



Press Release of the European Phenolic Resins Association (EPRA)

The European Phenolic Resins Association (EPRA) has seen a surprisingly balanced year 2020 for its members, benefitting from a V-shaped recovery in the course of 2020 with volumes finally being down only by a small single-digit figure versus 2019. Recovery in the construction sector, led by a healthy demand for phenolic resins in the insulation markets (glass and stone wool), helped to compensate for losses in automotive-related applications. However, even the automotive sector saw a strong re-bounce in demand in the second half of 2020 after the lockdowns in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 which had affected automotive production in many parts of Europe significantly.

EPRA has continued to work on regulatory affairs and safety-related topics through its Regulatory & Safety Committee (RSC). The work of the RSC committee as well as many efforts in the Substitution Threats and Opportunities Group (STG), focussing on performance properties and market positioning of competitive products, are supported by Anthesis-Caleb, UK who provides technical, scientific and regulatory support on a regular basis. In 2020 noteworthy progress has been achieved with EPRA's work around the essentially benign nature of the fully-cured matrix of PF resins. A fully-cured matrix is the result of an irreversible crosslinking process and is characterized by no detectable on-going emissions of formaldehyde from products made using phenolic chemistry, thereby resulting in a non-hazardous profile for articles so produced. EPRA is in discussion with many stakeholders and institutes to further promote PF resins as materials of choice to be fully considered as safe and sustainable.

EPRA has also published a position paper, authored by Paul Ashford, Managing Director, Anthesis-Caleb, about phenolic resins in refractory applications (<https://epra.eu/wp-content/uploads/EPRA-Refractory-article-March-2020.pdf>). Phenolic Resins are important binders for refractory materials and will become even more important as coal-tar pitch-based materials are increasingly regulated under REACH. With Coal Tar Pitch (HT) already declared as a Substance of Very High Concern (SVHC) and under Authorisation, the promotion of other 'cleaner' coal-tar pitch products (e.g. CTPHTHT) seems short-sighted as they too are classified as carcinogenic and will ultimately be seen as regrettable substitutions when the regulatory process catches up with them.

In the course of 2020, a further focus area has evolved dealing with the assessment of the potential impact of the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability (CSS) on the future scope and operation of REACH in the EU-27 when the regulation is re-opened in 2023.

EPRA through its member companies is committed to complying with European competition law and all applicable national competition laws. Meetings are held in the presence of the DNU – Treuhandbuero, an independent trustee that ensures that activities comply fully with national and international laws.

EPRA members are: Allnex SA/NV, Chemiplastica AB, ERCROS S.A, Fenolit d.d., Foresa S.A., Hexion GmbH, LERG S.A., Metadynea Austria GmbH, Prefere Resins Holding GmbH, Sadepan Chimica Srl, SI Group S.A.S., Sumitomo Bakelite Europe N.V., Süd-West-Chemie GmbH, UCP Chemicals AG.