

# A.I.S.E. HOLDING STATEMENT ON MICROPLASTICS RESTRICTION

For reactive use only in case of media  
enquiries

June 2020

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## **Key messages:**

- ***Scientific evidence clearly indicates that the vast majority of small plastic particles (microplastics) present in the world's seas and waterways derives from the breakdown of larger plastic materials.***
- ***Detergents and maintenance products have not been identified as key contributors to marine litter in the 2016 European Commission "Study to support the development of measures to combat a range of marine litter sources" <sup>1</sup>.***
- ***The detergents and maintenance products sector traditionally makes very limited use of materials that could qualify as microplastics according to the final ECHA definition.***
- ***The definition developed by ECHA has been a moving target in the past. However, A.I.S.E., the EU detergents and maintenance products association, is now satisfied with the final proposed definition, which is based on scientific research and stakeholder consultations.***
- ***A.I.S.E. and IFRA have been leading in the work for a consideration of scientific criteria for biodegradability derogation.***
- ***The sector is committed to contributing responsibly and has already been actively investing in research and development in search of alternatives. Innovation is key for the sector, and technologies such as encapsulated fragrances for example allow for important benefits such as reduced use of ingredients and fragrances overall.***
- ***Guidance will be needed in the future on the REACH restriction. A.I.S.E. will remain available to contribute and share expertise.***

AISE welcomes the overall initiative to reduce plastics pollution of the environment and we are committed to finding pragmatic solutions for the benefit of European citizens, the environment, and society at large. When it comes to addressing the issue at hand, A.I.S.E considers the EU approach should fulfil three purposes:

<sup>1</sup> [Report for European Commission DG Environment](#), January 2016

- i. ensure that any regulatory action taken is proportionate, effective and science-based.
- ii. align objectives and scope of action with other global jurisdictions in order to appropriately reduce plastic leakage in the environment and (micro)plastics pollution in the world's oceans, and
- iii. promote action at EU-level to avoid a disparity of regulatory actions and disjointed approaches by Member States hindering the EU Single Market. We invite the European Commission also to ensure that Member States will not introduce measures deviating from the EU restriction in the future.

A.I.S.E. has been a committed supporter of the scientific process initiated by the European Commission through the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). This early commitment was confirmed by a continued engagement with the Commission and ECHA services through regular contacts, meetings, and the submission of several contributions on the Microplastics definition and on the socio-economic impact of a potential ban on intentionally-added microplastics.

In 2018, A.I.S.E. has also engaged more specifically with the Swedish Chemicals Agency (KEMI) in charge of estimating the potential use of microplastics in the detergents sector. The sector has also organised a workshop in 2019 to address criteria for biodegradability and how it plays a role in helping solve the presence of microplastics in the environment.

In addition, A.I.S.E. has participated in the development of a voluntary initiative to address marine pollution stemming from secondary microplastics, namely the “Cross-Industry Agreement”<sup>2</sup>. This Agreement – referred to in the Commission’s EU Strategy for Plastics – supports the need for further investigation and a better understanding for the prevention of microplastic release into the aquatic environment during the washing of synthetic textiles. It also aims to find feasible solutions based on science and research, which can be applied effectively. The initiative has so far delivered a test method to assess microfibre shedding during simulated laundering, which will be used for systematic evaluation of textiles and to support innovation to reduce fibre loss.

A.I.S.E. is satisfied with the final ECHA definition for microplastics. The association believes the definition is workable and has evolved positively from the early days of the restriction. It will serve to reduce genuine releases of microplastics in the environment, while also helping balance business considerations.

A.I.S.E. is committed to continuing the dialogue with EU policy-makers and stakeholders (NGOs, academia and industry) in order to find a sustainable and proportionate solution for all parties. A.I.S.E. will now take the necessary time to contribute to the consultation of ECHA’s Socio-Economic Assessment Committee expected to be launched by end June 2020. We stand ready to continue the dialogue with all stakeholders.

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<sup>2</sup> The [Cross Industry Agreement](#) was developed by a group of European industry associations representing the global value chain of garments and their associated maintenance.