

EU legislation: Azo dyes in textile and leather products

Introduction

If you are an exporter of textile and/or leather products, you have to make sure that your products do not carry any of the azo dyes that are prohibited in the EU.

Azo dyes are often used in the colouring process of textiles and leather. Some of these dyes have the capacity to release certain aromatic amines, which pose cancer risks. For this reason, the EU has laid down legislation to prevent exposure to these hazardous amines. This implies that azo dyes releasing the aromatic amines can no longer be used to dye textile and leather products that come into contact with the skin.



In this document you can find specific information on the legal restrictions, as well as information on testing methods and a practical example of current business implementation procedures.

A sustainable alternative: Natural dyes

Due to a growing environmental, health and social awareness of European buyers and consumers, in many Western countries the demand for sustainable materials, products and services is increasing. As a result, the demand for the use of natural dyes in the manufacture of textile and leather products is also growing.

➔ [For more information](#) on market opportunities resulting from this growing demand, refer to the related document.

Outline of the legislation



The prohibition on the use of certain azo dyes is laid down in Annex XVII to the EU **Regulation (EC) 1907/2006** on the registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals (**REACH**), which is directly applicable in all EU Member States.

Prohibition

The Regulation prohibits the use of azo dyes that release one of the 22 aromatic amines as provided in the table in [annex I](#) to this document. The prohibition applies to all textile and leather products that may come into direct and prolonged contact with the human skin or oral cavity. Examples of such products are:

- clothing, bedding, towels, hairpieces, wigs, hats, nappies and other sanitary items, sleeping bags;
- footwear, gloves, wristwatch straps, handbags, purses/wallets, briefcases, chair covers, purses worn around the neck;
- textile or leather toys and toys which include textile or leather garments;
- yarn and fabrics intended for use by the final consumer.

Please note that this list is **not** exhaustive.

The threshold limit for the prohibited amines, allowed to be found in the article or in the dyed parts thereof is 30 ppm for each amine. This is the limit of detection, so basically the use of dyes releasing the dangerous amines is **prohibited**.

If you export to the EU, it is important to check that all parts of your product comply with the limit AND that each present amine complies with the limit by itself. For example, a textile shoelace of leather footwear needs to comply with the limit of 30 ppm, as well as the leather parts of footwear. It is not allowed to take the average concentration of a certain amine in the complete product.