

Press Memo

## Conference on Endocrine Disruptors – Current Challenges in Science and Policy

***Do endocrine-disrupting chemicals pose a significant risk to health and the environment? Do they need special or priority measures? Do we know enough about these chemicals? Can we identify substances that are likely to be endocrine disruptors? What are the knowledge and data gaps? This week's conference on endocrine disruptors and the challenges they pose aimed to address these questions to inform and shape future EU policy in this area. The conference attracted more than 300 participants including policy makers and experts from EU Member States and outside the EU, scientists, academics, industry groups, trade organisations and NGO's.***

Opening the conference, European Commissioner for the Environment Janez Potočnik said: "We have all the classic ingredients of an intensive and substantial debate: signals from science, increasing public and political concern and awareness, and doubts from some stakeholders. The Treaty provides the basis for our response to this complex challenge. Our policies must deliver a high level of protection for man and the environment, these policies must be objective and science-based, and the precautionary principle must be applied."

European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy John Dalli said: "Since 1999, when the Commission adopted its Strategy on Endocrine Disruptors, the Commission has taken a leading role in establishing the most up-to-date information, to identify and fill scientific data gaps, and to implement policy as appropriate. Today, we stand at a turning point."

And European Commissioner for Research and Innovation Maire Geoghegan-Quinn said: "Under Horizon 2020 we will continue to support research which explores the impact of environmental contaminants on health. The decision on how to address endocrine disruptors must be based on conclusions drawn from discussions with stakeholders, but we must also ensure that any future EU policy is built on solid science."

Many EU and international reports have shown growing concerns about male and female reproductive health. In boys and men, an increase in the occurrence of genital malformations, a consistent decrease in sperm count, and an increase in testicular cancers are being observed. In girls and women, there is an increased incidence of precocious puberty and breast cancer. In addition, endocrine disruptors may also be contributing to the rapid increases in type II diabetes and obesity as well as certain neurological conditions and changes in the immune system.

Endocrine disruptors have harmful effects on the body's hormone (endocrine) system. Hormones are chemical signals created by the body. They regulate the body's development, growth, reproduction, metabolism, immunity and behaviour. Hormones act at very small amounts and at precise moments in time. The health effects can be felt long after the exposure has stopped. Exposure to endocrine disruptors in the womb can have effects on an individual throughout their life and can even have consequences for the next generation.

By the end of 2013, the European Commission is expected to propose criteria for the identification of substances with endocrine disrupting properties under the Plant Protection Product Regulation and the Biocidal Product Regulation. By June 2013, the Commission will also review the authorisation of endocrine disruptors under REACH. In parallel, the 1999 Community Strategy on Endocrine Disruptors will be revised.

At the conference there was general recognition that the current scientific evidence supported the need for action. It was also recognised that there were enough tools,

definitions, test guidelines and criteria to identify substances with endocrine-disrupting properties. The European Commission aims to propose science-based criteria for endocrine disruptors that are applicable to all relevant pieces of legislation. In addition, there is a need to strengthen research to fill any remaining knowledge gaps.

For more information:

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/endocrine/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/endocrine/index_en.htm)