

REACHforLIFE Press Release



What should be the role of science in policy-making?

REACHforLIFE calls for real benefits to be set off against perceived risks in evaluating products and technologies

Brussels 29 May 2009: The REACHforLIFE campaign hosted a roundtable this week in Brussels entitled "What should be the role of science in policy-making?" The event brought together panelists from a wide-range of interested bodies including the European Commission, universities, public research institutions, and industry, and a lively debate ensued.

Against the backdrop of the upcoming European Parliament elections and imminent changes in the European Commission, the participants at the Roundtable looked at how to ensure that science is properly taken into account under the EU's new five-year legislature.

In particular, participants discussed how the precautionary principle is regularly misinterpreted and how the critical debate between risks and benefits of new products and technologies, such as biotechnologies and nanotechnologies, is being gradually lost within the decision-making process.

"What we are seeing in Europe today is the move towards regulation on hazard alone, rather than risk in decision-making" said REACHforLIFE Spokesperson Mr K. Kannah. "What is more, this is not limited to one area of policy, to one political party, or to one institution. This is a broad trend which, if not halted in its tracks, could give rise to greater risks and fewer benefits for consumers and the environment. Europe cannot afford to be regulated on hazard alone."

During discussions participants mentioned the excellent work undertaken by the European Parliament's Science and Technology Options Assessment Panel (STOA) and questioned whether this body should not play a greater role in the future. At the same time, the position of an EU Chief Scientific Officer who would advise the European Commission was tabled, and members discussed whether such a role could push the issue of science in decision-making up the political agenda.

REACHforLIFE is campaigning for science to be a key component of decision-making together with ethical, social, economic, and political considerations, and is growing increasingly concerned at how science has increasingly been set aside in the EU policy-making process.

The next REACHforLIFE roundtable - "How can industry better communicate with consumers?"

- will be held in Brussels on Wednesday 3 June. Anyone interested in attending, either as a participant or an observer, is welcome to contact the REACHforLIFE Press Office.

For more information please contact the REACHforLIFE press office, pressoffice@reachforlife.eu or on +32(0)2.213.49.59.

About REACHforLIFE

The objective of REACHforLIFE is to launch a debate, the aim of which is to move away from a mistrust of science and towards a balanced approach in applying sound scientific evidence in the EU decision-making process. In particular it is calling for the official scientific risk assessments to be trusted and upheld in the EU's legislative infrastructure.

Our campaign is pan-European, embracing the Brussels regulatory landscape and the EU Member States, particularly France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK.

REACHforLIFE was founded in June 2008 and currently comprises the companies Albemarle, Chemtura, and ICL-IP – www.reachforlife.eu

REACHforLIFE will be hosting further roundtables on science and policy-making during the months in June, and any organisation interested in participated may contact the REACHforLIFE Press Office – pressoffice@reachforlife.eu
