

## EU cosmetics industry must address nano perception, says Commission

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The cosmetics industry has to work proactively to avoid the stigmatisation of nanomaterials and preservatives, the European Commission's deputy director general for consumers and health, Martin Seychell, advised the audience at the Cosmetics Europe conference in Brussels, this week.

Mr Seychell warned that consumers already perceive nanomaterials as “inherently problematic”. This is a problem that cannot be addressed by regulators alone, he said, urging industry to think about how nanotechnology is presented to the consumer. “Having an innovative technology is no guarantee of public acceptance,” said Mr Seychell. “There is a loss of trust among the general public in the ability of regulators to regulate and the ability of the regulated to co-operate with the regulators,” he added, noting that products containing nanomaterials should bring an obvious benefit to the consumers.

The cosmetics Regulation requires that the presence of nanomaterials in cosmetic products is indicated on the ingredients list, with the word “nano” in brackets. Also, any products containing them must be notified to the Commission, six months before they are placed on the market, and data on identification, specification, quantity, toxicological profile, safety data and foreseeable exposure conditions provided.

But the Commission suspects that companies are not taking these rules seriously enough. Notifications submitted since the Regulation entered into operation did not provide the right data in many cases, says Mr Seychell. He urged industry to take the nanotechnology provisions in the Regulation “very seriously”. “We can't afford - on this already very complicated subject - to face the situation where the public feels that the regulator and the regulated are not on the same wavelength.”

“We were regulated in detail before there was a consistent framework for nano in Europe,” says in response Dr. Gerald Renner, director for technical regulatory affairs at Cosmetics Europe. According to him, the notifications submitted to the European Commission may be odd because this is a learning exercise for the industry. “We need to quickly find the common sense approach which shows that nanomaterials in cosmetics are safe and are controlled,” Dr Renner adds.

Preservatives are also burdened with negative connotations, fuelled by “preservative-free” labelling used in the food sector, said Mr Seychell. Although preservation of cosmetic products is essential from a public health perspective, since many remain in consumers' homes for months, the message about the substances reaching the public is inherently negative.

“Consumers pick up information from the way products are presented, from claims and images, especially from an industry as present in their lives as cosmetics,” he said. “We need to communicate very, very clearly, and really show the benefits [of preservatives].”

Meanwhile, the Commission is reviewing stakeholder comments, received during the consultation, on its proposal on fragrance allergens ([CW 18 February 2014](#)). Mr Seychell said the feedback shows a strong preference from industry to convey information to consumers about fragrance allergens through electronic means, such as a website, rather than through product labelling, as suggested in the proposal.

The Commission is now “reflecting carefully on this” and trying to strike a balance between providing flexibility in labelling, and ensuring that information is accessible to all consumers, considering some may not have access to electronic tools, he said.