EU Restricts Chromium VI in Leather Articles

On 26 March 2014 the EU published a regulation to ban Chromium VI in leather articles. By this, articles containing leather parts in contact with the skin are banned from sale, if Chromium VI is present in concentrations of 3 mg/kg or more.

This requirement becomes applicable on 1 May 2015.

Background
Chromium III containing substances are used in 80-85% of worldwide leather production as tanning agents. Under certain production and storage circumstances Chromium III can transform to Chromium VI. A Danish survey showed that 44% of the reviewed articles emitted more than 3 mg/kg Chromium VI.

Chromium VI is known to cause strong contact dermatitis in humans and once sensitized, concentrations of 3 mg/kg are enough to trigger allergic reactions.

On this basis the EU now issued regulation EU 301/2014, which adds a Chromium VI restriction to Annex XVII of regulation 1907/2006 (REACH). The restriction states that articles with leather parts, which come into contact with the skin, shall not contain Chromium VI with 3 mg/kg or more.

This applies only to articles placed on the market on and after 1 May 2015.

Apart from that, other countries like Italy, France and Spain have already started to reject leather articles containing Chromium VI on the basis of general health and safety rules. Various cases have been made public under the European rapid alert system on dangerous consumer products (RAPEX).

Additional Information
Entry in the official Journal of the EU:

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