

RESTRICTIONS ON MICROPLASTICS AND GLITTER COME INTO EFFECT IN THE EU

On October 17, 2023, EU Regulation (EU) 2023/2055 came into force. The regulation restricts the placing on the market of synthetic polymer microparticles as such or in mixtures.

The restriction will curb the European Union's input of microparticles and loose glitter into the environment, primarily from cosmetics, personal care products and detergents.

However, biodegradable or water-soluble polymer particles and natural polymers that are not chemically modified are exempt from the restriction.

Furthermore, polymers that do not contain carbon, such as microparticles made of metals, are excluded.

The regulation states that “polymer microparticles may no longer be placed on the market as such or in mixtures in a concentration of 0.01 percent by weight or more.” Although “articles” according to the common ECHA definition are not explicitly listed in the regulation, a lively discussion has arisen in the industry as to the extent to which “articles”, for example consumer goods such as clothing and shoes, are affected or will be affected in the near future.

In order to provide assistance here, the EU Commission has announced in a “preliminary” statement that it will publish a guide by the end of the year in which the topic of “microplastics & glitter” in articles will be explained.

The EU Commission has provisionally stated the following:

Items that contain glitter or microparticles for decorative purposes, for example, are subject to the restriction. Typical examples of this are Christmas decoration items, party items, e.g. carnival costumes and hats, and toys. According to the EU, these items explicitly focus on the “decorative function” of the glitter. However, all items for which the “decoration” function of the glitter is only “of secondary importance” are excluded. The EU cites shoes and clothing textiles as examples. Here the EU is of the opinion that the glitter should be seen as an “integral part” of the product and therefore does not fall within the scope of the regulation. However, it remains unclear how the EU will classify these products in the future if the glitter comes off during “normal use”.

Hohenstein Services

No official test method is yet known regarding the adhesion of microparticles to the treated products. If you are interested, we will be happy to develop a product-specific test design to determine the abrasion of glitter. Hohenstein also offers the determination of biodegradability in an aqueous medium in accordance with DIN EN ISO 14851.

If you have any further requests, please contact our experts: customerservice@hohenstein.com.