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## FEICA's response to the public consultation for the simplification and digitalisation of labelling

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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 15 National Association Members, 24 Direct Company Members and 19 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

On 14 July 2021, the European Commission launched the public consultation on the Roadmap Inception Impact Assessment (IIA) on simplification and digitalisation of labels on chemicals<sup>1</sup> to better communicate essential information about chemical products to users via innovative digital tools.

FEICA welcomes this initiative and thanks the Commission for the possibility to provide feedback.

This initiative is of high relevance to the adhesives and sealants (A&S) sector because it would introduce changes for the labelling of a very broad spectrum of A&S products and A&S packaging.

A&S products are often placed on the market in very small packaging and, consequently, it is almost impossible to present all the mandatory information in a clear and readable way. Practical experiences clearly indicate that less than 30% of consumers read the label before buying the product and even less before using it.

FEICA members are committed to ensure end users are provided with adequate and useful safety and sustainability information.

### Current legislation

When analysing current legislation, we note that there are several overlaps and inconsistencies between the different European Regulations establishing labelling requirements.

The requirements established in Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures (CLP Regulation)<sup>2</sup> overlap with those established in other regulations such as the Biocidal Product

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<sup>1</sup> [Chemicals – simplification and digitalisation of labelling requirements.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Regulation \(EC\) No 1272/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures, amending and repealing Directives 67/548/EEC and 1999/45/EC, and amending Regulation \(EC\) No 1907/2006.](#)

Regulation<sup>3</sup> (BPR), the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive<sup>4</sup> (PPWD) regarding disposal and environmental information and the Aerosol Dispensers Directive<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, some specific legislations require information on the product label, e.g., the Construction Products Regulation<sup>6</sup> (CPR).

FEICA would be appreciative if the European Commission could address inconsistencies and duplication of information through the different pieces of European legislation.

## **Users' perspective on chemical labelling, assessment of labelling requirements, and needs of users**

A&S are used by three different user groups, i.e., industrial, professional and consumer users. We acknowledge that the level of understanding of chemical labels is different depending on the group.

In most cases, consumers don't read or understand labels. However, because of the applicable occupational health and safety (OHS) requirements, industrial workers and professional users are often obliged to read and understand chemical labels, as supported by the Safety Data Sheets (SDSs), before they use the product. Consumers are not subject to OHS legislation and, therefore, do not have to undergo training dedicated to reading and understanding labels.

The information on the label should be limited to crucial safety elements (e.g. H-phrases, use restrictions, etc.) and the rest (e.g. detailed specific instructions) could be made available digitally. Some items, such as P-phrases, could very well be replaced by visual signs (e.g., A.I.S.E. safe use icons<sup>7</sup> or FEICA SUMI pictograms<sup>8</sup>).

These modifications would create more space for clear and distinct wording and would increase the readability of, for example, the Unique Formula Identifier (UFI), which now mostly disappears in the overload of text on the package.

Replacing overloaded text (with all the mandatory translations) on the package with easy to read and understand commonly agreed upon icons, harmonised between sectors, could also play an important role in the improvement of labels for consumers.

There are ways to make labels less complicated. Even though not always required, multi-language labels and fold-out labels are quite often used even for clusters of countries. Less complicated labelling would lead to simplification of warehouse management and distribution and, thereby, cost for labels could be reduced.

If 'danger' phrases were given in one common language for different countries and if symbols or pictograms were used instead of text, other languages could then be consulted digitally. Also, chemical substances should be named by using IUPAC names (English only) or INCI names, as translations for some chemical names cannot be found in all languages.

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<sup>3</sup> [Regulation \(EU\) No 528/2012 of the European parliament and the council of 22 May 2012 concerning the making available on the market and use of biocidal products.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Directive \(EU\) 2018/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 amending Directive 94/62/EC on packaging and packaging waste.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Council Directive of 20 May 1975 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to aerosol dispensers \(75/324/EEC\).](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Regulation \(EU\) No 305/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2011 laying down harmonised conditions for the marketing of construction products and repealing Council Directive 89/106/EEC.](#)

<sup>7</sup> Safe use icons – A.I.S.E.

<sup>8</sup> [FEICA SUMI pictograms.](#)

## Analysis of IT solutions and digital tools for labelling of chemicals, and identifying label requirements both for the physical label and the e-label

FEICA members consider that already existing and very well-known IT tools, such as QR codes, could be of use to provide access to digital labels.

We believe that QR codes with a direct link to the product on the company website are very useful. QR code reading could be linked to the installed country or language (selected by the user) on the reader's smartphone for quicker access to the native language of the user and for connection to the specific country of sale of the product.

Furthermore, a website link for use on a laptop or PC is another way of communication.

A possibility to consider would also be to install and use scanning equipment in retail shops so that information could also be accessed before a sale. This would facilitate access to the information for users without a personal smartphone. Small shops with more personal and dedicated assistance can further help the customer to get information, either verbally or via a printout.

The costs to implement new digital solutions regarding products' labels, then, would include, among others, reworking labels with a 'code/link', consumer communication, creating and maintaining a dedicated website for storage, and hiring a dedicated webmaster. Distributors, on the other side, would need to provide scanning equipment at the point of sale.

Companies are already to an extent using digitalisation to pass on information. The adhesive and sealants sector impacted by the CPR started, in alignment with the Commission, a project for digitalisation of the CE marking and DoP information via scanning of a product QR code on the label. Also, some companies make the Technical Data Sheet (TDS) available via a QR code on the package. Then, too, for very small packaging (e.g., Superglue, 1 gram) with limited possibility to add text (Packaging is too small, e.g., for a readable QR code), information can be accessed via a reference to the company website (See '[www.companyname.com](http://www.companyname.com)').

Users' readiness to shift to new digital tools does exist, but such a move to digital information should be communicated in a way that is clear and commensurate with existing label information on the package. Over time, consumers will get better acquainted with digitalisation via the smart phone (used, e.g., for placing orders at restaurants, for arranging medical care and for conducting online banking), but it takes time to progress through the learning curve. Therefore, attention should be paid by the regulator to consumers' awareness and educational needs.

The question is not about deciding which information could be provided digitally but, rather, about avoiding too much text and duplication of information and about improving the readability of the product label, especially with multi-language labels (fold-out labels) and very small packaging (See the labelling exemptions under CLP).

### Additional information

The following additional useful information should also be considered:

- Access to up-to-date information is easier when digitally available. This is also a solution for outdated labels on older products at home
- Digitalisation using label information makes alignment with the SDS much easier and more accurate

- After legal changes (e.g., CLP ATP<sup>9</sup>), adaptations can be made more easily, avoiding disposal of a large label stock and expensive product recall at retailers. This is due to the short transition period in the sometimes long supply chain, where products remain on the retailers' shelves at the end of the 18-month transition period.
- It is important to avoid large stocks for pre-print aerosol cans, a proviso particularly of interest to the A&S industry due to the long shelf life of products
- Beside digital labelling, digital SDSs could also be explored (not only the PDF format, but general access and availability)

## Concluding remarks

FEICA fully supports the initiative of the Commission to simplify CLP labels and allow for digitalisation when possible. However, we would like to highlight that digitalisation of labeling should not open the door to additional new information requirements. Simplification should remain key.

Existing and working initiatives should be considered while this regulation is developed; for example, the Construction Products Regulation (CPR) regarding CE marking and the Declaration of Performance (DoP) is important for this study.

Digitalisation could also bring other benefits such as making different languages available, for example, for non-native people, travellers, and expatriates.

## Contact

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9 Adaptation of Technical Progress (CLP).