

## The EU must take more ambitious action on toxic chemicals in packaging, and the PPWR is a good opportunity to do so

We know that **many chemicals commonly used in food packaging** (both plastic and non-plastic) are **harmful** and can contribute to associated chronic diseases in the human population.

The 2020 "[Plastics in the Spotlight](#)" health research project looked for presence of 28 hazardous chemicals – phthalates and bisphenols, in the urine of 69 decision-makers, media personalities, public figures, and artists across Europe. Those chemicals can commonly be found in plastic packaging, may migrate to the food, and are associated with cancer, cardiovascular disease, disorders of the reproductive and immune system. **The participants from all 6 countries (Spain, Portugal, Latvia, Slovenia, Belgium, and Bulgaria) were found to have an average of 20 out of 28 chemicals present in their bodies.**

As concluded in a recently published [scientific paper](#) that analysed results from the above project, its limitation was a small number of participants. While indeed studies on volunteers do not pretend to be representative of the general population, more recent results from the largest ever human screening for toxic chemicals in Europe ([HBM4EU](#) project, with 120 partners from 28 participating countries, tested for the presence of 18 of the most problematic groups of chemical substances in the urine and/or blood samples from more than 13,000 people) confirmed that **the European population is exposed to "alarmingly high" levels of hazardous chemicals, especially of children.**

Scientists concluded that **17% of European children and adolescents were found at risk from exposure to a mixture of reprotoxic phthalates**, and that mothers and children are the most exposed to Bisphenol A (BPA). The recent [EEA briefing](#), based on measured concentrations of BPA in urine from 2,756 people from 11 European countries, shows that **at least 92% of the participants had a concentration of Bisphenol A in their urine that exceeds the safe level.**

And this is only the tip of the iceberg. Strong evidence also points to widespread exposure of European children to highly damaging flame retardants and persistent FASs. And all evidence points to a **regulatory failure: current policies are not protecting us from dangerous chemicals** that may be present in packaging. For many substances, such as phthalates, bisphenols and PFAS, action is in fact long overdue.

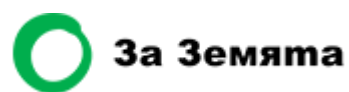
The lack of political will to take control of harmful chemicals in packaging, and notably in food packaging, has been accepted for too long. With outdated REACH and Food Contact Materials laws and not a clear picture when we will see them revised and how ambitious new rules will be – we need to act now. **The Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) has the potential to set Europe on a new path for [better protection from toxic chemicals](#).**

**Let's put chemicals in packaging in the spotlight** – let's introduce rules in the PPWR that will help to **avoid hazardous and not well tested substances in the packaging**. As more sustainable circular economy solutions are being developed, the critical aspect of chemical safety cannot be left behind. **Significant improvements in food packaging design to enable reuse and recycling must go hand in hand with well-proven safety from the chemicals perspective.**

Yours sincerely,



Rezero



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