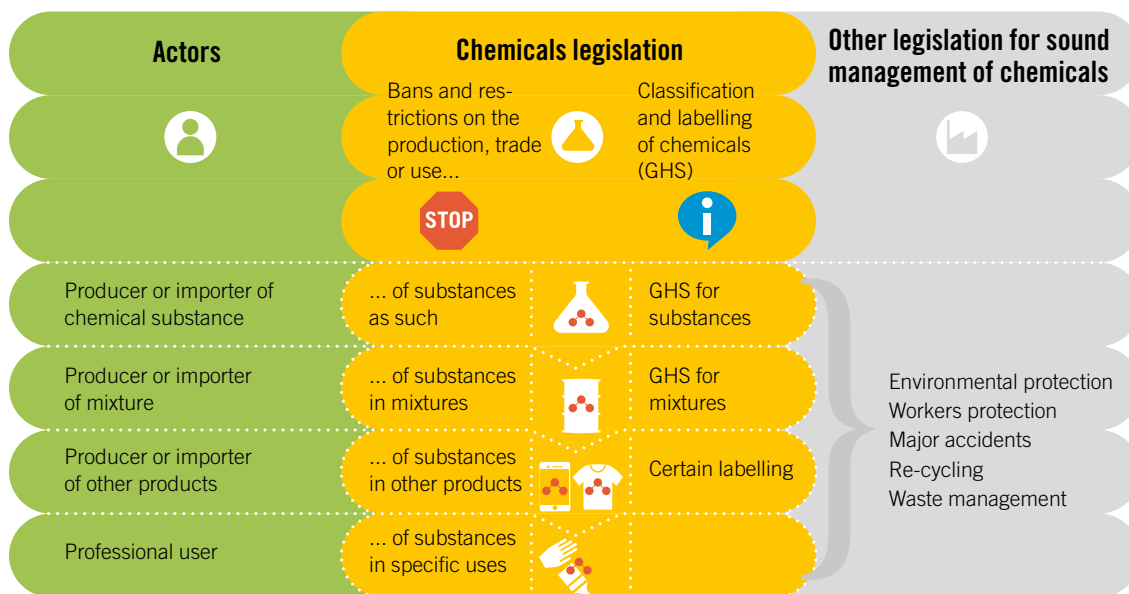
Bans and restrictions regulate access to chemicals that are too hazardous to remain freely and openly available. Such legislation can restrict the use of substances as such, in mixtures, in specified products or for certain uses. Banned or restricted substances will not be present further down the supply chain and hence will not result in problems there.

Obligations to disseminate information on hazards and precautionary measures enable both professional and private users to choose less hazardous chemicals and to handle chemicals safely. Safety data sheets provide professional users with information on how to manage risks in the workplace, prevent emissions to the outdoor environment, ensure safe transportation and ensure safe storage. Information about chemical contents in all sorts of products makes their recycling easier and supports safe waste management.

Chemicals legislation



The figure above shows the obligations in the supply chain imposed by chemicals legislation. The yellow field to the left represents bans and restrictions, as a means to regulate the use of the most hazardous substances. Information requirements on chemicals make it easier for professional users to comply with legislation on protection of the environment, workers' health and safety, major accidents, transportation, etc. The legislation also helps the consumer to make safe choices and handle chemicals correctly.



The actors in the supply chain must comply with chemical safety provisions in various areas of legislation that are complementary and support each other.

Producers and importers of substances must in their capacity as producers, users, employers and/or transporters comply with legislation on environmental protection, workers’ protection, transportation, recycling and waste management, as shown in the figure above. Chemicals legislation also gives them a clear responsibility for the products that they make available. This means that they must collect knowledge about the substances they produce or import, by collecting existing data or performing tests. They must ensure that they do not produce any substances that are banned or restricted for the intended use. They must also classify and label their chemicals and provide downstream users with information on hazards, risks and precautionary measures through safety data sheets.

Producers and importers of mixtures have the same obligations as those who produce or import substances. They must in their capacity as producers, users and/or employers, comply with legislation on environmental protection, workers’ protection, etc., as shown in the figure above. They must also take responsibility for the products that they make available, which involves making use of information from their suppliers or collecting the necessary information themselves. They must ensure that they comply with bans and restrictions, and that information on hazards, risks and precautionary measures – through labelling and safety data sheets – accompany the chemicals to customers down the chain.

Producers and importers of other products containing or treated with chemicals have to comply with bans and restrictions and may have certain information duties under chemicals legislation. As a user of chemicals and/or employer, they must also comply with other legislation related to chemicals, as shown in the figure above.

Professional users of chemicals or other products receive information on hazards and necessary precautions through safety data sheets provided by suppliers. As a user of chemicals and/or employer, they must comply with chemicals legislation on environmental protection, workers’ protection, etc., as shown in the figure above.

Benefits of the control of chemicals

Sustainable development requires sound management of chemicals, of which the control of chemicals placed on the national market is an essential part. Sustainable development cannot be achieved unless chemicals are managed safely. Severe risks to human health and ecosystems as well as substantial costs to the national economy may be avoided through the sound management of chemicals.

Chemicals control preserves natural resources

Land and water resources polluted by hazardous chemicals may become unusable for a long time. Pollution can make food sources such as fish unsuitable for human consumption. Remediation is often costly, if possible at all. Chemicals control contributes to reducing the contamination of the biosphere, air, soil and water, and keeps these natural resources usable for future generations.

Chemicals control saves lives, improves the quality of life and reduces health care costs

People can be exposed to hazardous chemicals at work, in the home and indirectly through the environment. This can lead to early deaths or to irreversible health effects, such as cancer, birth defects and impaired neurodevelopment. It is particularly serious when foetuses and children are exposed, as this can affect their development and in many ways impair their prospects in life. Chemicals control saves lives and improves quality of life. It reduces costs for health care.

Chemicals control is cost-effective

Control of chemicals when, or even before, they are placed on the national market will help to reduce health and environmental problems that otherwise may occur later in the lifecycle of the chemical. This approach is often highly cost-effective compared to measures when chemicals are already spread in society or the environment.

Chemicals control contributes to safer products, uses, methods and technologies

Chemicals control leads to the development of safer products, uses, production methods and technologies. It also contributes to a circular economy, where recycled materials with a known chemical content are likely to become attractive alternatives to virgin materials.

Chemicals control supports good conditions for industry and trade

A clear regulatory framework for chemicals management is an asset for doing business in a country. It facilitates international trade. It makes conditions clear for those who engage in manufacturing or import, or who intend to invest or trade in the country.



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