

## Press release

### EU Commission announces legislative proposal to phase out dental amalgam

20.3.2020. A Report of the European Commission under the Mercury Regulation has examined whether the use of dental amalgam can be generally phased out in Europe before 2030 and came to the conclusion that it is both technically and economically feasible. In consequence, the Commission announced to present a legislative proposal for a phase out in 2022.

As the use of mercury in dental amalgam is the largest remaining use of mercury in the Union and a significant source of pollution, the Commission was mandated by the EU Mercury Regulation to assess and report to the Council and the Parliament on the feasibility of a phase out of the use of dental amalgam in the long term, and preferably by 2030. The Regulation already prohibits its use, as from 1 July 2018, for dental treatment of deciduous teeth and of children under 15 years and pregnant or breastfeeding women.

For the report the Commission contracted a consultant to perform a study on the use of dental amalgam in the EU.

The study collected information on the use of amalgam and mercury-free alternatives, the impact on public health services in the Member States and the National Action Plans drawn up under the Regulation to reduce the use of amalgam. The extensive data collection included review of scientific articles and reports, EU-wide data collection through an online survey and interviews.

In addition, experts from the Member States and stakeholders (dental organizations, NGOs) were invited to a workshop to validate the preliminary results of the study and to provide additional input.

#### ***The Phase out is essential and economically and technically feasible***

Since mercury from dentistry is inevitably released into the environment (despite regulatory and other precautions), according to the report a phase-out became essential to comply with the Green Deal Zero Pollution ambitions for a toxic-free environment.

As alternative restorative materials are safe, effective, available and affordable and given their high use across the EU, a phase-out is unlikely to have a significant economic impact on patients and dentists. The Commission reports: “Mercury-free materials are now of good quality, effective restorative methods are widely available, and dental schools are increasingly teaching the necessary skills... The difference between the prices of dental restorations per type of material is relatively small...and... Evidence has shown that mercury-free materials exhibit satisfactory mechanical properties, with a lower cavity preparation requirement for composites as well as better aesthetics.” The Commission further affirms that the risk of BPA (which is present in some but not all composites) is "negligible" according to recent findings.

“This is a huge step into the right direction, but still a very long way to go. The decision for a concrete phase-out date, with the approval of the European Council and the Parliament, has only been postponed to 2022”, says Florian Schulze, Project Manager of the European Center for Environmental Medicine and Vice President for Europe of the World Alliance for Mercury free Dentistry, who represented the many European NGOs in support of a ban on amalgam at the Commissions hearing.

"As a global network, we are particularly pleased that the Commission has promised in their report not to stop at the European borders, but also to stop the trade of products banned in Europe" said Charlie Brown, President of the World Alliance for Mercury Free Dentistry, with a view to the next conference of the UN Minamata Convention on Mercury in Bali 2021, where African members in particular are calling for an international ban.

“Many Member States, like the Czech Republic and Slovakia, had already decided to phase out amalgam in their National Action Plans last year, thus contributing to the Commission's decision. This month Hungary presented a corresponding plan and it is time now for Poland to follow the example.”, says Hanna Schudy, Mercury Policy Manager at Eco Unia, Poland

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