(English version)

Priority question for written answer P-003902/25
to the Commission
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(3 October 2025)

Subject: Conflict of interest and regulation of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

Recent journalistic revelations ([1]) have highlighted a potential conflict of interest concerning the consultancy firm Ramboll, which allegedly worked simultaneously for the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) and for major PFAS-producing companies.

According to these reports, in 2020, Ramboll recommended to the European institutions that petrochemical companies be granted 10 years to replace PFAS in firefighting foams; this transitional period was incorporated into EU legislation, with a further derogation until December 2025.

Considering that PFAS are persistent, toxic and bioaccumulative chemicals, with serious effects on health and the environment; the EU has launched a universal restriction proposal on PFAS under REACH ([2]), which requires maximum transparency and scientific independence; and the credibility of European institutions could be undermined if decision-making processes are influenced by consultants linked to the industry concerned:

1. What measures does the Commission intend to adopt to verify the contractual relationships between Ramboll, the ECHA and PFAS-producing companies and how does it intend to ensure independent scientific assessments in PFAS regulation?

2. Does it confirm its commitment to the universal restriction proposal, in line with the precautionary principle and the "zero pollution" objective ([3])?

3. Was it aware that the ECHA's recommendation on firefighting foams was also based on the opinions of experts and consultants, including Ramboll, and how does it assess this circumstance in light of potential conflicts of interest?

Submitted: 3.10.2025

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Séjourné on behalf of the European Commission
(21 January 2026)

The Commission and the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) are fully committed to independent processes for restrictions under the regulation concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) ([1]).

When awarding contracts to consultants, ECHA follows the rules established in the General Financial Regulation ([2]) and the Commission's Vademecum on public procurement including those aimed at preventing professional conflicting interests.

All consultants working for ECHA must declare any potential professional conflicting interests and if such conflicts are identified, the contract is not awarded.

ECHA has confirmed that the work on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) performed by Ramboll between 2020-2021 was delivered before their 2022 engagement with industry.

In addition, the study in which Ramboll was involved is only one of several sources of evidence in the restriction dossier prepared by ECHA for PFAS in firefighting foams ([3]).

Multiple information sources are taken into account by ECHA's committees to issue their final opinion with the highest possible level of quality and independence.

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1 'EU hired 'forever chemicals' adviser that lobbied for industry', Alice Hancock, Financial Times, 24 September 2025.
2 https://echa.europa.eu/hot-topics/perfluoroalkyl-chemicals-pfas.
3 Commission communication of 12 May 2021 entitled 'Pathway to a Healthy Planet for All EU Action Plan: "Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil"' (COM/2021/400, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0400).

([1]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:02006R1907-20250901.

([2]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ:L_202402509.

([3]) The detailed answer from ECHA regarding the allegations of Ramboll's conflict of interests is available online at https://echa.europa.eu/-/echa-manages-conflicts-of-interest-appropriately.

The Commission was aware of Ramboll's role in the study contracted by ECHA for the preparation of the restriction dossier on PFAS in firefighting foams ([4]).

It based its restriction on the entire dossier, on the opinions of the ECHA's scientific committees and on stakeholders' feedback.

On the universal PFAS restriction, the Commission is committed to presenting a proposal as soon as possible after receiving ECHA's opinion, with the overall objective of minimising PFAS emissions, as indicated in the Chemical Industry Action Plan ([5]).

([4]) The study has been published on ECHA's website: https://echa.europa.eu/documents/10162/6755610/pfas_flourine-free_alternatives_fire_fighting_en.pdf/d5b24e2a-d027-0168-cdd8-f723c675fa98.

([5]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0530.