

Press Release

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Initiative against Micro-plastic Release in Environment Sporting Goods Manufacturers Conduct a Research in Collaboration with Two Universities and an Environmental Organisation

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Synthetic fibre-based textiles can shed micro-particles once when they are washed. Such particles end up in the environment and can enter the food chain when being released into rivers, lakes and seas. Reducing this environmental burden is the goal of a joint research project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

The “TextileMission” Joint Project started on 1 September 2017. The project aims to reduce the micro-plastic particles release, which originate from man-made synthetic fibres (e.g. polyester). The “TextileMission” project is funded with a budget of 1.7 million Euros by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) under the “Plastic in the environment – sources, reduction, possible solutions” funding priority program. As project partners, the following nine organisations from industry, the academy and civil society will jointly contribute their specific expertise: adidas AG, Bundesverband der Deutschen Sportartikel-Industrie e.V. (National Association of the German Sporting Goods Industry, BSI) as the project co-ordinator, Henkel AG & Co. KG, Hochschule Niederrhein - Faculty of Textile and Clothing Technology, Miele & Cie. KG, Polartec LLC, TU Dresden – Faculty of Environmental Sciences, VAUDE Sport GmbH & Co. KG and WWF Germany.

Project focus: textile production and wastewater treatment technology

TextileMission follows an interdisciplinary research approach dedicated to two priorities. On one hand, textiles and clothing are to be developed, using optimized production processes and researches, for significant lower quantities of micro-particles release in comparison with the available products on the market. Together with the sports clothing manufacturers involved, the textile researchers will testify the feasibility of using biodegradable fibres as an environmental friendly alternative. On the other hand, the project partners will contribute in optimizing the wastewater treatment technology for phasing out maximum amount of particles. This will also enhance as well the reduction of micro-plastics from non-textile sources. In addition, data about the release of micro-particles - from various textures during washing and laboratory wastewater treatment processes - will be collected in order to gain an improved understanding of material flows and retention of micro-fibres in the environment. This would fill the research gap in this area.

Textiles as one of many sources

The background: micro-plastic particles are released into rivers, lakes and oceans from a variety of sources, and can endanger living organisms. They originate from tyres wearing

out, paint particles, disintegration of packaging materials, and also from household washing. The reason: a major part of our clothing is made from synthetic fibres releasing micro-plastic particles during the washing process, particularly fleece materials. These particles, with a diameter of less than 5 mm, are only partially filtered out by modern wastewater treatment systems and thus get into the environment. The project partners are looking forward to an exciting project and warmly invite all interested parties from the economic sectors and scientific disciplines relevant to the project “TextileMission” to provide input and to participate in various workshops and symposiums to be organized in the framework of the three years project.

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