Glossary of summaries

PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

The concept of the precautionary principle was first set out in a European Commission communication adopted in February 2000 in which it defined the concept and envisaged how it would be applied.

The precautionary principle is detailed in Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). It relates to an approach to risk management whereby if there is the possibility that a given policy or action might cause harm to the public or the environment and if there is still no scientific consensus on the issue, the policy or action in question should not be pursued. Once more scientific information becomes available, the situation should be reviewed.

The precautionary principle may only be invoked in the event of a potential risk and can never justify arbitrary decisions.

The EU’s regulatory framework for chemicals (Regulation (EC) N 1907/EC - known as REACH) is based on the precautionary principle, as is its general regulation on food law (Regulation (EC) N 178/2002).

SEE ALSO

- Consumer protection
- Environment
- Food safety
- Genetically modified organisms (GMOs)
- Public health
- Summary on the precautionary principle