



## PRESS RELEASE

# EU court hearing puts spotlight on Commission delay over hormone disrupting chemicals

**Brussels, Luxembourg 18 November 2015** – A crucial court hearing against the European Commission took place yesterday. (1) The European Union Court of Justice in Luxembourg heard Sweden's case against the Commission for failing to fulfil its legal obligations regarding hormone disrupting chemicals, also known as endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs). (1)

Sweden's anger erupted after the European Commission missed its legal deadline to put forward criteria to identify EDCs by the end of 2013. The case is supported by the EU Council of governments, which is considered to be the highest political body of the European Union. The European Parliament and three governments are individually backing Sweden. They are Denmark, France and the Netherlands.

Lisette van Vliet, Senior Policy Adviser, Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), who attended the hearing, says:

*"When all EU governments and the European Parliament join together to prosecute the European Commission, it is clear that the Commission is getting it wrong. These delays are keeping Europeans exposed to chemicals that contribute to breast and prostate cancer, diabetes and obesity, infertility and learning disorders. We look to the European Court to make the Commission abide by deadlines set in European law to protect the health of Europeans."*

EDCs interfere with the body's highly sensitive hormone system. Studies point to EDCs causing obesity, diabetes and cancer. (2) Even tiny amounts of EDCs pose particular risks to unborn children and infants. Policies are urgently needed to reduce human exposure. (3) Costs attributable to exposure to a selected sample of endocrine-disrupting chemicals (with only the highest probability of causation) were recently estimated at €157 billion per year in the European Union. (4)

The EU Commission is currently conducting an impact assessment partly prompted by intensive lobbying by the chemicals and pesticide industry. (5) This is expected to delay the setting EU criteria for defining EDCs until 2017 at the earliest.

### Notes for journalists

1. Case T-521/14, 4 July 2014 — Sweden v Commission

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2014.431.01.0028.02.ENG](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2014.431.01.0028.02.ENG)

*Background:* The European Commission failed to adopt scientific criteria by 13 December 2013 for the identification of hormone disrupting chemicals under the Biocides Products Regulation. That law, adopted in 2012, requires biocide substances to be examined for endocrine disrupting properties, and if found, to be taken off the EU market except under certain circumstances. A similar even stricter law exists for pesticides. The European Commission Environment Directorate General had made good progress on draft criteria by spring 2013, but after immense lobbying by the chemical manufacturers and pesticide companies, the European Commission Secretary General decided an impact assessment on the criteria and further regulatory adjustments was necessary and under the new Commission President Juncker, the work on biocides criteria was transferred to the Health Directorate General.

2. The Endocrine Society published its Second Scientific Statement on Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals in September 2015, in which it says there is no longer any doubt that exposure to endocrine disrupting

chemicals (EDCs), found in food and consumer goods, are contributing to some chronic endocrine-related diseases, including obesity, diabetes and cancer. The Endocrine Society is the world's oldest, largest and most active organisation devoted to research on hormones and the clinical practice of endocrinology. Its 2<sup>nd</sup> Scientific Statement is here: <http://press.endocrine.org/doi/10.1210/er.2015-1010> The Endocrine Society statement includes a review of 1,300 studies on EDCs, which show more evidence than ever of the links between EDCs and health problems including: obesity and diabetes, female reproduction, male reproduction, hormone-sensitive cancers in females, prostate cancer, thyroid, and neurodevelopment and neuroendocrine systems.

<http://press.endocrine.org/doi/10.1210/er.2015-1093>

3. The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO), which represents 125 national organisations, has called for greater efforts to prevent toxic chemical exposure in October 2015 at its recent congress. "*Documented links between prenatal exposure to environmental chemicals and adverse health outcomes span the life course and include impacts on fertility and pregnancy, neurodevelopment, and cancer. The global health and economic burden related to toxic environmental chemicals is in excess of millions of deaths and billions of dollars every year.*" (...) [http://www.ijgo.org/article/S0020-7292\(15\)00590-1/fulltext](http://www.ijgo.org/article/S0020-7292(15)00590-1/fulltext) and <http://www.figo.org/news/congress-news-global-ob-gyn-group-urges-greater-efforts-prevent-toxic-chemical-exposure-0015052>

4. Trasande L, Zoeller RT, Hass U, Kortenkamp A, Grandjean P, Myers JP, et al. Estimating burden and disease costs of exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals in the European Union. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab* 2015;100(4):1245–55.

5. Corporate Europe, A Toxic Affair, How the chemical lobby blocked action on hormone disrupting chemicals [http://corporateeurope.org/sites/default/files/toxic\\_lobby\\_edc.pdf](http://corporateeurope.org/sites/default/files/toxic_lobby_edc.pdf)

About the EU court of justice [http://europa.eu/about-eu/institutions-bodies/court-justice/index\\_en.htm#goto\\_7](http://europa.eu/about-eu/institutions-bodies/court-justice/index_en.htm#goto_7)

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*The **Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)** is a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union (EU). With the support of more than 70 member organisations, HEAL brings independent expertise and evidence from the health community to different decision-making processes. Our broad alliance represents health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, doctors, nurses, cancer and asthma groups, citizens, women's groups, youth groups, environmental NGOs, scientists and public health research institutes. Members include international and Europe-wide organisations as well as national and local groups. Website: [www.env-health.org](http://www.env-health.org). Follow HEAL on [Facebook](#) and Twitter [@HealthandEnv@EDCFree](#) and [@CHM\\_HEAL](#)*

*The **EDC-Free Europe coalition** represents more than 50 public interest organisations across Europe and beyond. The aim is to raise public awareness about endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) and urge quicker governmental action. Our campaign partners include trade unions, consumers, public health and healthcare professionals, advocates for cancer prevention, environmentalists and women's groups. **For more information please visit [www.edc-free-europe.org/](http://www.edc-free-europe.org/)** Follow on Twitter [@EDCFree](#) and like us on [Facebook](#)*

