

CIRCULAR ECONOMY: A PARADIGM SHIFT



The role of adhesives and sealants in circular economy and ecodesigns.

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The proposal of the European Commission to establish ecodesigns within the context of circular economy has great impact on many industries such as the adhesives and sealants sector.

We spoke to Nicolás Fuentes, Regulatory Affairs of FEICA, the Association of the European Adhesive & Sealant Industry about the current status.

What is the status of the ecodesign requirements for electronic displays?

Nicolás Fuentes: Currently, the European Commission is looking at ecodesign requirements for electronic displays in parallel to the ongoing ecodesign initiatives on computers and servers. Such an exercise is deemed necessary to ensure that the language of the regulations, while not identical, is coherent. This should enable a smoother understanding of the requirements for these products, There has already been extensive consultation of stakeholders and experts for these processes, in which FEICA has taken part. The Commission will gain further stakeholder inputs through a Consultation Forum that will be held in the first quarter of 2018. This will be followed by the Impact Assessment study carried out by external consultants, during which additional technical information and expertise will be collected and analysed. In

addition, an open public consultation on this topic will be conducted.

What would have been the implications of the ecodesign requirements for adhesive manufacturers?

Fuentes: A restriction on liquid adhesives whereas now the eco-design has to support repair and recycle. The initial draft Commission Regulation proposed a ban on liquid adhesive as well as an obligation to use double-sided adhesive tape. It is important to note that liquid adhesives are technically no different to double-sided adhesive tape. If the regulation were to be implemented, the competitiveness and innovation capacity of the adhesives industry and the electronics sector, as well as the available choice of fixing systems, would have been severely impacted.

Has the EU commission now moved away from proposing a ban on liquid adhesive bonds for displays?

Fuentes: It is our understanding that the European Commission is working on an alternative formulation for certain ecodesign requirements that will enhance the extent to which products can be dismantled without restricting product innovation and design. Liquid adhesives will be able to be used if they support the design and dismantling requirements.

Do you think that other ecodesign requirements for adhesives in other applications might become a possibility?

Fuentes: Yes and not only for adhesives. I think there will be dismantling requirements for all types of bonding techniques. It is important for adhesive producers to work with their customers to ensure that products can support recycling at end-of-life. The use of appropriate adhesive bonding solutions to facilitate repair and recycle needs to be properly planned and engineered during the design phase of a product.

What is FEICA's position on the circular economy and ecodesign regulation?

Fuentes: FEICA members support the need for ecodesign to encourage end-of-life reuse and recycle solutions for electronic products and components. The circular economy is a paradigm shift for many important sectors of European industry; successfully addressing the challenge of a circular economy is best secured if all of society is encouraged to contribute. The aims of reducing waste and ensuring full circularity of the economy go beyond what economic actors can achieve alone. It is indeed a societal challenge and FEICA members are ready to work to support such change. The adhesives and sealants industry has been active in the sustainability area for many years and has



NEXT REGULATORY STEPS

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Nicolás Fuentes, FEICA

adopted the Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) concept when considering uses in different sectors, for example:

- Durability: the extension of the life span of products and components
- Material efficiency: light weighting to reduce material inputs in design

- Energy efficiency: improvements in buildings and in transportation

FEICA has already been actively involved on advocacy in the ecodesign legislation proposals for electronic displays and servers, and supports the principle that design for circularity is important. Adhesives are an

outstanding and versatile fixing solution. By working closely with customers, adhesives manufacturers can help ensure that the optimum adhesive solution is specified in the design phase to improve the recycling and repair potential of future products. ◀



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