



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION

**on the results reached for the period 1996-2000 by the implementation
of Commission Recommendation 98/480/EC of 22 July 1998,
concerning good environmental practice for household laundry detergents**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Since the early 1970s the Community has operated a policy in the detergent sector aimed at solving the problems caused by surfactant foam in water systems. All existing Community legislation¹ is therefore intended principally to reduce environmental problems such as foaming in rivers and is based on biodegradability tests.
- 1.2. The existing detergent legislation has provided a stable foundation for the Single Market and it has ensured a relatively high degree of environmental protection. Surfactants classified as “primary biodegradable” lose their surface-active properties relatively quickly. They are generally less toxic than other surface-active chemicals. Regulatory requirements for the primary biodegradability of surfactants have not only solved the foaming problem, but have also provided a comprehensive mechanism for banning non-biodegradable surface-active chemicals.
- 1.3. However, since the 1970s detergent and surfactant manufacturing technology has changed significantly. The old detergent production technology was based on spray tower technology which subjected the product to severe conditions that restricted the range of surfactants that could be used. New detergent manufacturing technologies allow a more concentrated product and the use of a wider range of chemicals. Some of these new surfactant chemicals cannot be adequately tested using the test methods laid down by the existing detergent Directives.
- 1.4. Furthermore, the detergent legislation has been supplemented by voluntary measures such as the Commission Recommendation on the labelling of detergents and cleaning products², and the Commission Recommendation concerning good environmental practice for household laundry detergents³.

¹ Council Directive 73/404/EEC, OJ L 347, 17.12.1973, p. 51.
Council Directive 73/405/EEC, OJ L 347, 17.12.1973, p. 53.
Council Directive 82/242/EEC, OJ L 109, 22.4.1982, p. 1.
Council Directive 82/243/EEC, OJ L 109, 22.4.1982, p. 18.
Council Directive 86/94/EEC, OJ L 80, 25.3.1986, p. 51.
² Commission Recommendation 89/542/EEC, OJ L 291, 10.10.1989.
³ Commission Recommendation 98/480/EC, OJ L 215, 1.8.1998.

2. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 98/480/EC OF 22 JULY 1998

- 2.1. Commission Recommendation 98/480/EC of 22 July 1998, concerning good environmental practice for household laundry detergents, recommended for the first time at Community level “Environmental Agreements” as a tool for industry to implement the actions envisaged in the Recommendation. It takes into account the Council and European Parliament resolutions of 17 July 1997 and of 7 October 1997 on Environmental Agreements, which recognise that voluntary agreements may be a valuable instrument to make optimum use of industry’s own responsibilities ⁴.
- 2.2. The Recommendation established five targets, relative to the situation existing in the fifteen EU Member States in 1996, to be achieved by the end of 2001:
- 5 % reduction in energy consumed per wash cycle for the product group (kWh/wash); base: 1,04 kWh;
 - 10 % reduction in weight of household laundry detergents consumed *per capita* (kg/head); base: 9,94 kg;
 - 10 % reduction in weight of the primary and secondary packaging of the product group consumed *per capita* (kg/head); base: 0,71 kg;
 - 10 % reduction in weight of “poorly-biodegradable organic ingredients” (PBO) consumed *per capita* (kg/head); base: 0,32 kg;
 - provide information to the consumers on how to use detergents in a better way.
- 2.3. AISE ⁵ committed itself to undertake initiatives in order to achieve these targets. For this purpose AISE developed a Code of Good Environmental Practice for the Household Laundry Detergents (hereafter “the Code”) for implementation in eighteen countries ⁶: the fifteen EU Member States plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.
- 2.4. Implementation of the Code started in Denmark and Sweden in autumn 1997 as a pilot project. Following the positive results obtained in this pilot project, and the endorsement by the European Commission in the form of a Recommendation in July 1998, implementation in the other participating countries started in mid-1998/early 1999 and has continued since.

⁴ Council and European Parliament resolution of 17 July 1997, OJ C 286, 22.9.1997, p. 254.

Council and European Parliament resolution of 7 October 1997, OJ C 321, 22.10.1997, p. 6.

⁵ AISE (Association internationale de la savonnerie, de la détergence et des produits d’entretien) is the official body that represents the soap, detergent and maintenance products industry within Europe and towards other international organisations. AISE’s members and its National Associations are present in twenty-eight countries (in Europe essentially); their members are companies locally placing products of the above categories on the market. AISE represents over 90 % of the detergent and cleaning product industries in the Community.

⁶ Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, United Kingdom belonging to the European Union, and Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.

- 2.5. Commitments and targets in the AISE Code are based on risk assessment and life cycle analysis. Under the Code, manufacturers agree to provide consumers with relevant usage instructions to guide them on how to do their laundry in an environmentally responsible manner.

AISE and some non-AISE members that sell, market or produce household laundry detergents within the European Community and the European Economic Area therefore committed themselves to ensure compliance with this Recommendation, in co-operation with National Associations, and to report progress towards the targets for consumption, packaging and PBOs at least every two years, and to report on the energy consumption at the end five-year period, *i.e.* to report 2001 data for comparison with the 1996 baseline.

- 2.6. It should be noted that Member States agreed to contribute to the implementation of this Commission Recommendation and that all stakeholders showed interest in the achievement of the targets set in the above Recommendation, and particularly:

- the use of lower washing temperatures to decrease energy consumption and thus decrease CO₂ emissions;
- a decrease of the consumption of detergents and their packaging to lower the general environmental impact of detergents;
- a decrease of the poorly biodegradable ingredients in detergents (PBO's), to reduce the effects of detergents on the environment.

3. INTERMEDIATE RESULTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATION 98/480/EC

- 3.1. As stipulated in Article 7 of the Recommendation, AISE has provided for an independent organisation to collect and process statistics. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) was selected to monitor progress towards targets for consumption, packaging and PBOs every two years, and in addition to report on the energy consumption in the final report in 2002. The 1996-1998 figures for the three targets mentioned above, at both European and National levels, were presented in a first intermediate report ⁷ by PwC with a summary of the main trends from 1996 to 1998
- 3.2. PwC has now prepared a second report covering the period 1999-2000. Both reports are similar in structure and describe the methods of data collection, audit procedures, planning and management. Energy data, reported in the baseline report and to be reported again in 2002, are to be gathered through a market survey conducted by a specialist company, Taylor Nelson AGB.
- 3.3. AISE provided a complementary report ⁸ to the first PwC progress report. This complementary report focused mainly on actions undertaken by AISE's National Associations since the adoption of the Recommendation and its official launch in all Member States for the whole of the Code project, in particular on actions concerning

⁷ *AISE Code of Good Environmental, Progress report to the European Commission 1997-1998.*

⁸ *Implementation of the AISE Code in Europe, Complementary report from AISE to the PwC 1997-1998 progress report.*

the provision of information designed to encourage the correct use of household laundry detergents. AISE has provided a similar complementary report to accompany the second PwC progress report.

- 3.4. After the submission of the PwC and AISE reports in October 2000, the Commission organised a Working Group Meeting with the Member States in order to provide information on the progress achieved for the years 1997-1998. Consultation with other stakeholders such as BEUC (European Consumers' Organisation) and EEB (European Environment Bureau) were also organised and comments were provided by them. The reports were also submitted to the Consumer Committee for an opinion on the state of implementation of the Recommendation.
- 3.5. The main conclusions of these Organisations for the reporting period 1996-1998 were that for the four targets which were to be considered in the intermediate evaluation, two of them were fully achieved: the reduction of the PBOs and the information to consumers, but that the 1996-1998 data suggested that much remained to be done to reduce consumption of detergents and of packaging.
- 3.6. PwC report that for the period 1999-2000 the number of companies committed to the code has increased from 154 to 179, despite a number of mergers in the industry. Data on the consumption of detergents, packaging and PBOs is presented and compared with the data for the period 1996-1998.
- 3.7. The AISE report presents the same data as the PwC report and also comments on the consumption trends. In addition the AISE report presents the media actions undertaken by AISE in the 1999-2000 reporting period to promote sustainable consumption. These actions are mainly those associated with the "Washright" campaign, launched on 5 June 2000, with the objective of reducing consumption of energy and detergents through correct usage. The actions comprise television advertising campaigns, a dedicated website, and reminder panels on packaging.

4. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE TARGET CRITERIA OVER THE PERIOD 1996 TO 2000

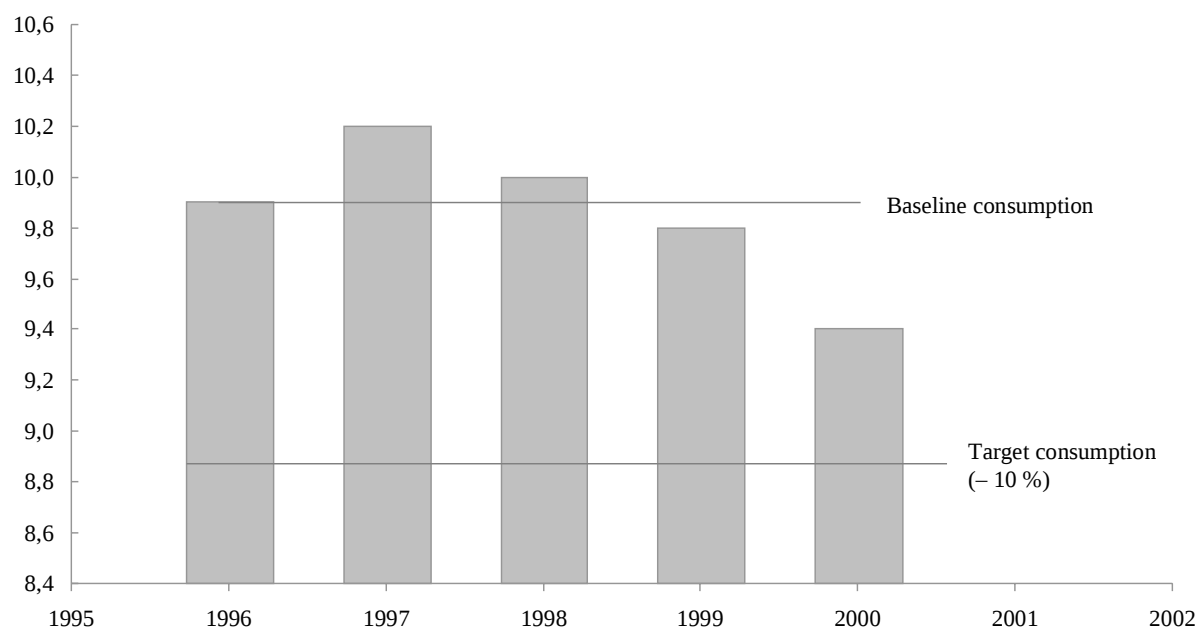
Progress in the fifteen EU Member States towards the targets described under heading 2.2 can be quantified as:

	1996-1998	1999-2000	TARGET FOR 2001
Detergent consumption	+ 2,2 %	– 4,6 %	– 10,0 %
Packaging consumption	– 6,8 %	– 5,9 %	– 10,0 %
PBO consumption	– 13,1 %	– 14,5 %	– 10,0 %

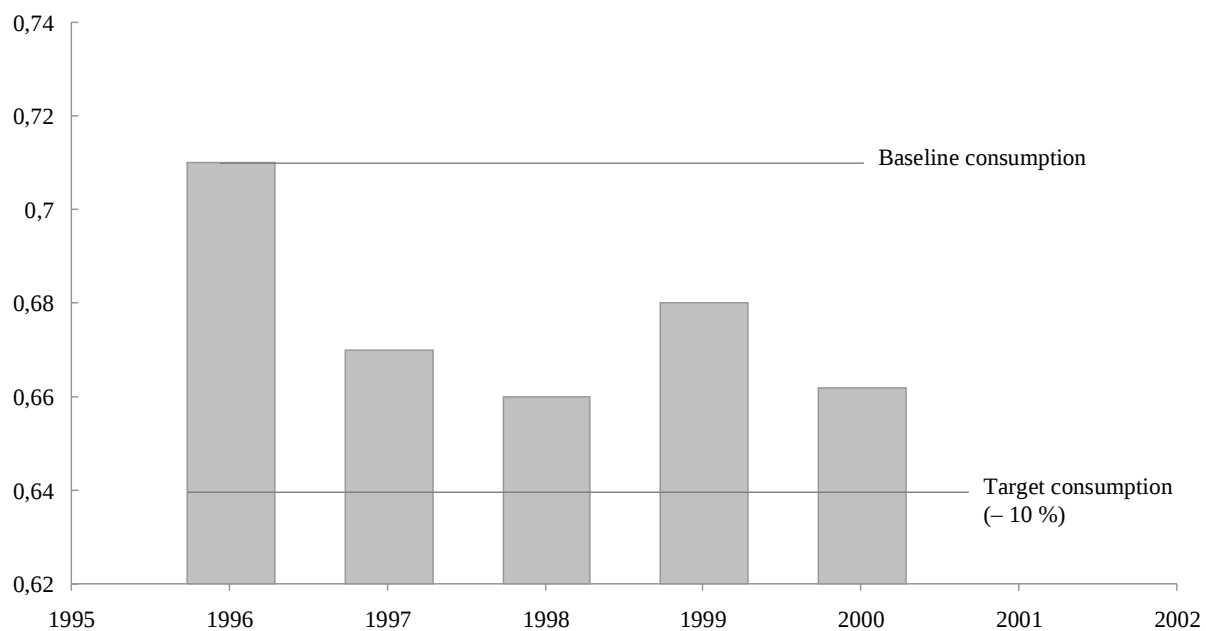
Appropriate information to the consumer is now printed on the packaging of the detergent. The target for PBO's was already met at the end of the 1996-1998 reporting period, and the trend has continued further downward. The data in the table above suggest that although the previous upward trend in detergent consumption has turned, and has become a significantly downward trend, consumption is still less than half way towards the target. Packaging consumption showed no further progress towards the target during the reporting period. Data on energy consumption will be reported in autumn 2002.

Progress towards the targets for 1996-2000

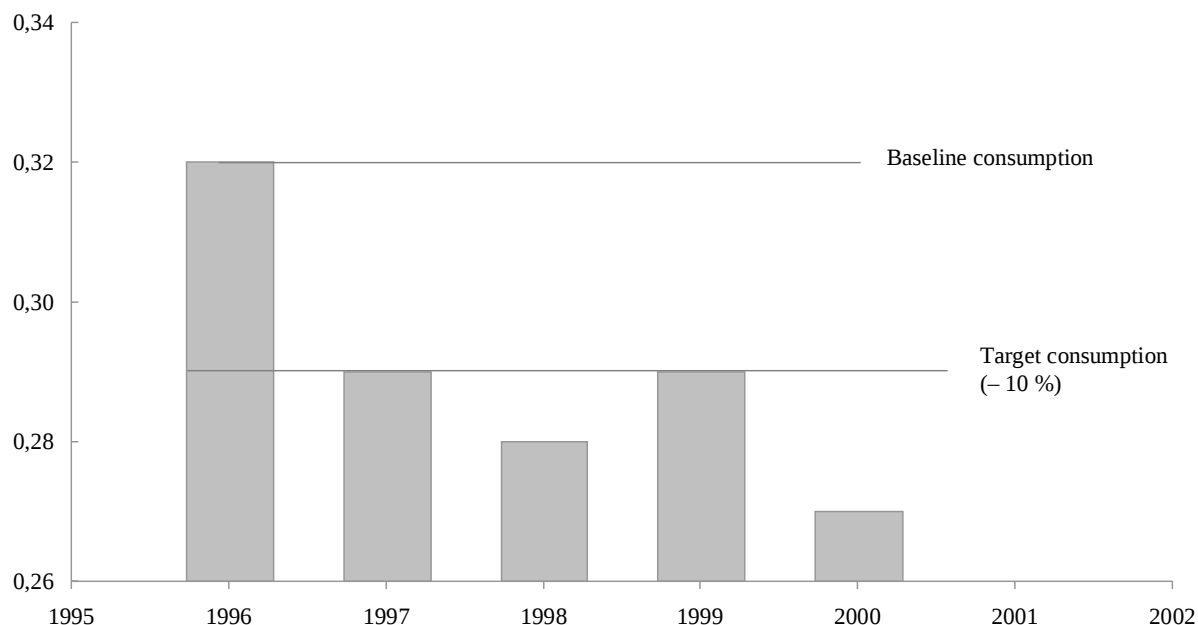
Detergent consumption
(kg per capita per annum)



Packaging consumption
(kg per capita per annum)



Poorly biodegradable organics (PBO) consumption
(kg per capita per annum)



5. AISE PLANS FOR ACHIEVING THE RECOMMENDATION'S TARGETS

AISE and the detergent industry remains committed to achieving the targets set out in the Recommendation. The trends from 1996-2000 show that this task is a challenging one. Companies committed to the Code will continue their efforts in the development and marketing of product formulations, product forms, and packaging that contribute to these targets. Furthermore, they will pursue the efforts already undertaken at consumer communication level to promote a more sustainable consumption of these products. The “Washright” media campaign in mid-2000 throughout Europe aimed to encourage the use of lower wash temperatures to help contribute towards the energy consumption target. AISE is developing a closer partnership with CECED, the electrical appliance industry association of Europe, on activities concerning washing machine use.

6. FINAL REPORT

With this report the Commission provides the information on the intermediate results achieved by the implementation of this Recommendation 98/480/EC, as required by article 9. The Commission will make a final report on the state of implementation of this Recommendation 98/480/EC at the end of 2002 after receiving the final PwC report in autumn 2002, and after consultation with the Member States, AISE and the Consumer Committee.

References

All documents mentioned in this report and some others used for its preparation can be consulted on the Commission Web site:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/chemicals/detergents/index.htm>.

These documents include the following:

1. *AISE Code of Good Environmental Practice: Progress report to the European Commission, 1997-1998*, by PricewaterhouseCoopers, 1999;
2. *Implementation of the AISE Code in Europe: complementary report from AISE to the PwCs 1997-1998 Progress Report*, by AISE, 1999;
3. *AISE Code of Good Environmental Practice: Progress report to the European Commission, 1999-2000*, by PricewaterhouseCoopers, October 2001;
4. *Implementation of the AISE Code of Good Environmental Practice for household laundry detergents in Europe: AISE 1999-2000 Progress Report*, by AISE, November 2001;
5. Summary note on the launch mid-2000 of the European washright TV campaign for the optimal use of laundry detergents, prepared by AISE;
6. EEB (European Environment Bureau) questions on the AISE Code of Good Practice;
7. AISE response to EEB questions on the AISE Code of Good Practice.

Furthermore, the content of the following reports and comments have been taken into account for the preparation of the report:

- *Changes in household detergents*, Report prepared by Svenska Naturskyddsföreningen (Swedish Association for the protection of Environment);
- *What effect has the eco-labelling of household detergents had on sewage treatment plants?*, Report by Svenska Naturskyddsföreningen;
- *Laundry detergents and sewage treatment*, Report by Polski Klub Ekologiczny on the Polish situation, as well as some possible solutions concerning textile detergents and the waste water from washing;
- Comments of Svenska Naturskyddsföreningen on the AISE Code.