



PRESS RELEASE

EP Committee tells Commission “the sooner the better” on EDCs

Brussels, 23 January 2013 – The European Parliamentary Committee on Environment, Health and Food Safety has voted a draft Resolution today sending a clear message to the Commission that prompt action is needed to protect public health from endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs).

The draft resolution says that measures to reduce public exposure to EDCs are a priority. It deals with improvements in the EU regulatory system and addresses how the science should be used in hazard and risk assessment.

The clear message to the European Commission is that the EU Strategy on EDCs needs a complete overhaul. The draft resolution states: *“The Strategy must deliver effective protection of human health by placing greater emphasis on the precautionary principle to work towards reducing human exposure to endocrine disruptors where necessary.”* (Para 10) (1)

MEP Asa Westlund (2) says: *“Our report makes clear that the time for coherent political action has come. Even if we do not have all the answers, we do know enough to regulate these substances in accordance with the precautionary principle.”*

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) welcomes the vote on the report. Lisette van Vliet, Senior Policy Advisor, HEAL says: *“A recent EU-wide study that monitored synthetic chemicals stored in the bodies of Europeans showed that we carry these hormone disrupting chemicals. Scientific studies link exposure to these chemicals, particularly in the womb and in early life, to a range of health problems, including genital defects in baby boys, early puberty in girls, infertility, obesity, diabetes, hormone-related cancers and other chronic conditions (3). Reducing exposure to EDCs offers a major opportunity to stop the development of some of these diseases before they start. The sooner the EU reorients itself to eliminating EDCs, the better.”*

Part of the foot-dragging on implementing the precautionary principle in relation to EDCs has come from industry’s fears of rising costs. However, a report published today by the European Environmental Agency (EEA) suggests that encouraging the development of alternatives to harmful chemicals could actually drive innovation. It provides guidance on how to maximise innovation and minimise harm. (4)

A number of EU member states have already legislated on EDCs on the basis of existing science to protect public health.

France has banned the use of the endocrine disruptor bisphenol A (BPA) in all food contact materials intended for the under three year olds from 2013, and for all ages from 2015. (5) From this month, Belgium has banned the use of BPA in food contact materials for children under three. Sweden has also banned BPA in children’s food contact materials starting this year.

Last year, Denmark announced that four phthalates (DEHP, DBP, DIBP and BBP) would no longer be allowed in shower curtains, table cloths and other consumer goods as they are EDCs.(6) The Danish authorities had already banned bisphenol A in food contact materials for the children in 2010.

The draft resolution represents for the first time in a decade that the European Parliament is formally addressing the issues of endocrine disruptors. The resolution will be voted on in plenary in March 2013.

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Notes

1. Amendment to draft resolution, paragraph 10.
2. Asa Westlund is rapporteur for the European Parliament's own initiative report on the "Protection of public health from endocrine disruptors"
3. [Lancet, Early-life prevention of non-communicable diseases](#) (Comment, January 2013) and see Barouki R, et al, Developmental origins of non-communicable disease: Implications for research and public health, June 2012, <http://www.ehjournal.net/content/11/1/42>
4. European Environment Agency, Late lessons from early warnings: science, precaution, innovation, 2013.
5. French parliament takes the path towards BPA- and EDC-free products <http://www.env-health.org/news/members-news/article/french-parliament-follows-the-road>
6. Newsletter from the Danish Consumer Council, Four phthalates banned in Denmark, August 2012, http://taenk.dk/sites/taenk.dk/files/edc_newsletter_12_1.pdf

HEAL is a leading European not-for-profit organization addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union. With the support of its over 70 member organizations, which represent health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, patients, citizens, women, youth, and environmental experts, HEAL brings independent expertise and evidence from the health community to different decision-making processes. Members include international and Europe-wide organisations as well as national and local groups. Website: www.env-health.org