

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001089/25
to the Commission**

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(12 March 2025)

Subject: Ethanol

Ethanol ('alcohol') is a substance that is easily biologically degradable. As part of the evaluation procedure for biocidal active substances, it is proposed that ethanol be classified as toxic to reproduction and carcinogenic (Category C), because these effects can be observed after the oral intake of alcoholic beverages. This classification would have the consequence that ethanol, due to EU chemical regulations (REACH ⁽¹⁾ or CLP ⁽²⁾), could no longer be used in detergents, care and cleaning products, disinfectants and cosmetics.

1. What costs does the Commission expect for the modification of hundreds of thousands of cosmetics, cleaning and disinfecting agents, and many other product groups, in the event that ethanol is classified in Category C as carcinogenic and toxic to reproduction?
2. What impact on the competitiveness of the EU economy does the Commission expect, in the event that ethanol is classified in Category C as carcinogenic and toxic to reproduction?
3. How does the Commission assess the compatibility of ethanol's potential classification in Category C with one of the goals of the European Green Deal, namely sustainable raw material extraction, given that classification in Category C would effectively ban the use of ethanol in many product groups?

Supporter ⁽³⁾

Submitted: 12.3.2025

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Séjourné on behalf of the European Commission
(20 June 2025)

The ongoing discussion on the potential classification of ethanol to which the Honourable Members refer to is part of the evaluation of ethanol in view of its possible approval as an active substance for use in biocidal products ⁽¹⁾. Any decision taken in that regulatory context will, therefore, only concern uses of ethanol in biocidal products.

The Commission notes that, even if the hazard properties under discussion were to be confirmed, ethanol might still be approved for use in biocidal products, provided its use is safe for human and animal health, and the environment.

Ethanol is currently not subject to a harmonised classification, as carcinogen or reprotoxicant, according to Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 ⁽²⁾.

The Greek authorities plan to submit a dossier for harmonised classification in 2025. After a thorough assessment by the European Chemicals Agency, the Commission will decide on the appropriateness of classification, after consultation of the expert group.

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), establishing a European Chemicals Agency (OJ L 396, 30.12.2006, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2006/1907/oj>).

² Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures (OJ L 353, 31.12.2008, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2008/1272/oj>).

³ This question is supported by a Member other than the authors: Fernand Kartheiser (ECR)

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) No 528/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 May 2012 concerning the making available on the market and use of biocidal products.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures, amending and repealing Directives 67/548/EEC and 1999/45/EC, and amending Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006, OJ L 353 31.12.2008, p. 1-1355.

Once a harmonised classification materialises, the Commission will carefully assess the regulatory consequences in other EU legislation, like Regulation (EC) 1907/2006 ⁽³⁾ or Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009 ⁽⁴⁾, and the needs and possibilities for derogations.

The Commission is aware of the versatile role of ethanol across a wide range of industries, including in the health sector. Any costs to be incurred by industry will depend upon the final classification and derogations that might be granted under EU legislation.

The Clean Industrial Deal ⁽⁵⁾ aims at accelerating decarbonisation, reindustrialisation and innovation. It will increase sustainable and resilient production in Europe, also by providing continuous support to innovation in sustainable and bio-sourced raw materials.

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), establishing a European Chemicals Agency, amending Directive 1999/45/EC and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 793/93 and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1488/94 as well as Council Directive 76/769/EEC and Commission Directives 91/155/EEC, 93/67/EEC, 93/105/EC and 2000/21/EC, OJ L 396, 30.12.2006, p. 1-850.

⁽⁴⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on cosmetic products, OJ L 342, 22.12.2009, p. 59-209.

⁽⁵⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/clean-industrial-deal_en.