



PRESS RELEASE

Tough start with potential: EU-wide regulation of microplastics in cosmetics and cleaning products

Alliance of 14 environmental organizations and companies - supported by actress Caro Cult - voices criticism

Berlin, September 6, 2022 - The EU Commission's proposed legislation to restrict intentionally added microplastics in products in the cosmetics and detergents sector has met with criticism. The ocean conservation collective Ocean. Now! and 14 alliance partners - including four other environmental organizations, eight natural cosmetics and detergent brands and two apps - are taking a stand on the proposed regulation. The German actress Caro Cult supports the alliance.

The alliance, including brands such as ANNEMARIE BÖRLIND, Coscoon, i+m, Planet Pure, Sonett and UND GRETEL, welcomes on the one hand the EU Commission's regulatory proposal that so-called "microbeads" (exfoliating, abrasive and scouring agents) in cosmetic products are banned with immediate effect. This was to be expected after a voluntary commitment by the industry to remove these products from the market by the end of 2020. The further transition periods of 4 years for "rinse-off" and 6 years for "leave-on" products are accepted by some of the alliance partners. However, the transition period of 12 years for products such as makeup, lipstick and nail polish seems very long to the alliance. "Products like mascara, lipstick or blush can be produced without microplastics or dissolved synthetic polymers. For that, you need one thing above all - the political will to want to act ethically as a company.", says Guylaine Le Loarer, Head of Research & Development at Annemarie Börlind.

The coalition also welcomes the REACH registration proposal for soluble synthetic polymers, which has been developed - independently of the regulatory proposal - and will enter into force in October 2022¹. Although it is not relevant to the new REACH regulation, it is indirectly related to it: it provides for the industry to at least register gel-, wax- or paste-like dissolved plastics and this is the basis for a possible later regulation. The alliance welcomes this new important step, as it is estimated that this type of plastic accounts for the majority of microplastic inputs into cosmetics and detergents

¹<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/477/oj>

in the environment.² "It's about reducing the already increasing concentration of microplastics and liquid plastics in our atmosphere. This also means that manufacturers and retailers take responsibility and avoid putting potentially toxic substances on the market in the first place," demands Meike Schützek, founder of the ocean protection organization Ocean. Now!.

That even after 10 years, since the start of the so-called 'cosmetics dialogue' between the German industry and government in 2013, a large proportion of cosmetic products still contain liquid plastic was established by the reports of the apps *Beat the Microbead*³ and *Codecheck*⁴. "There is a strong desire on the part of consumers to buy products that do not harm the environment and possibly their health, which we see in the intensive use of our app *Beat the Microbead* by nearly 500,000 users in 199 countries.," said Bentelise Kraaijeveld, advocacy officer, Plastic Soup Foundation.

As a company that has been working without microplastics since its establishment in 2013, UND GRETEL BERLIN also proves that ethical principles are not at odds with economic success: "83% of all Germans reject microplastics in cosmetics.⁵ As a company, we comply with this wish.," says Stephanie Dettmann, founder at UND GRETEL BERLIN.

According to the alliance around Ocean. Now!, a first step has been taken in the regulation of plastics. However, two concerns remain: firstly, that companies will henceforth call themselves "microplastic-free", although they still add "liquid plastic" to their products and thus mislead consumers; secondly, the area of cleaning agents is still highly problematic. "Here, manufacturers are not even required to indicate environmentally relevant liquid polymers on the packaging. Even some eco-labels allow their use in certified detergents. Many consumers are thus not at all clear what they rinse regularly into the waste water. We at CodeCheck are calling for a change in the mandatory declaration of detergents and cleaning agents," says Dr. Ruta Almedom, Head of Science at *Codecheck*.

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Background:

With the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (especially point 14.1), policymakers have committed to addressing ocean conservation. As an ocean protection collective in action against microplastics, Ocean. Now! is following the first steps of policy towards clean oceans through microplastic reduction in Germany and at the EU level. Ocean. Now! has been tackling the issue of microplastic prevention in cosmetics and detergents since the end of 2018.

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² [NABU study: "48.000 Tonnen Mikroplastik und gelöste Polymere gelangen jährlich ins Abwasser" \(Oktober 2018\)](#)

³ [Report by Beat the Microbead, App und Kampagne der Plastic Soup Foundation: "THE FORGOTTEN SYNTHETIC POLYMERS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN HEALTH CONCERNS" \(April 2022\)](#)

⁴ [Study by Codecheck "The Invisible Danger Hidden Polymers in Cosmetic Products" \(Januar 2020\)](#)

⁵ [Greenpeace study, „Was Verbraucher vom Einsatz fester und flüssiger Kunststoffe in Kosmetik- und Pflegeprodukten halten \(Januar 2017\)](#)

Further media material:

- [Petition Ocean. Now!](#) "Stop the plastic shower: ban toxic microplastics in cosmetics and detergents" (live since end of 2018 - signatures as of August 2022 130,327).
- [Codecheck Study](#) "The invisible danger Hidden polymers in cosmetic products" (January 2020).
- [Report of the Plastic Soup Foundation/Beat the Microbead](#) "THE FORGOTTEN SYNTHETIC POLYMERS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN HEALTH CONCERNS" (April 2022)

Positioning:

- Fundamental Alignment: As part of the global #breakfreefromplastic alliance, Ocean. Now! aligns with the [positioning](#) of #breakfreefromplastic/Reth!nk Plastic Alliance. The alliance partners of Ocean. Now! alliance differ in their positioning. The common denominator is their commitment to ensuring that regulatory action is taken on both solid and soluble polymers.
- Regulation of soluble polymers in cosmetics and in detergents and cleaning products: The alliance sees the EU Commission's registration requirement as a first step in the right direction. This registration obligation provides a basis for later regulation of soluble polymers. Dissolved synthetic polymers that are not biodegradable should not be released into the environment.
- Transition period of regulation of cosmetic products: The alliance partners of Ocean. Now! alliance have different opinions regarding the transition period of products. However, they are united in calling for it to be minimized as much as possible.
- Regulation of soluble polymers in detergents and cleaning products: The alliance calls for mandatory declaration of soluble polymers for detergents and cleaning products.