Restriction proposal for intentionally added microplastics in the EU – update

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**ECHA nor the European Commission are proposing to close down artificial turf pitches.**

**Helsinki, 25 July 2019**- Several media have recently reported that proposals to restrict the intentional use of microplastics under the REACH regulation will result in the closure of thousands of artificial turf pitches across the EU, with profound implications for sports clubs and the users of these facilities.

The granular infill material that is typically used in artificial turf pitches is understood to be an ‘intentionally-added microplastic’, but neither ECHA nor the European Commission are proposing that these pitches should be closed.

The European Commission has requested ECHA in 2018 to prepare a proposal for restriction of intentionally added microplastics in the framework of the REACH regulation. This is done in the wider context of the EU plastics strategy. In March of this year, ECHA has published their proposal and opened a public consultation that will be open until 20 September 2019.

The restrictions proposal addresses a wide range of uses of intentionally added microplastics. In the framework of the public consultation, further information has been requested on the use of granular infill material in synthetic turf in order to assess the implications and the possible need for a derogation.

As these pitches are a substantial source of microplastics to the environment ([estimated loss of between 18 000 and 72 000 tonnes of microplastics per year in the EU](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/good-environmental-status/descriptor-10/pdf/microplastics_final_report_v5_full.pdf)), ECHA is gathering information on the socio-economic impacts (costs and benefits) of phasing out microplastic infill material. Socio-economic costs could arise, for example, from the need to use alternative infill material on existing pitches such as cork, coconut fibre, olive cores or other alternative materials.

ECHA is also gathering information on the effectiveness of technical measures to prevent the loss of infill material from artificial turf pitches into the environment. ECHA’s scientific committees for Risk Assessment (RAC) and Socio-economic Analysis (SEAC) will consider the information received as they consider their opinions on the restriction proposal, which will include their evaluation of the costs and benefits of the proposal and the need for transitional arrangements. The committees’ opinions are planned to be finalised in early 2020, after which they will be sent to the Commission for decision-making. All factors, including the important role that sport fields play in promoting physical exercise, health and social inclusion, are taken into account in the decision-making process.

ECHA’s scientific committees also recently adopted opinions on a proposal to [further reduce the maximum permissible content of certain polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in infill material, because of the potential risk to human health](https://echa.europa.eu/documents/10162/23665416/rest_rubber_granules_axvreport_10931_en.pdf/9777e99a-56fb-92da-7f0e-56fcf848cf18). This proposal is not thought to have significant impacts on existing fields as the new limit is only applicable to new infill material and can be readily achieved.