Consumers/Health: the EU strengthens consumer protection with respect to
tooth whitening products

The Commission welcomes the adoption today by the Council of a directive on tooth
whitening products which strengthens consumer protection with respect to these
products in Europe. Currently the European Cosmetics Directive only fixed a maximum
authorized concentration of hydrogen peroxide – the main active ingredient
in tooth whitening or bleaching products – at the level of 0.1%. However, in reality
tooth whitening or bleaching products containing levels of hydrogen peroxide higher
than the maximum authorised concentration are being used widely. The new
Directive sets out differentiated rules according to the level of hydrogen peroxide in
line with the advice from the European Scientific Committee on Consumer Safety.
Tooth whitening or bleaching products containing up to 0.1% hydrogen peroxide will
continue to be freely available to consumers on the market. Products containing
concentrations higher than 0.1% and up to 6% will only be sold to dentists. For each
cycle of use of the product, the first use will be by a dentist who will have performed a
clinical examination. The dentist will then provide access to these products for the
remainder of the cycle of use. Persons under 18 years of age will not be allowed to
use these products, even under the supervision of a dentist. Products containing
more than 6% are banned. The Member States will now have 12 months to
implement the Directive into their national legislations.