

EU ministers OK landmark chemicals law

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European Union ministers have reportedly approved a landmark chemicals law after two years of discussion and lobbying.

The law requires firms to register all chemicals they produce or import, and to obtain authorization for the most dangerous substances, the BBC reported Tuesday.

Industrial opponents of the law say it will impose heavy costs, while environmentalists say it is too weak.

Since the version of the law passed by the ministers differs from the text approved by the European Parliament last month, efforts to reconcile them will begin next year.

Under the new system called REACH -- for Registration, Evaluation and Authorization of Chemicals -- the ministers relaxed the conditions set by parliament for approval of the most dangerous chemicals.

The BBC said REACH could lead to the testing of thousands of chemicals used in household products, such as computers, toys and detergents, to determine their impact on health and the environment.

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