



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
ENTERPRISE AND INDUSTRY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Directors-General

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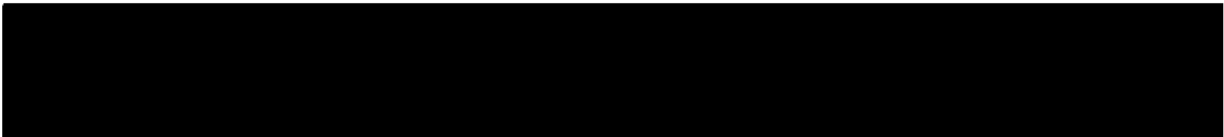
European Chemicals Agency
Attn: Mr Geert Dancet
(Executive Director)
Annankatu 18, P.O. Box 400
F-00121 Helsinki, Finland

Subject: Request to ECHA to evaluate new scientific evidence concerning the availability of reliable safer alternatives that are technically and economically feasible for mercury-containing sphygmomanometers and other measuring devices in healthcare and in other professional and industrial uses, as required in Annex XVII to Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 (REACH)

Entry 18a of Annex XVII to REACH restricts the use of mercury (a non-degradable environmental pollutant which is transformed in nature to highly toxic methyl derivatives) in certain measuring devices to protect the environment and, in the long term, human health, through preventing mercury released from these sources from entering the waste stream. Entry 18a also requires the Commission to:

“... carry out a review of the availability of reliable safer alternatives that are technically and economically feasible for mercury-containing sphygmomanometers and other measuring devices in healthcare and in other professional and industrial uses. On the basis of this review or as soon as new information on reliable safer alternatives for sphygmomanometers and other measuring devices containing mercury becomes available, the Commission shall, if appropriate, present a legislative proposal to extend the restrictions in paragraph 1 to sphygmomanometers and other measuring devices in healthcare and in other professional and industrial uses, so that mercury in measuring devices is phased out whenever technically and economically feasible.”

The Commission services have collected a significant amount of new information from interested stakeholders, and particular questions concerning the use of mercury in sphygmomanometers have been examined by SCHENIR, the Commissions Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks



A summary of the information received and the opinion of SCHENIR are included in the attached report, together with some tentative conclusions.

The full information received is available at:

http://circa.europa.eu/Members/irc/enterprise/lmudsp/library?l=/thematic_folder/mercury_follow_up&vm=detailed&sb=Title

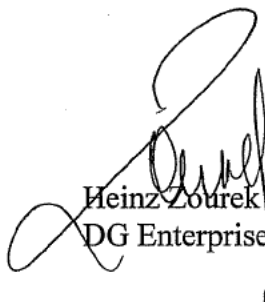
and the SCENIHR opinion at:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihhr/scenihhr_opinions_en.htm#2

In particular, the Agency should take into account that following consultation with stakeholders and in the light of the SCENIHR opinion, safer alternatives that are technically and economically feasible are available for most uses of mercury-containing sphygmomanometers. The situation seems to be somewhat similar for other mercury-containing measuring devices in industrial and professional uses (such as thermometers, manometers, barometers, tensiometers etc.). For mercury containing porosimeters, pycnometers and mercury electrodes in polarography, the evidence collected seems to reveal technical limitations of their existing alternatives.

In line with the requirements of the REACH Regulation and in consideration of the obligation to review the restrictions in Entry 18a of Annex XVII of REACH, the Commission would like to request that the Agency, on the basis of the new information, prepare an Annex XV dossier as foreseen by Article 69 of REACH.

Yours sincerely,


Heinz Zourek
DG Enterprise and Industry


Karl Falkenberg
DG Environment

pp. J. Dulbeke

