

## Press release

# Companies too much silent about Nanotechnology

**Paris – 15 September 2010.** Today, Novethic is publishing its study on nanotechnology, which examines the communication of about one hundred European companies involved in the field. It identified only three companies in the chemicals sector that provide extensive information on the subject, while 54% remain publicly silent. Nanotechnology has developed dramatically, but stakeholders have been left without any information from companies about its use or any potential risks. Only communication on toxicological data can answer the many questions about the need for specific regulation on nanotechnology, its potential toxicity for the employees who handle it or for consumers or the environment.

### **An under-estimated CSR issue**

Identifiable by its microscopic scale, nanotechnology is opening up new opportunities for an increasing number and wider range of products. However, its medium- to long-term risks are currently nearly impossible to assess. In its most recent study, Novethic filters companies' communication strategy through the CSR prism, comparing it against the expectations of stakeholders. These stakeholders include consumer organisations calling for products containing nanotechnology to be labelled or investors who need clearer visibility about the development of nanotechnology and the products using it. Companies generally present their development as a growth opportunity at best, offering no estimates of the cost of any health risks or the potential refusal from consumers.

### **Incomplete information focused on sustainable development**

Less than half of the companies reviewed in the study provide information about their use and development of nanotechnology. The few companies that have structured their communication focus on its benefits in terms of sustainable development. They describe technologies that help reduce the need for natural resources, make lighter products or improve their resistance, meaning that they need to be changed less often. These companies are committed to convincing the different stakeholders of the benefits offered by nanotechnology. This is their best defence against refusal from consumers or even a partial moratorium on its development, which is demanded by some environmental NGOs in France and Germany.

### **The chemicals sector leading the pack**

The three most transparent companies belong to the chemicals sector, attesting to its very strong commitment to developing nanotechnology. Weighing in at several tens of billions of euros, it is associated with most of the legislative measures, governmental lobbying and work of NGOs. As often the only source of information about nanotechnology, the sector has to communicate to all of its clients, across all sectors. Although the European chemical companies reviewed in the study provide twice as much information, only the three companies Bayer, BASF and Arkema actually offer extensive communication.

### **Labelling and regulations: two key issues**

The study also looks into regulatory aspects, but any regulation would first require agreement from the various stakeholders on the definition of nanotechnology. Should size alone be considered, or should materials that change the properties of the products also be included?

Lastly, Novethic describes the expectations of consumer organisations and scientists, health safety specialists, on the labelling of products containing nanotechnology. Thus far only planned for cosmetics, "nano-labelling" will be no easy task, as identifying the presence of nanotechnology, incorporated into a product chain, is in itself complex.

Click on this link to access the survey: [http://www.novethic.com/novethic/v3\\_uk/upload/nanotechnologies\\_study\\_2011.pdf](http://www.novethic.com/novethic/v3_uk/upload/nanotechnologies_study_2011.pdf)

**Novethic**, part of Caisse des Dépôts, is a research centre in France on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) and a sustainable development media expert. [www.novethic.com](http://www.novethic.com)

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