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FEICA position on the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation

FEICA, the Association of the European Adhesive & Sealant Industry, is a multinational association representing the European adhesive and sealant industry. Today's membership stands at 16 National Association Members (representing 17 countries), 25 Direct Company Members and 24 Affiliate Company Members. The European market for adhesives and sealants is currently worth more than 17 billion euros. With the support of its national associations and several direct and affiliated members, FEICA coordinates, represents and advocates the common interests of our industry throughout Europe. In this regard, FEICA works with all relevant stakeholders to create a mutually beneficial economic and legislative environment.

Background

The European adhesives industry is supportive of the revision of the Packaging and Packaging Waste directive (PPWD) that is currently being prepared by the EU Commission. **FEICA supports bringing this legislation up to date** to accelerate the transition to a circular EU economy and a climate-neutral Europe.

Furthermore, **FEICA welcomes the opportunity of a potential recasting of the PPWD into an EU regulation**, which would bring about more harmonised requirements on packaging across EU member states, reduce internal market barriers and simplify compliance work for economic operators.

While **adhesives already have been part of successful circular value chains for paper, plastic, glass and metal packaging for many years**, the European adhesives industry is continuously investing in evaluating together with stakeholders along the value chain and in improving the compatibility of adhesives with collection, sorting and recycling of packaging waste.

Aspects to be considered in the future packaging and packaging waste legislation:

FEICA fully supports the objective of an ambitious updated legislation with clear targets on circularity. For adhesives to continue to play their part in achieving these goals, in order to realise the maximum ecological benefit and in order to avoid market disruptions or regrettable substitutions, FEICA strongly believes that the following aspects need to be considered when future packaging and packaging waste legislation is defined:

1. Design-for-recycling (DfR) guidelines are a useful tool for designers and users of packaging to make better choices with regards to circularity. To provide correct direction to practitioners, **adhesives should be recognised in DfR guidelines in their applied form¹ ('adhesive**

¹ The form in which adhesives enter recycling operations is in the form of their application, which generally differs substantially from their delivery form, which the adhesive user receives. Differences include size and shape (adhesive applications are

applications’). As the compatibility of adhesives with the recycling of different packaging materials is determined by their behaviour during recycling operations, **requirements and restrictions on the use of adhesives should be formulated in the form of required or restricted properties, not by a description of their chemical makeup. These properties should be stated relative to clear and established characterisation methods. Limits and restrictions should be based on empirical evidence. To ensure clear language and technical accuracy, **representatives of the adhesive industry should be involved in consultations which lead to the creation or update of DfR guidelines or lists of restricted materials.****

2. Design-for-recycling guidelines allow in many cases for a fast, inexpensive first assessment of recyclability. However, both to not stifle innovations – which may initially not be listed in design guidelines – as well as to recognise that design guidelines are by necessity a generalization, **a legally recognised pathway to prove recyclability of a specific package through testing should be provided.** Such testing should be performed according to publicly available and scientifically sound test methods.
3. For the same reason, **a general negative list for substances or products, which precludes proving recyclability through specific testing, must be avoided in order to not eliminate from the market packaging that is already recyclable and recycled in practice.**
4. In addition, to improved design-for-recycling of packaging, a continuous improvement of sorting and recycling infrastructure will be needed, so that well-designed packaging will achieve an ‘at scale’ recycling result. A situation where packaging is designed according to design-for-recycling guidelines but cannot be widely recycled in practice must be avoided. **Upgrading sorting and recycling infrastructure across Europe to state-of-the-art or best available technology (BAT) should therefore be given sufficient attention.**
5. The adhesives industry is constantly innovating and improving its products with a view to compatibility with recycling. At the same time, **certain improvements in recycled material quality may be more readily, more realistically and more effectively reached through improved washing and cleaning operations before recycling than through fundamental change of adhesive properties,** which may also impair their functionality during the packaging’s useful life. Sufficient consideration should be given to this option and funding be made available to support such improvements in infrastructure and processes.
6. In the setting of targets for recyclability, the realisable ecological benefit should provide the sense of direction. In particular, as stated in the 2020 JRC report on ‘Quality of recycling’, certain increases in quality of recycling, for example, reaching a closed product loop, may not result in a significant benefit where a lower quality material can also be used to displace virgin material. **Consequently, definitions of recyclability should not require a closed product loop,** so that recycled materials can flow into all types of ecologically beneficial end uses. This is consistent also with existing key definitions such as those from EN and international norms.
7. Quality of recycling also relates to the ability of introducing recycled content into contact-sensitive packaging applications. Recycled plastics in food contact are specifically regulated. As evidenced by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), opinions published since the introduction of Regulation (EC) No 282/2008, these requirements are not easily met for mechanically recycled plastics other than PET, even if sourced from closed systems or dedicated collection. **Advanced technologies such as physical recycling (including solvent-based processes) and chemical recycling of plastics should be fully recognised as recycling**

generally thin and small whereas delivery may occur in large volumes), aggregate state (adhesives are often delivered in liquid form but adhesive applications are always solid), chemical composition (adhesives may ‘cure’, that is, chemically transform during hardening, or release substances during application) and properties (for example, adhesive applications may be insoluble and resist softening even if the delivery form was soluble or meltable).

to allow meeting ambitious recycled plastic content targets for sensitive end-use applications.

8. The benefits of reuse and its higher level in the EU waste hierarchy compared to recycling, is already recognised by the adhesives industry. Our industry has already deployed reusable packaging and bulk transportation of both raw materials and finished adhesives on a large scale. Factors such as the safety of hazardous goods during storage and transportation, the effort and ability to fully clean containers of resinous or hardened residues, the prevention of accidental reactions of residual cleaning agents with reactive chemicals and the guaranteeing of both the performance and the purity of today's high-performance adhesives must be taken into account. The application of reuse to industrial packaging, in particular that of chemical products such as adhesives, therefore, requires careful case-by-case consideration. **A mandatory and potentially rushed introduction of reuse targets for industrial packaging of chemicals, including adhesives, may jeopardise the track record of quality and safety that the adhesives industry has built over the years.**

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