

Proposal for a Directive on the Marketing and Use of certain measuring devices containing mercury

Foreword

The overall objective of the proposed Directive relating to restrictions on the Marketing and Use of certain measuring devices containing mercury is to introduce harmonised provisions with regard to mercury by imposing restrictions on measuring devices and thus, by preventing considerable amounts of mercury entering the waste stream, to contribute to a high level of protection of the environment and human health, whilst preserving the internal market, as required by the Treaty.

The Commission carried out an Extended Impact Assessment with the aim of reducing the demand for mercury use in products and speeding up the substitution of mercury. This impact assessment indicated that the introduction of a Community wide marketing restriction on mercury-containing measuring and control equipment for consumer use, with some exemptions in the healthcare sector, was appropriate.

In February 2006, the European Commission drafted a proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council relating to the restriction on the Marketing and Use of certain measuring devices containing mercury. The following uses are included in this proposed restriction:

- (1) Mercury in fever thermometers
- (2) Mercury in other measuring devices intended for sale to the general public (e.g. manometers, barometers, sphygmomanometers, thermometers other than fever thermometers)

The relatively large amounts of mercury which are still used for the production of measuring devices, and the high risks associated with those uses justify Community action in this area. A restriction on fever thermometers and other measuring devices intended for consumer use cover the major part of mercury use and emissions. The Commission considers this fact as well as information available regarding the feasibility and proportionality of the risk management measures, to be sufficient to support a ban on all fever thermometers and other measuring devices for consumer uses.

Consultation period: 3rd March 2006 to 5 pm on the 7th April 2006

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