

## **EARS October 2022 Newsletter**

Welcome to the [ESE Advocacy Representation Scheme \(EARS\)](#) newsletter. We are delighted to share with you the latest updates on ESE's Policy and Advocacy activities.



### **The European Commission hosted its Fourth Annual EDC Forum**

On 21 and 22 September, the annual Forum on Endocrine Disruptors was held in hybrid format. The event gathered scientists as well as public and private stakeholders with expertise in Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) and was organised by the Directorate-General for Environment of the European Commission together with ANSES, the French National Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety. This year's Forum was divided into four main sessions: An update from the European Union (EU) on current ongoing policy files, a discussion on guidelines on test methods, and two special sessions on the thyroid and bisphenol. Over 2000 people from all over the world attended the forum.

Experts Prof. Andreas Kortenkamp (Brunel University, London, UK) and Prof. Anne-Simone Parent (Université de Liège, Belgium) provided key interventions on behalf of ESE and partner organisations about the importance of the thyroid pathway for EDCs and the impact of bisphenols on children.

#### ***Thyroid session: The impact of EDCs on brain development***

As keynote speaker in the session on thyroid, Prof. Kortenkamp emphasised the significance of healthy brain development and the detrimental effects that endocrine disrupting chemicals can have on it through the thyroid pathway. He provided examples of how even minor changes in a person's cognitive capacities can have profound effects on their ability to learn and ability to function in society.

In clear and accessible language, Prof. Kortenkamp made it clear that thyroid hormones are essential for healthy brain development in the pre- and postnatal stage. He highlighted

the T4 thyroid hormone as the most crucial for development, and mentioned the consequences for IQ and foetal development, stressing the need to avoid any level of iodine shortage in the body.



He asked for improvements in EU testing regulations and noted the inadequacy of the current OECD test recommendations. He said thyroid hormone analytics is a crucial area currently lacking funding and stressed that chemicals regulation needs an update as the criteria for endocrine disruptors in relation to the thyroid are out of date.

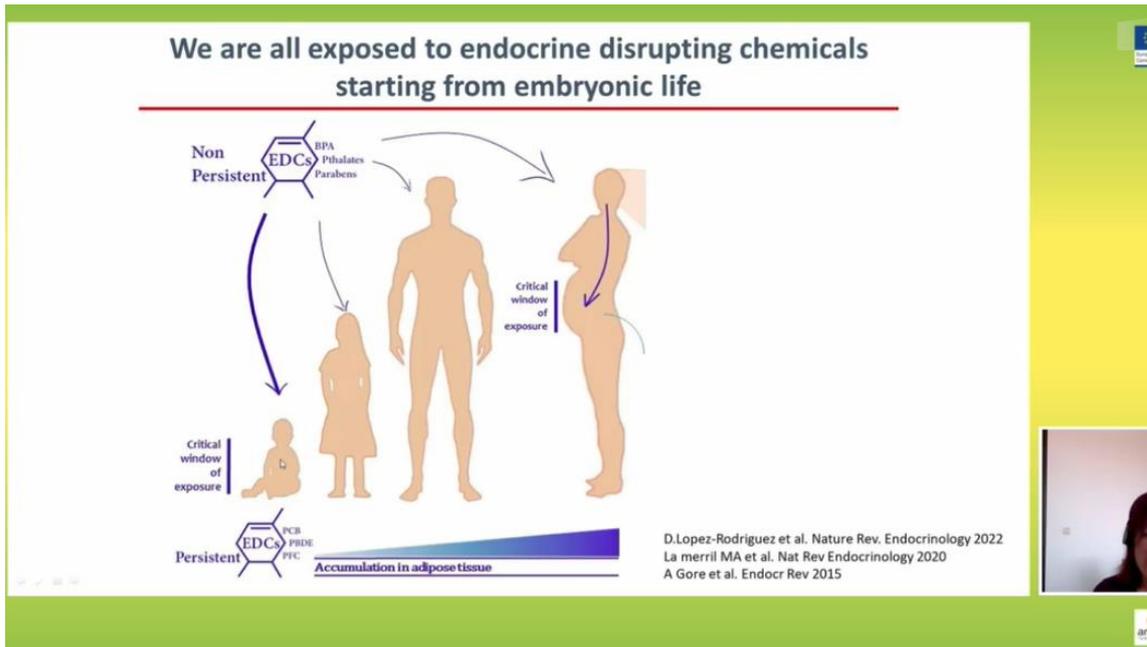
### ***Bisphenols session: Children are highly sensitive to endocrine disruption***

Prof. Anne-Simone Parent opened her session on bisphenols and children by providing an easy-to-understand overview of the effects of EDCs on foetuses and children before delving into the specific impact of bisphenol, highlighting that we are all exposed to this substance daily.

Prof. Parent illustrated that a foetus is particularly sensitive to low dosages of hormones and EDCs. Notably, she emphasised the discovery that new-born babies are exposed to more than 100 endocrine disrupting chemicals prior to birth. She demonstrated that there is a clear correlation between prenatal bisphenol exposure and cognitive function impairment. As an example, she noted studies showing impaired working memory or abnormal neural development three years after being exposed to bisphenol A as a foetus.

Moreover, bisphenol A exposure during development resulted in increased weight gain, increased food intake, and aberrant fat formation. Finally, she stressed that bisphenol is transmissible to the next generations as it could modify DNA – reaching 3rd and 4th generations even if they have never themselves been exposed to the compound.

Prof. Parent said bisphenol is found in 90% of the population, making it one of the most serious threats to human health, particularly that of children. ESE is pushing for a full phase out to be implemented for the protection of the youngest members of our society.



## What is ESE doing in this area?

ESE is actively reaching out to policymakers to encourage a firmer application of the precautionary principle and a phase-out of EDCs through upcoming policy revisions. There will be more activities in this area in the future. Please read the full press release on our participation in the forum [here](#) and do not hesitate to share this information with your contacts.



## The Commission is pushing ahead in the fight against dangerous chemicals: What can we expect for the upcoming period?

Since the European Commission launched the Chemical Strategy for Sustainability in 2020, the Executive has been working on the legislative implementation of the strategy

which strives for a toxic-free environment by 2030, where chemicals are produced and used in a way that maximises their contribution to society while avoiding harm to the planet and to current and future generations.

## ***REACH revision, a highly awaited policy file with significant changes***

The revision of the EU's main chemicals legislation REACH, expected in Q1 2023, has been eagerly anticipated. It controls the production, usage, and possible effects on both human health and the environment and is therefore the most significant piece of chemicals legislation in the EU.

Of relevance to the endocrine community, the Commission plans to amend the informational requirements for endocrine disruption to strengthen the dossiers submitted by producers, to allow for a more thorough classification and risk assessment. In addition, they want to designate endocrine disruptors as a separate category of substances of very high concern (SVHC). Currently endocrine disruptors can be identified as a SVHC, but only through a so-called "equivalent level of concern" test to other SVHCs. After the revision of REACH, endocrine disruptors will have their own place by name.

Additionally, the Commission plans to stop evaluating chemicals one by one. With the modification of REACH, chemicals will be evaluated as substances that can be grouped together to avoid regrettable substitution. An endocrine disruptor will be evaluated depending on the group to which it belongs. There will be derogations possible from a restriction of the use of a substance if its use is deemed essential for society. Once published the legislation will be discussed by the European Parliament and Council, offering ample time for comment by stakeholders. More information on this will follow in upcoming newsletters.

## ***New Classification and Labelling (CLP) scheme for chemicals***

In September 2022 the Commission published an update to the CLP regulation, which defines the classification and labelling of chemicals. One major update is to add hazard classes for EDCs. With this update there will be two groups of endocrine disruptor hazards: one for the environment and one for human health.

EDC hazards are categorised according to the following criteria: a verified endocrine activity, an adverse effect on an intact organism, its progeny, or future generations, and a logical connection between the endocrine activity and the adverse effect. A [public consultation](#) on the legislation is available until 18 October – ESE will prepare comments and encourages the endocrine community to submit their views on this legislation, and to reach out to your local Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to encourage them to support the addition of EDC hazard classes as proposed by the Commission.

These proposals are a very welcome development, showing that the European Commission takes the issue of EDCs seriously. After many years of policy advocacy from NGOs, scientists and the endocrine community on this topic, we are starting to see concrete legislative impact.



## ESE meets with NGOs in Brussels to further strengthen collaboration to tackle EDCs

On 21 September ESE was invited to the annual meeting of [EDC Free Europe](#), an umbrella organisation of a broad variety of NGOs aiming at the reduction or eradication of endocrine disruptors in our environment. Prof. Barbara Demeneix was part of the ESE delegation in her capacity as prominent member of the ESE EDC Working Group which has for many years now providing scientific input into the European debate around endocrine disruptors. Together with Dirk De Rijdt (ESE's Director of Strategic Partnerships) and Mischa van Eimeren (ESE's EU Liaison Officer) she gave an overview of ESE's activities in the area of EDCs as well as ESE's broader initiatives in the area of policy and advocacy including the recent launch of [European Hormone Day](#) and the publication of the [Milano Declaration](#).

During the general discussion that followed the presentation it was obvious that there may be many additional opportunities where ESE and the NGOs present could work together. In the coming months ESE will see where connections could be made, including at the national level where ESE's ECAS members have showed an overall strong interest in engaging more in policy and advocacy at the national and EU level.



## Cancer screening guidelines

In September 2022, the Commission presented [new guidelines](#) to EU member states to encourage the uptake of cancer screening. The objective is to ensure that 90% of the EU population who qualify for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screenings are offered such screening by 2025. It also extends population-based organised cancer screening to lung, prostate and gastric cancers.

Important upgrades include expanding the recommended screening ages for breast cancer from 50-69 to 45-74, recommending more frequent HPV testing, and a recommendation for triage testing for colorectal cancer in people aged 50-74 through

faecal immunochemical testing. Prostate cancer testing in men up to 70 will be recommended on the basis of antigen testing. In areas with high gastric cancer, screening for *Helicobacter pylori* and surveillance of precancerous stomach lesions are recommended.

The previous general guidelines on cancer screening were last updated in 2003. This update is therefore a welcome upgrade in the support the Commission provides to EU member states. In total, the EU has committed nearly 100 million in funding to support the rollout of the new guidelines, with more to be earmarked in 2023.

As the cancers the guidelines are targeting have important links to other endocrine impacts including obesity and EDCs, it will be a welcome development in identifying more of these cancers sooner.

The Commission is always looking to improve its guidelines. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the ESE secretariat via [esepolicyandadvocacy@ese-hormones.org](mailto:esepolicyandadvocacy@ese-hormones.org) if you have identified a need for screening that is not covered under the current guidelines.

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## EU Policy Media - in the news

**ENDS Europe:** [Commission proposes eight new hazard classes](#) (22/09/2022)

**Euractiv:** [Commission proposes updated cancer screening recommendations](#) (20/09/2022)

**Eurek!Alert:** [European Society of Endocrinology strengthens call for endocrine disrupting chemicals](#) (20/09/2022)



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## Stay connected



European Society of Endocrinology  
Starling House, 1600 Bristol Parkway North, Bristol BS34 8YU  
[info@euro-endo.org](mailto:info@euro-endo.org)  
[www.es-e-hormones.org](http://www.es-e-hormones.org)

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