



PRESS RELEASE  
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## RoHS-vote: A missed opportunity

**Brussels, 2 June 2010:** The European Parliament Environment committee today voted on the RoHS directive, on Restrictions of Hazardous Substances in electrical and electronic equipment. ChemSec supports the decision of the committee to extend the scope of the directive into an open scope, including categories previously not covered by RoHS. Furthermore, ChemSec welcomes the introduction of a methodology into RoHS for further substance evaluation for future restrictions to be included in the directive.

However, the failure of MEPs to introduce new restrictions on brominated flame retardants, or BFR, and PVC plastic is a disappointment and a missed opportunity.

In the vote, the committee rejected proposals from the rapporteur to include BFRs and PVC on the RoHS-list of restricted substances: Annex IV. ChemSec has strongly recommended MEPs to restrict BFRs, and PVC. The main reason being the potential of such chemicals containing organic bromine and chlorine to transform into dioxins when incinerated at insufficiently high temperatures. Dioxins are some of the most hazardous compounds created by man, with far-reaching health effects such as hormone disruption, cancer and birth defects.

*– The well established scientific evidence on the problems to human and environmental health of BFRs and PVC is overwhelming, explains Frida Hök, ChemSec RoHS Project Manager. In the last decade, the scientific literature to an ever greater extent has demonstrated the negative impact of BFRs and PVC on human health and environment. The potential to release hazardous substances to the environment, through eg transformation into dioxins, was recognized by the MEPs in the wording of the methodology for possible future restrictions. But even though BFR and PVC fulfill these criteria today, they were not included on the RoHS restrictions list. It is remarkable that the EP Environment committee did not decide to contribute to the phase-out the use of these hazardous chemicals!*

Furthermore, there are viable alternatives to the use of BFRs and PVC. Large parts of the electronics industry has already started the transition away from BFRs and PVC. As an example, key players in the electronics sector such as Dell, Acer, Hewlett-Packard and Sony Ericsson support restrictions on all brominated flame retardants and PVC in the RoHS Directive.

Nardono Nimpuno, ChemSec Senior Policy Advisor: *– Large parts of industry is undergoing a transition to BFR and PVC-free, with a supply-chain able to provide safer alternatives for these hazardous chemicals. With others yet to follow, awaiting clear signals from law-makers, it is indeed unsatisfactory that legislators do not provide them with sustainable guidance on in which direction to move. The technical capability is there, the science is there, but the legislators are flinching.*

The committee also introduced an exclusion from RoHS for renewable energy technologies, such as

solar panels.

*– The blanket exclusion of eg solar panels is a rather strange move by the committee. We fully support transitions into renewable energies, however many solar technologies make use of highly problematic chemicals, such as eg cadmium, adds Nardono Nimpuno. To exclude them from the scope of RoHS might not be the best incentive to invest in cleaner technologies. This is an unfortunate case where energy and use of toxics are traded against each other. It supports renewables. But is it greener?*

The vote in the European Parliament plenary is scheduled for 5 July 2010.

A more comprehensive analysis of the vote can be found at [www.chemsec.org/rohs](http://www.chemsec.org/rohs)

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