



Council of the
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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council
Subject: Rubber granulates on artificial sports pitches
- Information from the Belgian delegation

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Belgian delegation on the above subject, which has been put on the agenda under 'Any other business' for the next Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 22-23 May 2017.

Rubber granulates on artificial sports pitches

Questions on the safety of artificial sport pitches have been raised within the three Communities of Belgium.

Amongst the 306 artificial sports pitches in Flanders, 63 have been funded by the government of Flanders. Following rumors and studies on the risks of the use of recycled rubber in artificial sports pitches, many local authorities have been questioning the Flemish government on the safety of these pitches. The German speaking Community is planning to analyse the risks of all artificial sports pitches in Ost-Belgien.

Similar questions have also been raised in other EU Member States on the safety for children, youngsters and adults to practice their sport on artificial grass pitches.

Following the publication on the 28th of February 2017 of the evaluation report by ECHA (European Chemicals Agency) on the risk of substances in recycled rubber that is used in artificial sports pitches and the advice from ECHA to consider changes to the REACH Regulation, the Flemish Minister of Sport, Philippe Muyters contacted the European Commission on its intention whether or not to propose changes to the REACH Regulation.

This letter has been sent on the 7th of March 2017 to the two competent Commissioners: Mr. Karmenu Vella (Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries) and Mrs. Elzbieta Bienkowska (Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs).

The European Commission has provided an answer on the 24th of April 2017, repeating the conclusions made by ECHA in its report and referring to the ongoing discussions between the Member States and the European Commission services on what the best approach for a restriction proposal under the REACH Regulation could be.

Although this issue is not a sports competence, the sports sector is involved and there is great concern about the safety of people practicing sports on these infrastructures. It is important to inform the sports sector properly and to ensure a safe way of practicing sports in the Member States.

It is thus of big importance to inform the EU Sports Ministers and to provide clarity to the sports sector on the safety of rubber granulates on artificial sports pitches.

At the Council Meeting on the 23rd of May 2017, Belgium would like to

- a) Thank the European Commission for her answer to the letter of Minister Muylers of the 7th of March 2017;
- b) Inform the other Member States and the EYCS Council (Sports Ministers) on this issue;
- c) Call upon the European Commission to keep the EU Council of Sports Ministers informed on the further developments for this topic under the REACH Regulation.