



RELEVANCE OF EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FOR MICROPLASTICS MITIGATION

Elena Buzzi and Maarten Dubois
OECD Environment Directorate

EPR as an instrument to tackle microplastics pollution
EPR Club International Conference, 24 February 2021



The context of microplastics (MP) pollution

- Microplastics (< 5mm) have been sampled in **all environmental media** and in **wildlife**, including seafood destined for human consumption
- These originate from a variety of sources :



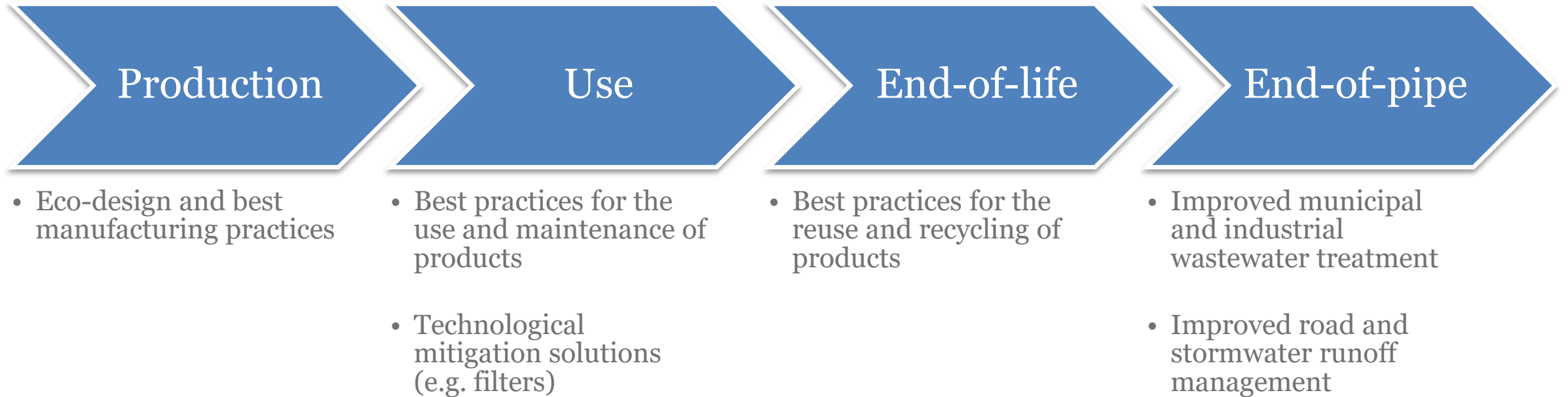
Key entry pathways into the environment

- **Wastewater networks** (e.g. microfibres, microbeads) and **sludge application**
- Diffuse entry points: **air transport, road and stormwater runoff** (e.g. tyre particles, paint flakes, airborne microfibres)



Mitigation technologies and best practices

A focus on MP unintentionally released from textiles and tyres





Policy guidance to address unintentional releases of microplastics

- **Lifecycle approach**
- **Source-reduction measures** are likely to be most cost-effective
- **A mix of different policy instruments** is needed

Strengthen the knowledge base to inform intervention

- Promotion of research
- Standardisation and harmonisation of methods
- Promotion of cross-industry and international collaboration

Opportunities for “no-regrets” interventions

- **Tyres:** Reduce passenger vehicle use; vehicle light-weighting; shifts towards more sustainable transport modes
- **Textiles:** Promote sustainable production and consumption
- **Awareness** raising among consumers to prompt best use practices, e.g. best laundering practices, eco-driving, tyre and vehicle maintenance

Policy instruments for further intervention

- **Source-reduction:** product minimum standards, eco-labelling, BAT, green public procurement, information provision schemes
- **End-of-pipe:** EQS, tariffs/taxes/subsidies for improvements in wastewater treatment or stormwater management, [Extended Producer Responsibility schemes](#)



POTENTIAL OF EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY (EPR) TO ADDRESS MICROPLASTICS



What is EPR?

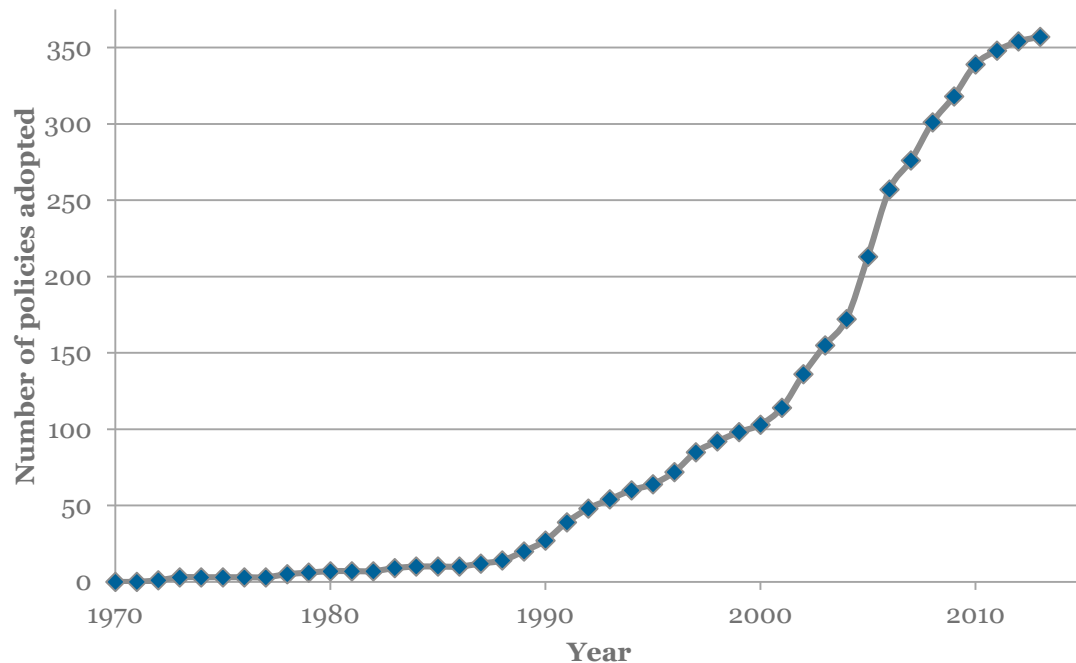
EPR is an environmental policy approach in which a producer's responsibility for a product is extended to the post-consumer stage of a product's life cycle.

- Collection of end-of-life products
- Sorting
- Recycling



What do we know about the impacts of EPR schemes?

Cumulative Global EPR adoption



- Reduced disposal and increased recycling
- Significant financial flows and burden shifting
- Economic opportunities
- However, limited effects on design for the environment [eco-design]



Some criteria to evaluate the adequacy of EPR to address microplastics



Financing



Governance

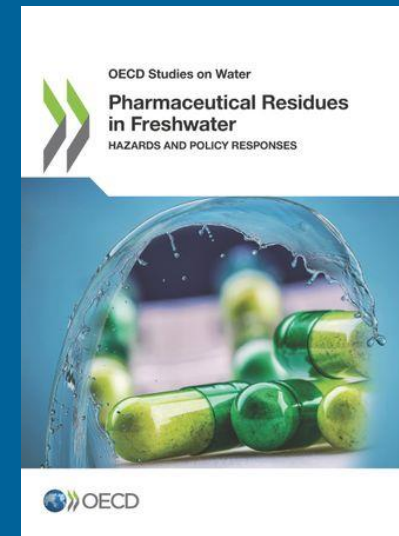
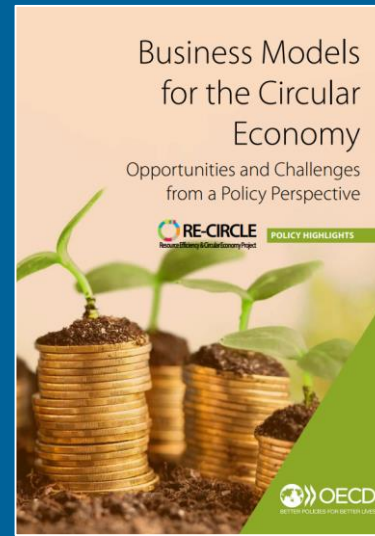
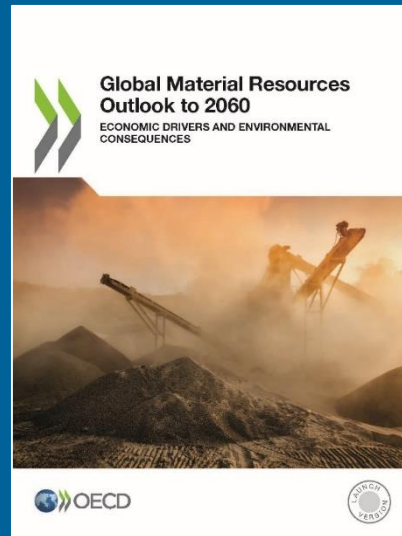


Design for environment

- Can EPR be applied to microplastics?
 - EPR already exists for certain products known to shed microplastics
- Could EPR generate necessary funding for wastewater treatment?
- What would be the role of producers, beyond paying for environmental costs?
- Can effects on product design be expected to occur?



Recent publications:



Elena Buzzi
elena.buzzi@oecd.org

