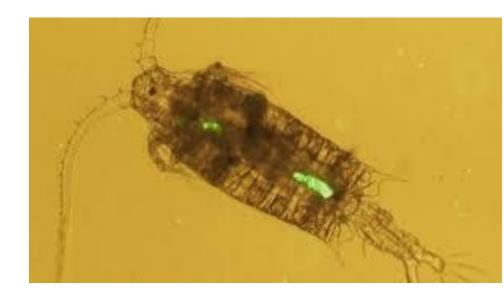


# Current EU initiatives to prevent microplastics in the environment

Werner Bosmans Team leader 'Plastics' DG Environment 9 March 2023

#### The issue

Microplastics = small solid particles composed of synthetic polymers that are non-degradable and less than 5mm in size (European Chemicals Agency)



- Microplastics are:
  - ✓ ubiquitous, persistent and accumulate
  - ✓ transported by wind, snow and rain, and traveling across entire continents
  - ✓ found in soil, air & waters, plants, animals, human diet & drinking water, in the Antarctic & on the Everest
- They can transport and absorb other organic contaminants
- Impacts on environment and potentially on health
- Rising public awareness & overwhelming support for action in public consultation



#### The political mandate

2018



Acknowledgment of risks posed by microplastics & first actions

2020



Commitment to address microplastics:

- intentionally added
- unintentionally released

2021



30% reduction of microplastic releases by 2030



### Filling the gap to tackle plastics pollution

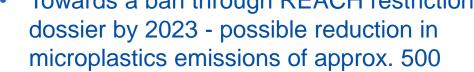
#### **Macroplastics**

- waste legislation
- SUP Directive



#### **Unintentional releases of microplastics**

- Resulting from the use of a product, for instance abrasion or fragmentation
- Towards <u>legislation to reduce microplastic</u> releases



thousand tonnes over 20 years



# Legislation for microplastic releases: limited to monitoring requirements

- Proposed revision of Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive
- Proposed revision of polluting substances in the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Groundwater Directive (GWD) and the Environmental Quality Standards Directive (EQSD)
- Recast Drinking Water Directive (DWD)
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

→ Still more is needed



# or living oceans and water

- 2 Belgian students from ULB and UCL
  - journey to better understand plastic pollution
- European countries
- samples of plastic waste (micro/macro)

supported by







## **SCAN ME**



https://www.flowproject.be

#### Sources of unintentional releases of microplastics

- Originally determined as most important sources:
  - Pellets: small granules that are intermediate raw material to manufacture plastic items.
  - Tyres
  - Textiles clothes
- Three additional sources identified in the 'draft IA study' and by stakeholders:
  - Paints: marine paints, road markings, architectural paints, ...
  - Geotextiles: used in construction e.g. for building roads, coastal & flooding protection
  - Soluble films in detergent capsules for laundry and dishwashers



#### Releases to the environment in the EU

(*provisional* figures from 'draft IA study')

Source	Quantity (tons/year)
Paints	482 000
Tyres	450 000
Pellets	134 260 – 198 190
Textiles	1 649 – 61 078
Geotextiles	6 000 – 19 750
Detergent capsules	18 000
<b>Total emissions from the 6 sources</b>	800 000 – 1 800 000
	(90% of the total sources)



## Links with other regulatory initiatives

Paints	Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation
Tyres	Euro 7: Review clause to include tyre abrasion limits. Ongoing study on tyre abrasion test method
	Tyre Labelling Regulation: delegated acts possible for a label on mileage and abrasion
Textiles	• Review of Regulation on ecodesign for washing machines and washer-dryers (2025) to consider requirements for reducing micro-plastics, such as filters
	Textile Strategy, Textile labelling regulation
	Revision of the Waste Framework Directive (EPR and modulated fees)
	Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation
Detergent capsules	Revision of Detergents Regulation
Geotextiles	Revision of Construction Products Regulation



#### Tackling pellet losses

- 3 main actors in pellets value chain: producers, converters & logistics
  - > Pellet losses throughout value chain because of handling
- Industry voluntary certification scheme (OCS Operation Clean Sweep)
  - ➤ Analysis ongoing to determine whether industry's scheme is sufficient
- SME survey: mandatory measures acceptable if lighter requirements for SMEs



#### Conclusion

- 1) EU political commitment to tackle microplastic pollution
- 2) Planned REACH restriction on intentionally added microplastics
- 3) Ongoing work to evaluate benefits of additional legislation for unintentional releases
  - → legislative proposal & communication for Q2 2023





share



reuse



return & collect



sort



recycle



Learn more about plastics and the circular economy:

Circular economy action plan (europa.eu) & Plastics (europa.eu)



#### © European Union 2020

Unless otherwise noted the reuse of this presentation is authorised under the <u>CC BY 4.0</u> license. For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the EU, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective right holders.

