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Sweden slams proposed EU mercury law

Valerie Flynn, 4 Mar 2016

Sweden has criticised the European Commission's proposal for a new EU mercury regulation, which it says is not sufficiently ambitious.

Phasing out of mercury in [dental amalgam](#) is possible but the Commission proposal is silent on this "major field of [mercury] use within the EU", Swedish environment minister Åsa Romson argued at an Environment Council meeting in Brussels today (4 March).

"We need tougher rules, not just better risk management," Ms Romson told other ministers, adding that it was important for the EU to play a leading role internationally in phasing out mercury use.

The Commission tabled [proposals](#) in February for a new mercury regulation and for ratification of the 2013 [Minimata Convention](#) on mercury.

The proposed EU regulation does not go beyond the requirements of the Convention, which will ban mercury in products including most batteries and in certain types of fluorescent lamps. The Convention calls for a phase-down but not a phase-out of mercury in dental fillings.

When it [consulted](#) on the new regulation in 2014 the Commission considered going beyond the requirements of the Convention, including banning exports of products containing mercury.

Green group EEB called on the Council to strengthen the proposed regulation by banning export of all products containing mercury that are not allowed on the EU market "to avoid double standards and to ensure they are not reaching countries with no or poor regulations to manage mercury".

EEB also called for the new regulation to specify conditions for environmentally safe disposal of metallic mercury, with a preference for solidified mercury disposal in underground facilities.

Presenting the proposals to the Council, environment commissioner Karmenu Vella said the Convention would prohibit new uses of mercury in the EU and would level the international playing field as other major economies would need to apply similar rules to those in the EU.

Only 23 countries have so far ratified the Minimata Convention. Fifty ratifications are needed before it could come into force. EU member states cannot individually ratify until the new regulation and proposal for EU ratification are finalised.

Dutch environment minister Sharon Dijksma said the Dutch EU presidency would work towards "swift entry into force" of the Convention.

No other ministers made statements on the proposal.