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Answer given by Ms Zaharieva

on behalf of the European Commission

(26.3.2026)

The Commission and EU Agencies¹ support and monitor scientific progress on microplastics to aid EU legislation. Microplastic pollution is assessed in reports by the Joint Research Centre and the EEA². The European research cluster to understand the health impacts of micro- and nanoplastics (CUSP)³ is a EU-funded research initiative⁴, to advance the development, and harmonisation of materials and analytical methods. CUSP has produced 200+ publications⁵, including on addressing methodological challenges⁶. The CUSP Research Roadmap⁷ summarises findings and highlights major challenges ahead. At the Parliament's request, EFSA will provide a scientific opinion on potential health risks from microplastics, and on analytical methods⁸.

The Commission and scientific community recognise the limitations of current methodologies for detecting microplastics, especially for smaller particles, and advise caution in reporting findings. However, humans ingest and inhale microplastics, and small particle accumulation in human tissues remains a concern. The 2023 Regulation on the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals (REACH)⁹ restriction on microplastics is based on an assessment by ECHA, that concluded there is an environmental risk from microplastic emissions. This conclusion is not challenged by studies referring to effects on human health. The Plastic Pellet Losses Regulation¹⁰ states that any harm to human health is considered 'potential', with precautionary measures taken based on the opinion¹¹ of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors. In 2025 the Commission launched a new EUR 40 million

¹ European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), European Food and Safety Agency (EFSA), European Environment Agency (EEA).

² Key messages from EEA-JRC report 13/2024: 'Microplastics are a major emerging pollutant of concern as the chemical compounds within them can pose a threat to human health. While much data is available on the presence of microplastics in the environment, knowledge on the health impacts of microplastics is currently lacking. The Commission initiated regulatory actions, such as a restriction of non-degradable and non-soluble (semi-)synthetic polymer microparticles and of products that contain them. While a number of research projects are ongoing, significant data gaps remain regarding microplastic sources, exposure pathways and levels of concern for humans and the environment'. Full report: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/zero-pollution-monitoring-and-outlook-report>.

³ <https://cusp-research.eu/>.

⁴ CUSP received a funding of EUR 30 million and consists of 5 projects connecting 70+ organisations from 22 countries.

⁵ <https://zenodo.org/communities/cusp-research/records?q=&l=list&p=1&s=10&sort=newest>.

⁶ <https://zenodo.org/records/17038462>.

⁷ <https://zenodo.org/records/17467125>.

⁸ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/news/microplastics-european-parliament-requests-scientific-advice-efsa>.

⁹ Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02006R1907-20140410>.

¹⁰ Regulation (EU) 2025/2365; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2025/2365/oj/eng>.

¹¹ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/knowledge-publications-tools-and-data/publications/all-publications/environmental-and-health-risks-microplastic-pollution_en.

call¹² aiming to further advance the knowledge on the impacts of micro- and nanoplastics on human health.

¹² <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/HORIZON-HLTH-2025-03-ENVHLTH-02-two-stage>.