

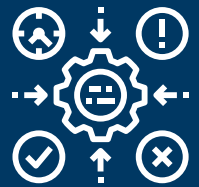


## 1 MICROPLASTICS - WHAT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED?

The European Commission has accepted the proposal of ECHA (the European Chemicals Agency) which recommends to introduce a ban on the future use of microplastic infills used in synthetic turf systems. The proposed regulation would imply a ban on the use microplastic infills following a six-year transition period and would be a legal requirement in all EU member countries. This proposal will now be debated and decided in the European Parliament. The discussion does not affect existing fields, but potentially affects the future construction of synthetic turf fields.

## 2 CONTEXT

The European Commission asked ECHA in 2017 to research the impact of intentionally added microplastics in a range of industries and applications. In 2019, ECHA published a report which included a recommendation of a broad restriction on the use of intentionally added microplastics with the aim of reducing environmental pollution caused by microplastics. Within ECHA, the RAC (Risk Assessment Committee) recommended a complete ban on the use of microplastic infills, whereas the SEAC (Social & Economic Analysis Committee) recommended the use of risk management measures in order to contain infill within a synthetic turf field environment. This recommendation was made on the basis of the significant health and social benefits synthetic turf fields provide to communities worldwide.



## 3 INFILL CONTAINMENT

ESTC recommends the use of **RMM (Risk Management Measures)** in order to minimise any dispersal of infill materials on a synthetic turf field. In the ECHA report, SEAC recommended a maximum dispersal of **7g/m<sup>2</sup>** which equates to an annual loss of infill from a synthetic turf field of approximately **50kg**. Recent studies, as referenced below, have demonstrated the effectiveness of these measures to reach values significantly below the recommendation of SEAC. This is nevertheless not expected to be the path forward by the European Commission. Links to the studies: [SILKEBORG](#), [Ecoloop-Report-Effectiveness-RMM](#), [NORCE-rapport](#).

## 4 HOW WILL SYNTHETIC TURF SYSTEM DESIGN ADAPT?

If a ban is brought into legislation, only natural and fully biodegradable infill materials will be permitted for use in synthetic turf fields after the transition period has ended. The synthetic turf industry has been known to be especially innovative in systems innovation and it is expected that turf design will change significantly in the coming years. This will be necessary in order to meet the technical requirements of synthetic turf systems which today, with the use of microplastic infills, are able to meet and exceed the sports performance demands of global sports governing bodies.



## 5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The proposal of the European Commission will be discussed in parliament. If a ban were to be agreed and enforced, a transition period of six years would become effective from the date when the recommendation becomes legislation. In the meantime, it is possible to continue to install synthetic turf fields with microplastic infills, and it will be possible for the duration of the six-year transition period. At the end of the transition period, it will not be possible to install a synthetic turf field with microplastic infills, nor will it be possible to supply additional microplastic infill materials for future top-ups on fields.

