

A.I.S.E. leads by example to secure a sustainable future

KEYWORDS: European Union Circular Economy Action Plan, Industry voluntary initiatives, Environmental Footprint, Charter for Sustainable Cleaning, A.I.S.E.



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Since 2005, **Sascha Nissen** has been working with A.I.S.E., the European Association for Detergents and Maintenance Products. He is mainly involved in the development and implementation of the industry sector's sustainability strategy. In addition, he contributes to external affairs activities. Sascha studied Political Science at the University in Bonn, Germany, and was working in parallel in the German Parliament. After his graduation, he worked as Consultant for Public Relations and Public Affairs firms in Germany and Brussels.

Abstract

A.I.S.E., the European Association for Detergents and Maintenance Products, has a long tradition over the last 25 years of proactive work towards sustainable production and consumption for the whole detergents and maintenance product industry. A.I.S.E. prioritises proactive engagement with EU policy makers, to drive forward a coherent legislative process that fosters innovation, sustainable development, and a circular economy, to realise the full benefits of the European Single Market. Our work is closely aligned with various EU initiatives relating to the EU Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP).

A ROLE MODEL INDUSTRY FOR SERVING SOCIETY IN AN INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE WAY

A.I.S.E., the European Association for Detergents and Maintenance Products, is the official representative organisation of this industry in Europe. Its membership totals 29 national associations across Europe, 18 corporate members and 18 value chain partners. This network of members represents over 900 companies supplying both household and professional cleaning and maintenance products and services to consumers and professional users. A.I.S.E.'s agenda for sustainable cleaning guides the association's activities and represents a long-term commitment and responsibility to contribute to a sustainable future. A.I.S.E. bases all its work on solid principles of science-based solutions, a commitment to constructive dialogue with stakeholders and clear and transparent communication to end-users. All of this is founded on, and supported by, our extensive membership base which underpins and fuels the powerful

combination of insights, influence, and expertise that A.I.S.E. brings to the table.

A.I.S.E. has over the last 25 years delivered impactful projects to drive sustainable production, design and consumption for the whole industry sector in a responsible way. Sustainable development is one of A.I.S.E.'s strategic priorities enshrined in the industry vision *'A prospering cleaning and hygiene industry which is a role model for serving society in an innovative and sustainable way'*. The leadership and coordination of voluntary sustainability initiatives together with stakeholder partners is a key defining strength of this industry and one which builds the industry's credibility, reputation, and influence on technical and regulatory matters.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSUMER POLICY

Sustainable development is enshrined in the EU Treaty as an 'overarching' principle of all EU policies. In this context, the Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) adopted in March 2020 is

relevant to the whole industry. This is one of the main building blocks of the so called 'European Green Deal' – an overarching framework to enable the green transition in society and economy, achieve climate neutrality by 2050 and to halt biodiversity loss. Several actions are mapped out by the CEAP: one of A.I.S.E.'s main areas of focus is the revised Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR). The scope of the current Ecodesign legislation will be extended from energy-related products to all product groups - this means for our industry sector that the whole product portfolio of A.I.S.E. is intended to be included, both homecare and professional applications. In particular, the regulation aims to address the design of every product placed on the EU market to make such products more circular, as well as energy and resource efficient. In addition, following a life cycle-based approach, environmental impacts of products shall be reduced. For this purpose, the regulation sets a framework that will determine specific rules for product groups; these will be developed by the European Commission with the support of stakeholders, including industry. The revised regulation also introduces the concept of a digital product passport aiming for example to ensure better tracking of substances of concern along the supply chain.

Furthermore, the European Commission has published legislative proposals in the context of the so called 'New Consumer Agenda'. This includes a Directive on empowering consumers for the green transition to protect against unfair practices and provide better information. The proposal aims to support consumers to make informed choices when buying products and to strengthen consumer protection against untrustworthy or false environmental claims. As such, the 'Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (UCPD)' will be amended; moreover, the legislative proposal on substantiating green claims complements the UCPD. Via this Directive, companies will be required to have the conformity of the green claims on their products validated by a third party. This legislation will also refer to environmental labelling schemes, such as the A.I.S.E. Charter for Sustainable Cleaning (see below).

Finally, the review of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) is a relevant piece of regulation for the industry, which amongst others will set specific requirements and targets for recycled material to be used in packaging.

On all those files, A.I.S.E. is pro-actively contributing to the currently ongoing legislative procedure; we advocate for the industry position to relevant stakeholders, such as the European Parliament, the European Council and the European Commission.



A.I.S.E.'S SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Our history of driving sustainable progress goes back more than 25 years and we continue to innovate and work with partners up and down our value

chain to provide society with safe, effective and sustainable cleaning and disinfecting products. Industry initiatives cover the compaction of products, a strategy on plastics, use of bio-based materials, corporate social responsibility as well as sustainable use of products (see figure 1). It is important that policy makers consider the achievements of our industry sector, with a robust system of self-regulatory measures in place. These can help address the policy objectives with rapid implementation, which will also be beneficial to the companies operating in our industry sector.

A.I.S.E. is aware that its sustainability strategy and building blocks will have to be further developed and elevated to the next level, which will entail huge efforts. Global challenges, such as climate change, sufficient availability of energy, raw materials and clean water can only be addressed and solved in a multi-stakeholder approach. In this context, intelligent product design, sustainable raw material

selection, efficient production, and use of resources, as well as responsible consumption are crucial, and it will be important to bring the relevant actors into partnership to work on solutions for these challenges.

THE A.I.S.E. CHARTER FOR SUSTAINABLE CLEANING

An industry tailored system to foster sustainable production, design and consumption

The A.I.S.E. Charter for Sustainable Cleaning is A.I.S.E.'s flagship initiative driving best practices in sustainable development in our industry, in line with the EU policy objectives. The geographical scope of the Charter covers the EU, all member countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the United Kingdom. The aim is to encourage the whole industry to undertake continuous improvement in terms of sustainability and to engage consumers and end users to adopt more sustainable ways of doing their washing, cleaning and household maintenance. From the outset, the Charter has been regarded as a living

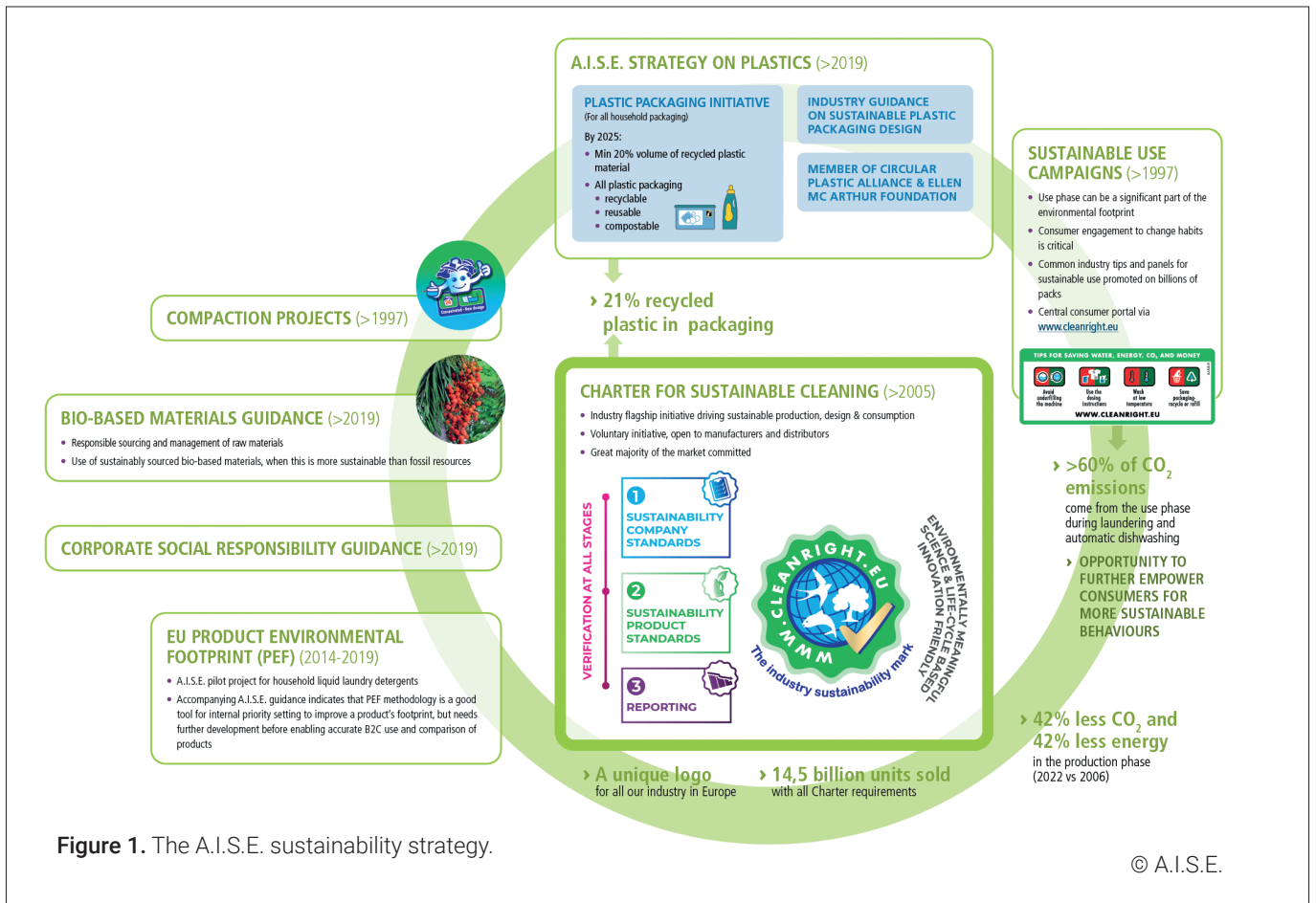


Figure 1. The A.I.S.E. sustainability strategy.

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scheme, evolving over time through regular upgrades. This ensures that it continues to offer the most advanced sustainability assurance scheme for promoting best practice within the industry, using life cycle assessment and science as its basis. A wide variety of activities and initiatives are covered, ranging from the human and environmental safety of chemicals and products to eco-efficiency, occupational health and safety, resource use and consumer information.

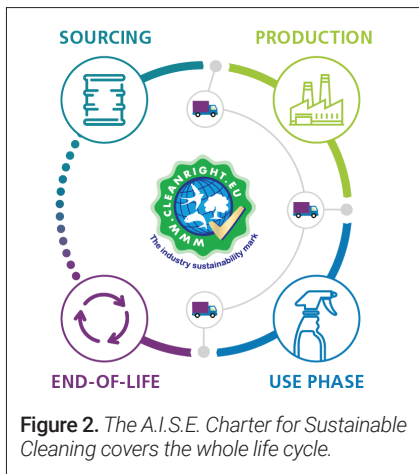


Figure 2. The A.I.S.E. Charter for Sustainable Cleaning covers the whole life cycle.

The A.I.S.E. Charter stipulates a set of 'Charter Sustainability Procedures (CSPs)' which companies implement in their manufacturing management systems, and which are verified by independent external verifiers. Companies must report each year on key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to the CSPs - the aggregated results are published by A.I.S.E.

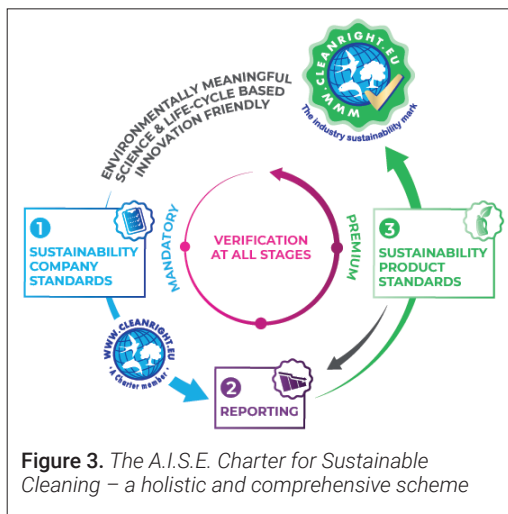


Figure 3. The A.I.S.E. Charter for Sustainable Cleaning – a holistic and comprehensive scheme

The product dimension of the Charter enables companies to give a sustainability assurance for products.

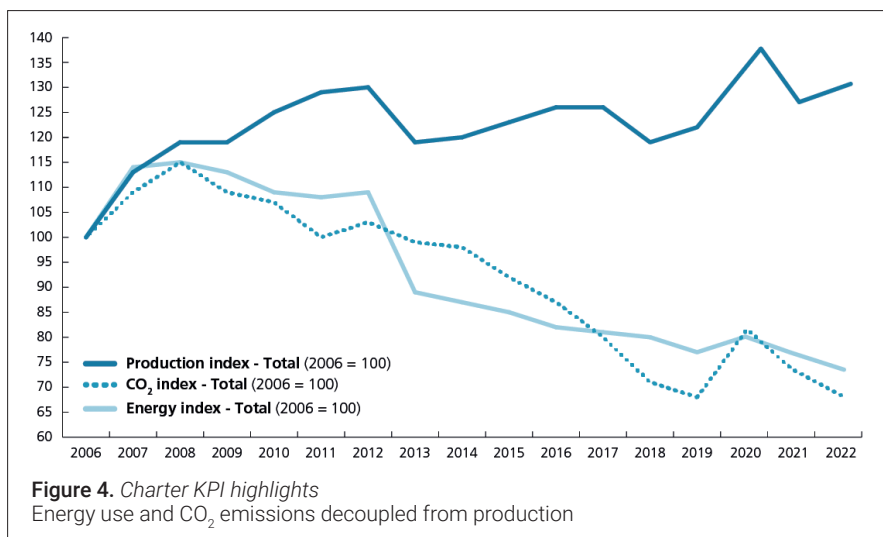


Figure 4. Charter KPI highlights
Energy use and CO₂ emissions decoupled from production

'Advanced Sustainability Profiles (ASPs)' for individual product categories set sustainability criteria that are ambitious but reasonably achievable by all market players for their products – the parameters are defined based on a life cycle assessment. The Environmental Safety Check (ESC) is a key component of ASPs, which all ingredients in a formulation must successfully pass. This ESC is a risk-based and conservative tool that assesses the environmental safety in the aquatic environment of ingredients aligned with principles of REACH.

Independent verification

Independent third-party verification by accredited auditing bodies guarantees that all applicant companies are individually assessed on the same basis. Before a manufacturing company can join the Charter, it must prove to the verifier that it has the required CSPs in place, under control, and adequately applied. In addition to the regular CSP checks, the appropriate implementation of the different ASP requirements and the annual reporting on KPIs are systematically verified.

Success to date

The membership of the Charter is continually growing: In September 2023, more than 180 companies, including industry manufacturers and retailers placing products on the market under their own labels, have joined the A.I.S.E. Charter. This represents more than 90% of the industry production output for Europe. Over the 17 years of operation since 2006, the verified returns from companies via the annual KPI reporting demonstrate how Charter members' efforts continue

to yield positive results across all Europe, e.g. energy use per tonne of production is down by 42% and CO₂ by 42% as well (to put this in perspective: the EU targets for 2030 are a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to 55% below 1990 levels).

REACHING OUT TO END-USERS TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Most of the environmental impact for product groups, such as laundry detergents, occurs during the product use phase, when consumers use the product to clean their laundry – due to heating up the water during the cleaning process. Therefore, in parallel with the manufacturers' own sustainability efforts, A.I.S.E. is continuously working on communications and information campaigns to promote sustainable use. Consumer engagement is organised through information material for on-pack and online use. Since 1997, A.I.S.E. has made tips for the best use of laundry products, dishwashing detergents, and cleaners available to its members. These 'best use tips' are a mandatory component of the Charter product criteria but can be applied by all companies placing products on the market irrespective of a commitment to the Charter.

Additional campaigns, such as Washright (2000-02) and 'I prefer 30°' have also been organised through A.I.S.E. and its members. The www.cleanright.eu portal is a multilingual common reference platform for EU consumers to obtain relevant information as well as best and safe use tips. Those tips are also conveyed by common artwork material used on billions of products on the European market.



Figure 5. Laundry best use tips

BRINGING THE CHARTER TO THE NEXT LEVEL

When the Charter was launched in 2005, A.I.S.E. always had in mind that it would be a living scheme, which would evolve alongside R&D and societal needs. Major updates were implemented in 2010 (e.g. with the integration of product standards) and in 2020 (e.g. strengthening the social component and changing the governance structure). A.I.S.E. has already started the next revision which takes account of the EU political landscape.

Following our learnings from an official pilot project with the European Commission on the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) method and subsequent meetings with stakeholders, we are seeking to further develop the Charter. We want to integrate robust elements along the whole product life cycle to enable product comparison, to further elaborate ingredients assessment and adjust the carbon footprint of products. We are involving external experts and stakeholders, and several technical workstreams have been initiated to ensure science-based implementation.

CONCLUSION

A.I.S.E. and its members will continue to actively and constructively support the global SDGs and contribute to the EU sustainability policy through the development of impactful industry

initiatives. This will help progress the sustainability of the sector by achieving significant reductions in the lifecycle impact of detergents and cleaning products. It can be demonstrated that the overall footprint of both manufacturing and products has been decreased since the launch of the Charter. The A.I.S.E. Charter for Sustainable Cleaning will continue to be the reference scheme for this industry in Europe, driving meaningful progress for the whole sector across all lifecycle phases. A.I.S.E.'s vision is that the Charter continues to be scientifically meaningful, robust, measurable, pragmatic, SME-friendly and end-user-understandable.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- www.aise.eu
- www.sustainable-cleaning.com
- www.cleanright.eu
- Charter KPI Report 2023

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60% TOPRASIL®M55 / 40% SLES

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