



PRESS RELEASE

“Saga is over”: mercury in most measuring devices will soon be history

(Brussels/Strasbourg, 10 July, 2007) - Europe's leading campaigners against mercury, the European Environmental Bureau, the Health & Environment Alliance, and the Zero Mercury Working Group, today warmly welcomed the European Parliament's vote, which finally confirms that mercury barometers will not be exempted from a wider ban on household devices which contain the toxic metal.

“The saga's over at last! We'll soon have legislation banning the use of mercury from most non-electronic measuring devices,” said Elena Lymberidi of EEB's Zero Mercury campaign. “Reason has finally triumphed, and Parliament has come round to including mercury barometers in the ban. This latest move is a major boost in protecting our health.”

Thermometers and all other measuring devices for domestic use will soon be mercury-free. Barometers using the metal will be banned two years later, and by then the Commission will report on the availability of reliable, safer, mercury-free alternative measuring devices, especially blood pressure devices used in hospitals and doctors' practices. The European Commission had initially proposed only banning mercury from fever thermometers and other measuring devices¹ for public use, and fever thermometers used professionally. Professional measuring devices, such as blood pressure devices in hospitals, could therefore still be used.

“Parliament's vote is a huge relief to everyone who wants to get rid of mercury,” said Lisette van Vliet of the Health & Environment Alliance. “This is a good step forward. But it's a pity that blood pressure devices for professional use which contain mercury haven't been banned, because safe, precise and reliable alternatives are available. The Commission's impact assessment should have already considered that.”

The NGOs urge the Commission now to proceed swiftly with its report on the availability of reliable, safer alternatives, and a legislative proposal to extend the restriction to other mercury-containing professional devices, which will reduce the risk of mercury exposure in hospitals and laboratories, and other specialist workplaces.

For further information please contact:-

Elena Lymberidi, Project Coordinator, Zero Mercury Campaign: www.zeromercury.org, www.eeb.org; elena.lymberidi@eeb.org; Tel: +32 (0)2 289 1301; Mobile: +32 (0)496 532 818

Lisette van Vliet, Toxic Policy Advisor, Health & Environment Alliance: www.env-health.org; www.noharm.org; lisette@env-health.org; Tel: +32 (0)2 234 3645

Peter Clarke, Press & Publications Officer, EEB: press@eeb.org; Tel: +32 (0)2 289 1309

Notes for editors: See our letters of:-

5 July http://www.zeromercury.org/EU_developments/070705_NGO_letter_to_MEPs_Plenary_Measrg_Equip.pdf

4 June

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

30 May

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

7 May

http://www.zeromercury.org/EU_developments/070507NGOcommentsMeasDevicesENVIonCCP.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>

¹ Manometers, barometers, and sphygmomanometers (blood pressure measuring devices).