

## **Towards More Sustainable Healthcare: The European PVC Industry's Response to Environmental Concerns**

Over the past two decades, the European PVC industry has demonstrated a strong commitment to environmental stewardship, sustainability, and safety. This commitment is deeply rooted in our understanding and acknowledgement of the valid concerns raised by NGOs such as Healthcare Without Harm. They urge us to take a hard look at the environmental and health impacts of PVC. This position paper is an opportunity for us to address these key points and affirm our commitment to sustainable practices.

### **Voluntary Actions and Regulations: The Path to Safer PVC Production**

Voluntary initiatives and stringent regulations have synergistically transformed the European PVC production landscape in terms of environmental and health impacts. A notable example of our industry's proactive measures is the complete phase-out of lead stabilisers across EU-27 by 2015, an achievement that has outpaced regulatory requirements. We continue to focus on the replacement of harmful additives as part of our voluntary measures, showcasing our ongoing commitment to environmental health and safety.

### **Balancing PVC's Utility with Environmental Concerns**

While we acknowledge and support the growing demand for safer, more sustainable materials, it is important to highlight that PVC offers unique properties that make it indispensable for certain critical applications, particularly within the healthcare sector. It is vital for devices such as blood bags and medical tubing, as well as medical interiors, diagnostic equipment, piping systems, windows and much more. Our focus remains steadfast on continually improving the safety and sustainability profile of the PVC material and its additives.

### **The Question of Low Molecular Weight Phthalates and Alternative Plasticisers**

The European PVC industry has been a leader in efforts to replace phthalates that have been identified as Substances of Very High Concern and classified under EU chemical regulations with safer alternative plasticisers. High molecular weight phthalates and other plasticisers currently in use have undergone rigorous safety evaluations and have been approved by European regulators. We endorse and support the necessity for continued research and comprehensive risk assessments of these alternatives.

### **Embracing the Circular Economy: Innovative Recycling Initiatives**

Contrary to the assertion that PVC has no place in a circular economy, we have evidenced a vibrant role for our industry in this area. Over the years, we have intensified our efforts in PVC recycling. In 2022, we recycled more than 810,000 tonnes of PVC. An inspiring example of this effort is the successful recycling of DEHP-free medical PVC, used in 14 Belgian hospitals, into durable wall coverings. This innovative solution not only extends the lifecycle of PVC products but also underscores our industry's commitment to addressing the full lifecycle impacts of PVC production, use, and disposal.

### **The Path Forward: Dialogue and Collaboration**

In reflecting upon our journey, we are proud of the significant progress made by the European PVC industry. We acknowledge that the path to sustainability is an ongoing one, and we welcome continuous dialogue and collaboration with NGOs, policymakers, and the wider public to enhance our sustainability efforts. The industry remains steadfast in its dedication to the principles of Responsible Care and Sustainable Development.