

PRESS RELEASE

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Protecting citizens from mercury pollution

On 25 April 2017, the Council adopted a regulation on the anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds into the air, water and land.

Mercury is a very toxic substance which constitutes a serious global risk to human health and the environment, including through the presence of its compound methylmercury in fish, seafood, ecosystems and wildlife.

The new regulation will provide a high level of protection and limit the pollution generated by activities and processes related to mercury.

To this end, the regulation establishes measures and conditions at an EU level to control and restrict:

- the use and storage of and trade in mercury, mercury compounds and mixtures of mercury;
- the manufacture and use of and trade in mercury-added products;
- the use of mercury in dental amalgam;
- and to ensure the appropriate management of mercury waste.

Activities such as mercury mining, the use of mercury in products and industrial processes, artisanal and small-scale gold mining, coal combustion and the management of mercury waste, can be the source of emissions and releases of this hazardous substance resulting in environmental and health risks.

Background and next steps

The Commission presented its proposal, which also repeals Regulation (EC) No 1102/2008, on 2 February 2016.

On 14 March 2017, the European Parliament adopted its position at first reading. Now that the Council has approved this position, the Regulation can be published in the Official Journal of the European Union, once both the President of the European Parliament and the Council have signed the act, and will enter into force 20 days after publication.

The new rules provide greater legal clarity and transparency and will apply from 1 January 2018 replacing Regulation (EC) No 1102/2008.

International scope: Minamata Convention

Mercury can travel long distances once emitted and released into the air or water. That is why the EU cannot on its own guarantee the protection of its citizens against the negative health effects of mercury. Mercury pollution must also be tackled at an international level.

The new regulation addresses this issue by setting out provisions which will allow the Union and its Member States to approve, ratify and implement the Minamata Convention on Mercury. It will also ensure that EU law is in line with the Convention.

The Minamata Convention, adopted in Kumamoto (Japan) on 10 October 2013, is a legally binding treaty providing a regulatory framework for the reduction of mercury pollution globally. The Convention is currently being ratified by signatory states and regional organisations. The EU and its member states are committed to ratification, and the necessary measures are underway to ensure this happens.

- [Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on mercury, and repealing Regulation \(EC\) No 1102/2008](#)
- [Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Mercury \(EP position at 1st reading\)](#)
- [Commission proposal](#)
- [Minamata Convention website](#)

Press office - General Secretariat of the Council of the EU

Rue de la Loi 175 - B-1048 BRUSSELS - Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319

press@consilium.europa.eu - www.consilium.europa.eu/press