

**Welcome speech at the ANEC/ ASI -CC/ BEUC conference
“How to eliminate hazardous chemicals from consumer products”**

by Benedicte Federspiel, member of ANEC, BEUC and the EESC

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a member of the Economic and Social Committee, I am pleased to welcome you to this landmark conference on hazardous chemicals in consumer products, co-hosted by ANEC, the European Consumer Voice in Standardisation, BEUC, the European Consumers' Organisation and the Consumer Council of the Austrian Standards Institute. I am all the more delighted to welcome you as a past President of both ANEC and BEUC.

Through this conference, we would like to engage with all of you in an open and constructive dialogue about chemicals in consumer products and how to close the gaps in the present European legislation.

Tests by consumer magazines often show that the vast bulk of consumer products available on the European market today contain potentially hazardous chemicals: food storage boxes contain bisphenol A; toys contain phthalates; cosmetic products contain parabens, computers contain brominated flame retardants and so forth.

Unfortunately, many of these chemicals accumulate in the fatty tissue of the body or do not break down or degrade easily. Of particular concern are those chemicals known to be toxic, cause cancer, damage our reproductive systems or adversely affect the hormonal system. There are increasing concerns from scientists about the potential “cocktail effect” of chemicals, whereby combined exposure to hazardous chemicals may have a detrimental impact on our health significantly higher than the effect of single substances. And this is probably just the tip of the iceberg considering that most chemicals used today haven't been tested with regard to their potential risks to health and the environment.

Hazardous chemicals are not only present in consumer products but can be found in the dust of our homes, in the air, in the water and soil as well as in our bodies, notably our blood and breast milk. Hence our organizations believe it both urgent and essential to work towards reducing exposure based on the precautionary principle.