



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
 DIRECTORATE-GENERAL ENVIRONMENT Directorate C - Quality of Life
ENV.C.2 - Marine Environment & Water Industry

Brussels
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Subject: Meeting with Cosmetics Europe

COM explained the urgency of considering and implementing effective options to reduce releases of microplastics in aquatic environment from cosmetics, in view of the international attention the matter has attracted, the bans in third countries (US, Canada) and the strong calls (including draft legislative measures at national level) from EU MS (reflected also in the draft Council conclusions, which explicitly require COM to propose a ban). COM services believe that microplastics need to be addressed in a holistic way, addressing all major sources and pathways, not only cosmetics; if voluntary approaches are to be considered a realistic option, they have to prove their effectiveness.

CE felt disappointed by draft Council conclusions which target cosmetics, in spite of the fact that they only account for a very small quantity of microplastics; they are expecting news from their members until end June on how they implement the CE recommendation (from 2015, to phase out certain microplastics from wash off products by 2020); once this information is received and processed, it could be shared with COM, tentatively in early autumn; it will refer to all plastic materials (polymers) used in cosmetics and also to cosmetic products currently not covered by the recommendation (the "leave-on" products, such as creams and make-up). Preliminary conclusion is that phase out is progressing even more rapidly than expected for 2016. CE has not decided yet whether/which part of the data they will make publicly available.

COM services explained that if the recommendation and associated voluntary phase out is to be considered a credible alternative to regulatory measures (including a possible ban), convincing information about quantities of microplastics placed on the market, list of product groups and % of market share covered (by CE and by those of its members which have committed to apply the recommendation) needs to be provided, as well as a comprehensive coverage of cosmetics containing microplastics to be ensured. In this respect reference was made to COM response of 19/11/2015 to CE letter announcing the CE recommendation. COM further enquired about possible work of CE on research on substitutes, impact on environment of cosmetics in microplastics, labelling and biodegradability; CE informed that they do not envisage any microplastics-specific labelling and that they define biodegradability on the basis of internal benchmarking against possible natural materials, such as wood.

In reply to CE, COM services informed that a roadmap on the Plastics Strategy under the Circular Economy Package is under preparation; it has not been decided yet how microplastics will be addressed therein; no deadline has been set for its release, but once published by COM, CE will have the opportunity to comment. As regards

biodegradation, COM informed CE that in Canada biodegradability is included in the assessment of Polymers of Low Concern.

As main follow-up action, it is envisaged to remain in contact with CE for the monitoring of the recommendation and supply of data on microplastics quantities in products not covered by this recommendation. Such information will be necessary for evaluating CE voluntary action as one option to reduce microplastics from cosmetics.