QUESTIONS/ANSWERS ON THE “PERIOD OF TIME AFTER OPENING”¹

What is the “PERIOD OF TIME AFTER OPENING”?  

The period of time after opening informs consumers of the authorised period of time a product may be used after opening without any harm to the consumer. This new labelling requirement follows from the Directive adopted in February 2003 by the European Parliament and the Council amending the legislation on cosmetic products².

How is the “period of time after opening” indicated?  

The period of time after opening is indicated by a symbol representing an open cream jar and the period given in months and/or years. This symbol was adopted by the European Commission in collaboration with Member States and the cosmetics industry³. If the period is given in months, it may be indicated by a number followed by the word “month(s)” or by the abbreviation “M”, the letter “M” corresponding to mensis, or month in Latin.

When does this labelling requirement come into force?  

The labelling requirement covers cosmetic products placed on the European market from 11 March 2005 onwards. For a transitional period, labelled and unlabelled products will therefore be available on the market until stocks of the “old” products have sold out.

Is the “period of time after opening” indicated on all cosmetic products?  

The “period of time after opening” must be indicated on products with a shelf life of 30 months or more. For products with a shelf life of 30 months or less the minimum shelf life must be stated; i.e. the date up until which the product, kept under the right conditions, can continue to fulfil its initial function without any harm to human health.

The new labelling will not cover:  
- products not at risk of deterioration;  
- products which do not open (such as products in sealed packaging, or sprays)  
- or products which are intended to be used only once.