



17th February 2006

**RE: Matsakis Mercury Report**

Dear Member of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee,

A recent Eurobarometer survey of public opinion shows high levels of public concern about pollutants in food such as mercury (59%)<sup>1</sup>. Given the highly toxic nature of mercury, and its dispersal far beyond its sources of release, such concern is justifiable. We are now learning that even relatively low doses can seriously harm the development of the brain, and possibly the cardiovascular, immune and reproductive systems.

In Europe, public health is already being compromised. Between 3 to 15 million people, in coastal areas and in central and northern Europe, have body levels around the US reference dose, which is more protective than the level referred to in Europe. Large numbers of regional populations have ten times that dose – a level where there is clear neurological harm. Please see our attached paper on Misconceptions about Mercury and Health for more information. See also: <http://www.noharm.org/europe/mercury/issue> and [http://www.noharm.org/library/docs/Going\\_Green\\_Making\\_Medicine\\_Mercury\\_Free.pdf](http://www.noharm.org/library/docs/Going_Green_Making_Medicine_Mercury_Free.pdf)

At the same time, the healthcare sector, which must cope with the health problems resulting from mercury, is itself a contributor to the problem. The health care sector uses many mercury-containing medical devices (such as thermometers, gastro-intestinal tubes and blood pressure gauges), as well as amalgams and other products. The devices often break, thereby posing a great occupational risk. Even when properly disposed of, they eventually release mercury into the environment through medical waste incineration.

You will be voting on the Matsakis Draft Report on the Community Strategy on Mercury on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. This is your chance to send a clear signal to the Commission about the importance of taking concrete measures to protect people's health from mercury that is ALREADY contaminating our environment, and to ensure that healthcare systems do not contribute further to the contamination.

We therefore urge you to support or reject the following amendments directly important for health and healthcare. For the other amendments, we refer you to our joint voting list with the European Environmental Bureau / Ban Mercury Working Group.

**SUPPORT** AMENDMENT NUMBERS: 5, 12, 19, 25, 33, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 54.

**REJECT** AMENDMENT NUMBERS: 32, 35

If you need any further information on the issues above, please contact us.

Yours sincerely,



Genon Jensen, Director  
Director EPHA Environment Network (EEN)



Cestmir Hrdinka, Director  
Health Care Without Harm Europe

### **European Public Health Alliance – Environment Network (EEN)**

EEN advocates protection of the environment as a means to improving the health and well being for European citizens. Launched in 2004, it brings together groups that want to ensure that health is at the centre of environment issues. Member groups include NGOs specialising in public health, environment related health conditions and women's environmental and health concerns and associations representing health care and environmental professionals. One of EEN's key objectives is to bring health expertise to the environment policymaking process.

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### **Health Care Without Harm Europe**

Health Care Without Harm Europe (HCWH) is an international coalition of hospitals and health care systems, medical and nursing professionals, community groups, health-affected constituencies, labour unions, environmental and environmental health organisations. HCWH is dedicated to transforming the health care industry worldwide, without compromising patient safety or care, so that it is ecologically sustainable and no longer a source of harm to public health and the environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Pesticides EU are citizens' top food-related health concern

<http://www.euractiv.com/Article?tcaturi=tcm:29-152346-16&type=News&Ref=mail>