



PRESS RELEASE

“Victory for common sense”: Parliamentary Committee cracks down on mercury barometers

(Brussels, 5 June, 2007) - Key European campaigners against the use of mercury, the European Environmental Bureau, the Health & Environment Alliance, Health Care Without Harm and the Zero Mercury Working Group, today applauded the outcome of this morning's vote by the European Parliament's Environment Committee, which agreed not to exempt mercury-containing barometers from a wider ban on consumer devices which contain the toxic metal.

“This is a victory for common sense. We're delighted that the Environment Committee has recognised that barometers must be banned”, said Elena Lymberidi of Zero Mercury. “Parliament's earlier view that an exception should somehow be made to allow new mercury-containing barometers to continue being produced was unreasonable. Now the EU's public health interests have been upheld.”

The European Commission had originally recommended banning mercury only from fever thermometers and measuring devices intended for public use, and fever thermometers used in professional healthcare. This meant measuring devices for professional use, such as blood pressure devices (sphygmomanometers) in hospitals could still be used. Last November Parliament voted to exclude barometers from the ban but to include sphygmomanometers used in healthcare. The Council compromised by adopting a 'Common Position' (CCP) in April this year, in which they gave barometers two years' grace following adoption of the Directive, and stipulated that the Commission should report within two years to check whether alternatives to sphygmomanometers and other professional equipment which contains mercury were available. “The Environment Committee's vote this morning on the Common Position is a source of great relief to everyone fighting to exclude mercury from our daily lives”, said Lisette van Vliet of the Health and Environment Alliance. “This is the best compromise we can realistically hope to obtain.”

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Notes for editors:-

See our letters of

4 June

http://www.zeromercury.org/EU_developments/070604_NGOs_on_ENVI_MEPS_Vote_Limitations.pdf and

30 May

<http://www.noharm.org/details.cfm?ID=1631&type=document>

7 May:-

http://www.zeromercury.org/EU_developments/070507NGOscommentsMeasDevicesENVIonCCP.pdf

And related press releases of September 2006

http://www.zeromercury.org/press/140906_Mercury_EP_Env_Cttee_Press_Release.pdf and 14 November 2006: <http://www.zeromercury.org/press/061114NGOsPR-Plenary-Equipment.pdf>