

Manifesto .

Children's rights and chemicals

Why must the European Union step up children's rights protection under EU chemicals legislation?

BECAUSE the exposure to hazardous chemicals severely impacts children in their daily lives, causing **irreversible damage to their health and wellbeing**.

BECAUSE exposure to hazardous chemicals leads to **severe violations of children's rights protected in legally binding United Nations and European agreements**, including their rights to life, health, survival, education, play, safe food and water, non-discrimination and bodily integrity.

BECAUSE children are not only part of a vulnerable group, but **they are also individual rights holders**. They should be protected not because they are the "adults of tomorrow" or the "future generations" but because **they are fully entitled to human rights today** and must be protected and have their rights upheld as such.

BECAUSE the European Union, its institutions and all Member States **committed to always take children's best interests into primary consideration**. Upholding children's rights should be a key compass for decision making on EU chemicals legislation.

BECAUSE continuous contamination of children is happening under existing EU chemicals legislation. The **shortcomings in assessing and managing hazardous chemicals should urgently be addressed**.

BECAUSE the **EU chemicals legislation seriously neglects children's rights** and should be improved to ensure children's rights are recognised and protected against exposure to hazardous chemicals.

BECAUSE the EU has an opportunity to make things right by **completing the revision work with the adoption of ambitious regulations**. By adopting laws that prevent children's rights violations, the EU would finally live up to the EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child.

BECAUSE the revisions of EU chemicals laws can **reinforce the resilience of health care systems across the EU, and ultimately strengthen the EU economy**. The use of harmful chemicals has significant health costs. Strengthening rules on chemicals assessment and management will help decrease those costs currently shouldered by public authorities and families.

BECAUSE the **success of the green transition, climate and biodiversity policies hinges on the adoption of ambitious chemicals legislative revisions**. As the climate, biodiversity and chemicals crises are irrevocably connected, climate and biodiversity policies must come together with ambitious laws for safer and greener chemicals. Hazardous chemicals will not help the green transition and circular economy, only the safest and most sustainable chemicals will.

BECAUSE if the EU does not efficiently phase out harmful chemicals while it has the opportunity to do so, the EU, States and businesses will continue to be responsible for long-term and irreversible contamination of children, severely infringing upon their rights. As such, **children's rights protection should be an essential component of international and EU chemicals legislation and related judicial proceedings**.

In 2024 and beyond, decision makers can stop severe children's rights violations by committing to work for strong EU chemicals legislation. Each and every decision maker should do what they can to build the best possible life for children in Europe and beyond.

It's time for EU institutions to deliver on their promises to uphold children's rights and put an end to children's exposure to hazardous chemicals.