

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since **exposure to methyl mercury** via diet is the critical mercury problem in Europe, the reduction of potential exposure to this Hg species should be the focus for the steps to be taken in Europe. The daily reference dose of 0.1 µg methylmercury per kg body weight is often exceeded in certain population groups in Europe. To reduce the risk to human health and to ensure that this reference dose is not exceeded, a long-term strategy for the reduction of the methylmercury levels in fish from European waters should be adopted. As a part of this strategy, **the WG proposes a specific action plan** for reduction of the atmospheric input of mercury to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in Europe which includes reductions of mercury emissions from major anthropogenic sources and a complete phase-out of the use of mercury in major goods. Other actions such as dietary guidelines may be needed to reduce the human health risks in the short term.

The WG recommends that the European Commission adopts the following action plan as apart of the Air Quality directive:

1. **A mandatory monitoring network** for Total Gaseous Mercury (TGM) in ambient air and mercury in precipitation (wet deposition) should be established in the Europe Union.
2. The European Commission should encourage Member States to promote a voluntary monitoring network for **mercury species** in ambient air (total particulate mercury and gaseous divalent mercury).
3. To ensure data comparability and quality, the European Commission should support **standardisation** of methods for sampling and analysis of atmospheric mercury species within CEN.
4. Member States should be requested to make an **inventory** of current mercury emissions from anthropogenic sources.
5. **To reduce the uncertainty** associated to anthropogenic emission estimates there is a need that Member States promote measurements of speciated mercury emissions at the emission source (in the flue gases at the stack).
6. The European Commission should support studies that may lead to a better assessment of mercury emissions from major natural sources (i.e., surface waters, soil). It would

- improve our understanding of the **relative contribution** of natural vs. anthropogenic sources in Europe and would provide an important information on the European contribution (anthropogenic + natural sources) to the atmospheric mercury budget that annually is released into the global atmosphere (European emissions vs. emissions from the rest of the world).
7. Member states should be requested to present an inventory of what **actions** can be taken **to reduce anthropogenic mercury emissions** including a ban on use of mercury in products.
 8. The European Commission is urged to provide support for the development of **atmospheric models** to be used as (regulatory) tool in the implementation of the policy at Member State and European level.
 9. The European Commission should encourage Member States to generate **dietary exposure data** for critical population groups.
 10. To improve the **risk assessment** related to mercury exposure, the European Commission should encourage and support studies of interactions between methyl mercury and nutrients in humans.
 11. The **benefits derived from fish consumption** should be taken into account in risk assessment and risk management.
 12. The European Commission should encourage/take initiative to strengthen the **co-operation of Member States** in the current activities of the UN ECE on atmospheric modelling, monitoring and development of models for critical loads/limits assessment scenarios for atmospheric deposition of mercury.
 13. Results of the above activity should be used to establish a **target value for the long-term atmospheric deposition of mercury** in Europe and for the development of strategies for a cost-efficient implementation of the limit value.
 14. Since the actions needed are derived from assessment of human exposure in Europe and potential health risks, the European Commission should encourage research and surveys on the population exposure to mercury in Europe, and on the associations between exposure and health effects.

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POSITION PAPER ON MERCURY

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