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Answer given by Mr Breton

on behalf of the European Commission

(27.8.2021)

The fight against microplastics is a long-standing priority of the Commission and a key flagship of the European Green Deal. For this reason, the Commission asked the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) to investigate the risks posed by microplastics intentionally added to products, in view of a possible restriction under REACH¹. ECHA submitted the final opinions of its Risk Assessment Committee (RAC) and Socio-Economic Analysis Committee (SEAC) on this restriction in February 2021. As new elements on inorganic polymers and infills for artificial sport fields had emerged after RAC adopted its final opinion in June 2020, the Commission mandated ECHA on 5 February 2021 to prepare a supplementary opinion, taking into account these new elements. ECHA delivered the supplementary opinion on 22 April 2021, complementing its February submission and providing a complete picture of its committees' opinions.

The proposed restriction on intentionally-added microplastics is the largest restriction under REACH to date, both in terms of scope and expected impacts. The Commission has carefully analysed the opinions of RAC and SEAC and is now working intensively to prepare a draft restriction proposal.

The draft restriction proposal, including the appropriateness and length of potential transitional periods, is expected to be discussed with Member States in the REACH Committee before the end of 2021. If agreed, the draft would then undergo a two-month scrutiny by the European Parliament and the Council before the Commission can formally adopt it.

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH). OJ L 396, 30.12.2006, p. 1.