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FROM COMPLIANCE TO IMPACT: HOW CIRCULAR ECONOMY POLICIES SHAPE SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION - LEGISLATIVE TRENDS AND INDUSTRY INITIATIVES

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Introduction

In a regulatory environment that aims to facilitate the transition towards sustainable industries, understanding the real-world implications and applicability of policy measures is vital for the development of successful environmental measures. National associations provide a bridge between industry, academia and authorities, ensuring that scientific rigor and practical feasibility are well represented in sustainability discussions. RUCODEM - Romanian Union of Cosmetics and Detergents Manufacturers represents the national reference point for cosmetics, detergents and biocides in Romania and acts as a sectoral integrator, consolidating multiple perspectives that can assist in stakeholder consultations.

Circular Economy Policies

One of the main roles of RUCODEM is to facilitate dialogue and knowledge exchange, ensuring continuous communication between companies, researchers and policymakers, by creating structured platforms for dialogue that promote science-based decision-making. We encourage academia to contribute to evidence and industry to provide operational insights, which would otherwise have a small probability of occurrence. In order to do so, we track EU and national regulatory developments and provide early interpretation, helping companies anticipate compliance requirements and innovation opportunities, while flagging aspects with potential implementation risks and technical constraints to authorities.

Industry Sustainability Initiatives

Another area where RUCODEM has a significant role is in supporting voluntary sustainability initiatives. We encourage companies to go beyond compliance and adopt voluntary programs that would bring a real added and measurable benefit to the environment. Among these we can name national initiatives (PREP P RO) and at the same time European-wide initiatives (Detergents Europe's Charter for Sustainable Cleaning, Cosmetics Europe's Commit for Our Planet) that RUCODEM members have access to, through our affiliation to European trade associations.

PREP P RO - Product Resources Efficiency Project for Powder Laundry Detergents

PREP P RO was a voluntary sustainability initiative in the field of household powder laundry detergents, carried out between 2021-2024 under the umbrella of the PREP-P3 initiative of Detergents Europe (formerly A.I.S.E.). The project tackled two angles: improvements in the field of production and improvements in the field of consumption. For production, the aim was reducing the environmental impact of the powder detergents sector in Romania, which was achieved by a reduction of the

recommended usage dose, via an increase in active ingredients concentration. This modification reduced the quantity of chemicals per wash, the amount of packaging and packaging waste, and the energy used in manufacturing, delivery, and use. For consumption, RUCODEM encouraged consumers to adapt and optimize the way they used laundry power detergents. We have developed a consumer communication campaign which provided consumers with important information on how to reduce the use of product and adapt to the recommended detergents dose. It is important to note that all of these measures were taken in full retention of the product efficiency before and after detergent concentration.

The Charter for Sustainable Cleaning – An initiative of Detergents Europe

The Charter for Sustainable Cleaning is the European cleaning and hygiene products industry's voluntary sustainability framework. The Charter supports companies across the value chain in embedding sustainability into their operations, products, and business practices through a common approach to sustainability standards, measurement and reporting. The scheme is based on a lifecycle approach and addresses environmental, social and economic impacts from raw material sourcing through manufacturing, distribution, product use and end-of-life management. Participation is underpinned by defined sustainability requirements, independent verification and annual reporting against key performance indicators, providing a transparent and credible demonstration of continual sustainability improvement and measurable progress. Read more on www.detergentseurope.eu/charter.

Commit for our Planet – by Cosmetics Europe

The Commit for our Planet initiative was launched by Cosmetics Europe in 2023 and is an industry-wide initiative aimed at delivering impactful and measurable sustainability results for the cosmetics sector as a whole, building on top of individual company actions. Through this initiative, the cosmetics industry aims to improve its environmental footprint across three key areas: climate, packaging and nature. The sustainability framework is designed as a key provider of environmental solutions adaptable to different company sizes, from multinational companies to SMEs. Within the climate area, the framework aims to support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; for the packaging area, increasing recycled content, promoting packaging recycling, using sustainably sourced wood-based materials, or joining existing packaging initiatives are envisaged; while for the nature area, the framework supports reducing environmental impact within operations, ingredient sourcing and downstream use. The initiative reports annually on progress through a transparent methodology, highlighting real performance in reducing the environmental impact of the cosmetics sector.