PFAS: Risks, Uses, and Policy Pathways for a Sustainable Future

A Broadly Accessible High-Level Science Workshop

March 5 2026 | European Parliament | Host – MEP Dimitris Tsiodras

Organisation: the European Chemical Society (EuChemS)

Introduction

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) have been widely used for their high chemical and thermal stability, repellency against water and oil, low surface energy, lubricity and low friction in thousands of products from medical devices to firefighting foam. But their persistence in the environment, potential health impacts, and growing public concern have turned PFAS into one of the most urgent policy challenges in chemical regulation today.

This workshop brought together leading scientists, policymakers, industry experts, and civil society voices to provide a comprehensive, science-based overview of PFAS, their benefits and risks, and options for future regulation.

Main conclusions as recommendation to the European Commission on PFAS regulation

Given the well-documented persistence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and their adverse impacts on both human health and the environment, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive regulatory approach governing their production, use, and disposal within the European Union.

Evidence indicates that for several PFAS applications, viable alternatives have already been identified. In some cases, these alternatives demonstrate performance equal to or exceeding that of PFAS-based products. It is therefore reasonable to expect that alternatives can be developed for many additional applications. However, such alternatives will likely be application-specific rather than generic substitutes applicable across entire product classes.

The development and deployment of PFAS alternatives will require significant research and innovation efforts. This transition may impose short- to medium-term challenges for European industry, particularly with regard to competitiveness in global markets where regulatory frameworks may be less stringent. For many demanding industrial applications it is currently difficult to predict how long the search for substitutes will take. The fact that significant amounts of data on today's PFAS applications are missing complicates the creation of realistic replacement timelines. At the same time, the development of safer and higher-performance alternatives offers a potential for European companies to achieve a long-term competitive advantage by leading innovation in sustainable chemicals and materials.

To facilitate this transition, it is recommended that the European Commission strengthens support for research and innovation aimed at PFAS substitution. In particular, targeted funding mechanisms should be established or expanded to support public–private research collaborations that leverage state-of-the-art chemical science and engineering to develop safer materials, alternative technologies, and more sustainable production processes.

Furthermore, for applications where no viable alternatives currently exist - particularly those considered critical for safety, health, or essential industrial processes - the continued use of specific PFAS compounds may need to be temporarily permitted. In such cases, strict monitoring and control measures should be implemented. These should include robust oversight of production and use, as

well as comprehensive strategies addressing the entire life cycle of PFAS-containing products, with particular attention to end-of-life management, waste treatment, and environmental release prevention.

Taken together, these measures would enable the European Union to effectively reduce PFAS risks while supporting innovation, maintaining industrial competitiveness, and ensuring a responsible transition toward safer chemical alternatives.

Recording of the workshop

Programme

13:00 – 13:05 | *Welcome by the host*, **MEP Dimitris Tsiodras**, European Parliament

13:05 – 13:08 | *Welcome by EuChemS*, **Angela Agostiano**, EuChemS President

13:08 – 13:15 | *Setting the scene*, **Floris Rutjes**, Scientific Chair EuChemS PFAS workshop

13:15 – 13:25 | *PFAS restrictions: A huge challenge for public health and the innovation in industry*, **Maria Spyraki**, ECHA Management Board member

13:25 – 13:40 | *On the Way from PFAS to Fluorine-Free Alternatives*, **Martin Scheringer**, ETH Zurich, Switzerland

13:40 – 13:55 | *Legal considerations for the health sector*, **Ruxandra Cana**, Steptoe, Brussels, Belgium

13:55 – 14:10 | *Responsible Fluoropolymer Manufacturing in Europe*, **Takayuki Nakamura**, Fluoropolymers Product Group of Plastics Europe

14:10 – 14:25 | *Is it impossible to substitute PFAS broadly, or just difficult and inconvenient? – Examples from the industry, data availability of alternatives and how legislation can drive innovation*, **Emil Damgaard-Møller**, Danish Technological Institute, Taastrup, DK

14:25 – 14:35 | *Updates from the European Commission on PFAS*, **Denis Mottet**, European Commission, DG GROW

14:35 – 14:50 | Q&A session

14:50 – 15:00 | Concluding remarks, **MEP Dimitris Tsiodras** and **Floris Rutjes**