

OPEN LETTER FROM MICROPLASTIC-FREE BRANDS

We, as brands from the cosmetic industry, are committed to formulating and selling only microplastic-free products. We support a swift ban of intentionally added microplastics from all cosmetic products.

It is time that we stop the use of intentionally added microplastics and we strongly welcome the initiative by the European Commission to regulate this. As cosmetic brands that are already microplastic-free, we do not believe the upcoming legislation goes far nor fast enough in its current format.

For years now, we have worked tirelessly and successfully to remove microplastics from our products, whilst some brands have never used microplastics in any of their formulations. We have demonstrated that microplastics are not essential in producing a wide range of cosmetic and beauty products. It is about the willingness to do so.

We believe microplastics, whether solid, liquid or water-soluble, should stop being used due to their negative, irreversible environmental impacts and potential risk to human health. It is time to embrace safe and sustainable solutions for our consumers and the planet.

We, as brands from the cosmetic industry, fully acknowledge the following:

The availability & increasing use of alternatives and their promotion

The principal driver within our industry is innovation. Our industry is highly competitive and trend-led. With new research, changes in consumer behaviour and legislation, we review our formulations, packaging, labelling and regulatory requirements regularly.

Despite an official regulatory definition for the terms natural and organic, for more than a decade, there has been a shift towards greater use of natural ingredients in cosmetics. Moreover, 'Natural & Organic' cosmetics have been the fastest-growing sector of the cosmetics industry. Predictions for the compound annual growth rate of natural cosmetics in Europe¹ from 2023-2027 are two² to three-fold³ higher than for the cosmetic industry in general. Adaptation to increasingly rigorous consumer expectations has meant that many large and small cosmetic brands, including make-up brands, market microplastic-free products.

Given the notable drivers for innovation from consumer expectations and market growth in natural ingredients, decisive, consistent and rapid introduction of microplastic-free legislation can act as an economic lever that will enable a triple bottom line approach, ensuring we have a pathway to the circular economy.⁴ Scaling and driving investment towards increased innovation in the microplastic-free space offers new green jobs creation, decarbonises supply chains, as well as supporting initiatives linked to the Chemical Strategy for Sustainability and chemicals and materials that are safe and sustainable by design.⁵

The exceptionally long transition periods in the current proposal, especially 12 years for leave-on products such as make-up, remain at odds with the principles laid down in ongoing European Commission initiatives and therefore have no justification.

The rising demand for sustainable products

Increasing awareness from citizens⁶ and regulatory initiatives⁷ has shifted towards more environmentally sustainable and circular products. As a priority, we have proactively and voluntarily chosen to invest our resources in research and development that no longer depend

on microplastics across a wide range of cosmetic product categories in order to deliver consumers with improved options when it comes to sustainability.

Consumers can be trusted to understand that pollution should not be generated under performance-related claims. More than 52.000⁸ people across Europe have already signed a petition by the Plastic Soup Foundation to ban all microplastics in cosmetics and personal care products. A recent study by Provenance⁹ also shows that 9 out of 10 shoppers believe sustainability and ethics-related considerations are important when buying beauty and wellness products.

The need to protect consumers from exposure to harmful substances in non-critical uses

Microplastics are found in the human blood¹⁰, lungs¹¹ and even the placenta¹². That is why we believe that leave-on products should also be free from microplastics. More often than not, microplastics can carry toxic chemicals¹³, so a precautionary approach would imply that they should not be applied on human skin, even less on sensitive areas such as the mouth, eyes or the vulnerable skin of babies.

Our responsibility to take action within our reach

We have made a choice to come together and call for a future-proof regulation that doesn't provide exceptionally long transition periods for leave-on products and lip, nail and make-up products (6 and 12 years). As responsible industries, we believe we should contribute to shaping tomorrow's world, not fight to maintain yesterday's practices.

Signatories:

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Endnotes

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