Understanding CLP

The Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) Regulation ((EC) No 1272/2008) is based on the United Nations' Globally Harmonised System (GHS) and its purpose is to ensure a high level of protection of health and the environment, as well as the free movement of substances, mixtures and articles.

The CLP Regulation amended the Dangerous Substances Directive (67/548/EEC (DSD)), the Dangerous Preparations Directive (1999/45/EC (DPD)) and Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 (REACH), and since 1 June 2015, is the only legislation in force in the EU for classification and labelling of substances and mixtures.

CLP is legally binding across the Member States and directly applicable to all industrial sectors. It requires manufacturers, importers or downstream users of substances or mixtures to classify, label and package their hazardous chemicals appropriately before placing them on the market.

One of the main aims of CLP is to determine whether a substance or mixture displays properties that lead to a hazardous classification. In this context, classification is the starting point for hazard communication.

When relevant information (e.g. toxicological data) on a substance or mixture meets the classification criteria in CLP, the hazards of a substance or mixture are identified by assigning a certain hazard class and category. The hazard classes in CLP cover physical, health, environmental and additional hazards.

Once a substance or mixture is classified, the identified hazards must be communicated to other actors in the supply chain, including consumers. Hazard labelling allows the hazard classification, with labels and safety data sheets, to be communicated to the user of a substance or mixture, to alert them about the presence of a hazard and the need to manage the associated risks.

CLP sets detailed criteria for the labelling elements: pictograms, signal words and standard statements for hazard, prevention, response, storage and disposal, for every hazard class and category. It also sets general packaging standards to ensure the safe supply of hazardous substances and mixtures. In addition to the communication of hazards through labelling requirements, CLP is also the basis for many legislative provisions on the risk management of chemicals.

Additionally, the following processes are part of CLP:

Harmonised classification and labelling

The classification and labelling of certain hazardous chemicals is harmonised to ensure adequate risk management throughout the EU.

Member States and manufacturers, importers or downstream users may propose a harmonised classification and labelling (CLH) of a substance. Only Member States can propose a revision of an existing harmonisation, and submit CLH proposals when a substance is an active substance in biocidal or plant protection products.

Alternative chemical names in mixtures

Through this process, suppliers can request the use of an alternative chemical name for a substance present in a mixture, to protect the confidential nature of their business, and in particular, their intellectual property rights. Any requests for alternative chemical names approved by ECHA will be valid in all EU Member States.

C&L Inventory

The notification obligation under CLP requires manufacturers and importers to submit classification and labelling information for the substances they are placing on the market to the C&L Inventory held by ECHA.

Poison centres

A new Annex VIII was added to the CLP Regulation in 2017, implementing harmonised information requirements for notifications under Article 45. This information is submitted to the appointed bodies in the Member State and is used for emergency health response (the Poison Centres).

Annex VIII defines a unique formula identifier (UFI), which will be required on the label of the mixture, creating an unambiguous link between a mixture placed on the market and the information made available to emergency health response.