

EU ban of synthetic polymer microparticles

Synthetic polymer microparticles are polymers that are solid and are contained in particles and constitute at least 1% by weight of those particles. The EU has placed a ban on polymer microparticles (microplastics) and according to Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH Regulation) microplastics shall not be placed on the market as substances on their own or in mixtures in a concentration equal to or greater than 0.01% by weight.

Microplastics exempted from this ban include;

- Polymers found in nature,
- Polymers which are not chemically modified,
- Polymers that are degradable,
- Polymers that have a solubility greater than 2 g/L and,
- Polymers that do not contain carbon.

Timeframes and transitional periods

Microplastics are widely used in different products, such as cosmetics, fertilisers, detergents, etc. The EU has set different timeframes and transitional periods on microplastics where the ban starts to apply, depending on the specific use, as per the below list;

- Synthetic polymer microparticles for use in the encapsulation of fragrances - from 17 October 2029
- Rinse-off products - from 17 October 2027.
- Lip products, nail products and make-up products - from 17 October 2035.
- Leave on products - from 17 October 2029.
- Detergents - from 17 October 2028.
- Medical devices - from 17 October 2029.
- Fertilising products (not falling within the scope of Regulation (EU) 2019/1009) from 17 October 2028.
- Plant protection products, seed treated with those products and biocidal products - from 17 October 2031.
- Agricultural and horticultural uses - from 17 October 2028.
- Granular infill for use on synthetic sports surfaces - from 17 October 2031.

Exemptions

From 17 October 2025 suppliers of synthetic polymer microparticles (as substances on their own or in mixtures) for use at industrial sites, must provide;

- Instructions for use and disposal explaining to industrial users how to prevent releases of synthetic polymer microparticles to the environment,
- A statement saying: 'The synthetic polymer microparticles supplied is subject to conditions laid down by entry 78 of Annex XVII to Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council',
- The information on quantity or, as applicable, concentration of synthetic polymer microparticles in the substance or mixture,
- Generic information on the identity of the polymers contained in the substance or mixture.

From 17 October 2026 suppliers of products containing synthetic polymer microparticles in in vitro diagnostic devices, including devices within the scope of Regulation (EU) 2017/746, and from 17 October 2025 suppliers of products containing synthetic polymer microparticles in food additives, shall provide instructions for use and disposal explaining to professional users and the general public how to prevent releases of synthetic polymer microparticles to the environment.

Specific labelling requirements

From 17 October 2031 until 16 October 2035 suppliers of lip products, nail products and make-up products containing synthetic polymer microplastics shall provide the following statement on the label: "This product contains microplastics". Products placed on the market before 17 October 2031 are not required to bear that statement until 17 December 2031.

Information to be submitted to the European Chemical Agency (ECHA) by manufacturers and industrial downstream users

Starting from 2026, manufacturers and industrial downstream users of synthetic polymer microparticles in the form of pellets, flakes, and powders used as feedstock in plastic manufacturing at industrial sites shall submit the certain information to

the European Chemical Agency (ECHA). Furthermore, starting from 2027, other manufacturers of synthetic polymer microparticles and other industrial downstream users using synthetic polymer microparticles at industrial sites shall also submit certain information to ECHA.

Information to be submitted to ECHA includes the following:

- A description of the uses of synthetic polymer microparticles in the previous calendar year,
- For each use of synthetic polymer microparticles, generic information on the identity of the polymers used,
- For each use of synthetic polymer microparticles, an estimate of the quantity of synthetic polymer microparticles released to the environment in the previous calendar year, which shall include also the quantity of synthetic polymer microparticles released to the environment during transportation,
- For each use of synthetic polymer microparticles, a reference to the microplastics which are exempted from this ban.

This information shall be submitted by 31 May of each year.

Information to be submitted to ECHA by suppliers

From 2027, suppliers of medicinal products, food additives and in vitro diagnostic devices containing synthetic polymer microparticles placed on the