

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)
PO Box 400
FI-00121 Helsinki
Finland

29 April 2022

Dear Colleagues

Appeal for derogation in response to the draft recommendation of substances for inclusion in Annex XIV (REACH)

Substance name: Lead

EC Number: 231-100-4

Our attention has been drawn to the draft recommendation for lead to be included in *Annex XIV* of the authorisation list by our colleagues at ICOMOS. We share their concerns about the potential adverse impact of this proposal on the conservation of cultural heritage and we echo their call for the use of lead in conservation practice to be exempted from onerous and unnecessary control processes.

Icon (the **Institute of Conservation**) is a charitable company working to safeguard cultural heritage. We are also the professional membership body for the conservation profession supporting our 2,300 members, who are mostly based in the UK, although a significant proportion (18%) work in Europe and elsewhere. Our vision is to protect, preserve and promote our treasured cultural heritage through cultivating skilled conservation professionals, supporting meaningful collaboration across the cultural heritage sector, and delivering public benefit through engagement and advocacy.

We have consulted with our members and with other colleagues working in conservation practice in the UK and we now wish to submit the following comments.

Lead has been used in the construction of buildings for at least 2,000 years and continues to be used for the conservation and repair of historic structures including houses, churches, factories, offices, commercial premises and state buildings. The range of uses is extensive and includes sheet lead roofing, waterproofing details, fixing of stone masonry, leaded windows, and fittings for rainwater disposal. The longstanding use of traditional lead-based paints (currently controlled through the REACH Enforcement Regulations) should also be mentioned.

In addition to these practical uses of lead, our built environment bears testimony to the extensive decorative use of the material in the form of stained-glass windows,

which are one of the artistic highlights of the UK's outstanding heritage of historic parish churches, great cathedrals and fine civic buildings.

The role of conservators is to care for all aspects of historic buildings and their decorative fixtures; repairing, and sometimes restoring, elements as needed. In order to fulfil this task conservators, and associated professionals, must be able to work with lead without hinderance from disproportionate or punitive bureaucracy and regulation.

The proposed change in the REACH regulations poses a particular challenge for stained-glass conservators, who are represented by Icon's Stained-Glass Group. These skilled professionals handle lead on a daily basis and are already competent to ensure that this work is carried out safely and with minimum risks to their health.

The members of Icon's Stained-Glass Group believe that the inclusion of lead in Annex XIV would have a considerable detrimental effect on the stained-glass manufacturing and conservation industries both in the UK and globally and urge the reconsideration of this harmful proposal. Practitioners cannot conserve and repair our internationally important collection of stained-glass windows without using lead. There is simply no equivalent material that can replace the lead comes that support the glass in our windows. No modern material matches lead's performance and longevity, and so this is not just an ethical issue about preserving access to materials that are historically and aesthetically appropriate for conservation work, but also one of practicality.

While we understand the safety motivation behind the proposals, we do not believe that the full impact of the planned change to the legislation has been considered, and we ask that this assessment is now carried out. We urge ECHA to consult with specialist conservation bodies and to ensure that conservators and related professionals are not prevented from using lead in their work in the future.

The ancient crafts of lead-working and stained-glass-making are an intrinsic part of our European cultural legacy; these skills and the ongoing use of traditional materials deserve to be protected for future generations.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sara Crofts". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sara Crofts BArch(Hons) MSc FRSA
Chief Executive, Icon