

# Mercury pollution: Council confirms agreement with the Parliament to enhance protection

On 16 December, the Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) endorsed, on behalf of the Council, a deal with the European Parliament on a draft regulation on mercury. The new rules aim to **enhance the protection** against the pollution by this **highly toxic substance**.

The text was agreed by the Council's presidency and the European Parliament during a trilogue meeting on 6 December 2016.

Mercury represents a global and major threat to **human health**, including through the presence of its compound methylmercury in fish and seafood. Once emitted into the air or the water, mercury can travel **long distances**. That is why mercury pollution needs to be tackled at **international level**.

## Minamata Convention

The changes agreed will ensure EU legislation is aligned with **international rules** as set out in the Minamata Convention. This will allow for **swift EU ratification** of the text and therefore pave the way for its entry into force.

Mercury pollution is found all around the globe, even in virgin lands very remote from pollution sources. This proves how dangerous and global this pollution is. Today we have shown that we remain committed to halting mercury pollution. This deal will enable a swift ratification of the Minamata Convention by the EU.

*László Sólymos, Slovak Environment Minister and President of the Council*

## Dental amalgam

From January 2019 the use in dental amalgam will only be allowed as long as mercury is **encapsulated**. Moreover, its use for dental treatment of milk teeth, children under 15 years and pregnant or breastfeeding women will be banned from 1 July 2018 unless there are specific medical needs.

The text also imposes to dentists the use of **devices** to avoid mercury from ending up polluting water.

The Commission will report by 30 June 2020 on the **feasibility of a phase out** of the use of mercury in dental amalgam for a later date, preferably by 2030. In the meantime, member states will prepare **national plans to phase down** the use of dental amalgam.

## Use in products and industry

The manufacturing, import and export of **products containing mercury** such as batteries or lamps will be banned with few exceptions. The same will happen with the use of mercury in **industrial processes**. New **phase-out dates** are set for some specific uses in both products and processes.

## Export and import bans

The new rules will strengthen the already existing **export ban** on mercury and certain mercury compounds and mixtures. They will also **restrict the import** of mercury to a very limited number of uses.

## Timeline and next steps

The Commission presented its proposal for a regulation in February 2016. On 6 December 2016 the presidency of the Council

and the European Parliament reached an **agreement** on a compromise text. On 16 December 2016, the Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) **endorsed** the text on behalf of the Council.

After formal endorsement by the Council, the new piece of legislation will be submitted to the European Parliament for a **vote at first reading** and to the Council for **final adoption**.

**Press office - General Secretariat of the Council**

Rue de la Loi 175 - B-1048 BRUSSELS - Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319  
press.office@consilium.europa.eu - [www.consilium.europa.eu/press](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/press)