

# The REACH Restriction on Microplastics and the use of interleavants in the flat glass sector

## *Explanatory paper*

The European Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2055 of 25 September 2023 ‘restricting synthetic polymer microparticles on their own or intentionally added to mixtures’ entered into force in October 2023. Its purpose is to ban the placing on the market of mixtures containing synthetic polymer microplastics. The ban from placing on the market does not apply to products ‘for use at industrial sites’ and for certain specific applications<sup>1</sup>.

- **Interleavant polymer powders** used nowadays in the flat glass value chain for the storage, handling and transportation of flat glass sheets fall within the scope of the Regulation (EU) 2023/2055.
- **The placing on the market of interleavant polymer powders is permitted by the European Commission Regulation**, when these powders are ‘for use at industrial sites’.

Considering the confusing communication on this issue circulating in the sector since the entry into force of the EC regulation, Glass for Europe recalls the following:

1. **In the flat glass sector, interleavants are used exclusively at industrial sites.** They are used as a temporary aid deposited onto glass sheets on the production line itself at flat glass manufacturing sites. They are removed from glass at industrial sites of either flat glass manufacturers or flat glass processors by way of washing machines. Interleavants are no longer used further down the value chain and do not remain on the final product reaching either business customers outside the sector, e.g. window or car manufacturers, nor end-consumers<sup>2</sup>. The polymer powders used as interleavants in the flat glass sector therefore meet the condition for exemption from the restriction.
2. As part of the exemption for ‘uses at industrial sites’, **a set of obligations are created falling upon suppliers and users of these interleavants.** For their users, obligations mostly relate to information across the value chain and reporting to authorities. Flat glass manufacturers members of Glass for Europe are already working with both upstream suppliers and downstream users to ensure full conformity.

Notwithstanding the fact that the use of interleavant polymer powders in the flat glass sector is still permitted under this Commission Regulation, the sector as organised in **Glass for Europe and its members are committed to sustainable practices**. This sustainability commitment includes a substitution of microplastic interleavant technology once a substitute has been technically approved, not only by its manufacturer but also by users and recipients of interleavants, and is ready for wide-scale implementation. Extensive and long testing are needed to ensure the solution is suitable for all

<sup>1</sup> Annex XVII to Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006, entry 78, paragraphs 4 and 5.

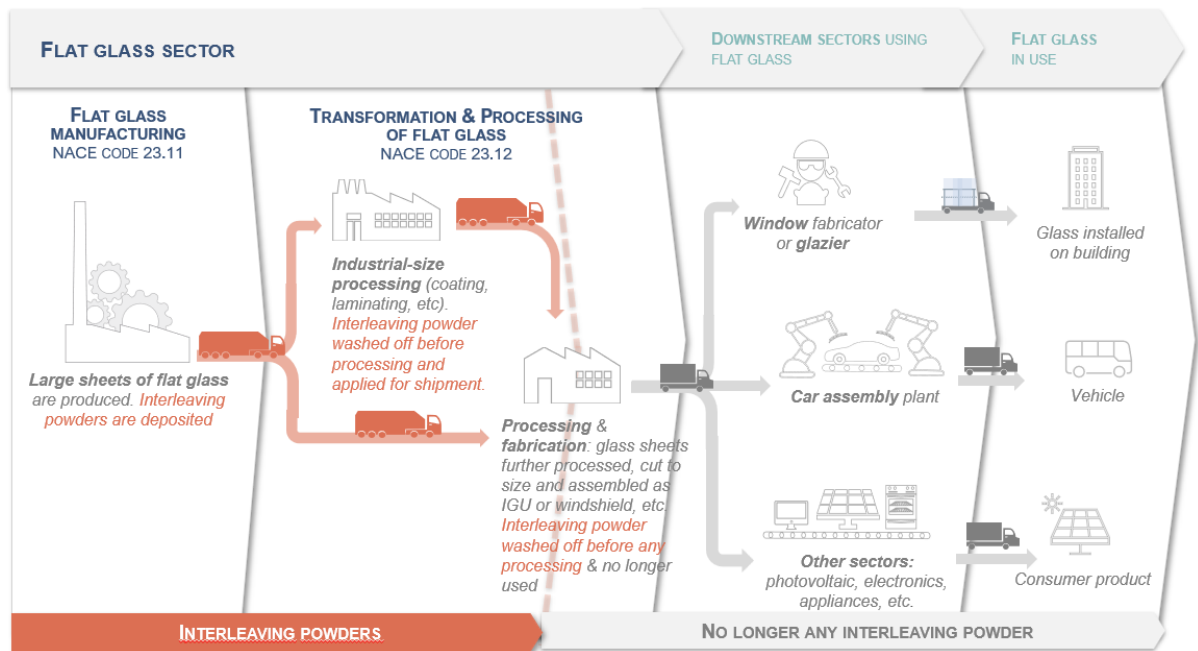
<sup>2</sup> See annex 1 on the flat glass value chain and usage of interleavants powders.

types of products and withstands ageing to ensure the quality of the product is not jeopardised. It is also essential to test that the potential substitute can be operated efficiently across the value-chain, considering machinery constraints and logistics demands.

It is the responsibility of flat glass manufacturers to assess whether any of the potential substitute that is or may become commercially available meets all technical requirements and is ready for implementation. The flat glass industry continues working with suppliers to identify possible alternatives, to test candidate substitutes and to implement viable ones as rapidly as possible.

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### ANNEX 1 – Flat glass value chain and use of interleavants



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*Glass for Europe is the trade association for Europe's flat glass sector. Flat glass is the material that goes into a variety of end products, primarily in windows and facades for buildings, windscreens and windows for automotive and transport as well as solar energy equipment, furniture and appliances. Glass for Europe brings together multinational firms and thousands of SMEs across Europe, to represent the entire building glass value-chain.*