

**Brussels: for immediate release**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**PUNITIVE VOTE FOR BATTERY CONSUMERS**

**Brussels, 21 April 2004** – The European Portable Battery Association is perplexed with the results of the EP plenary vote, on 20<sup>th</sup> April, where MEPs voted in first reading not only an unrealistic but also an unworkable Battery Directive. It is clear that some MEPs have not measured the impact of their decision and the effect it will have on our daily lives.

This vote will not only impact the critical medical and electronic applications, including insulin pumps, glucometres, hearing aids and everyday electronic appliances such as children's toys, TV remote controls, watches, alarm clocks, and many other uses (for more examples, see our comic strip on the EPBA website). It will also have a direct and significant impact on employment in the battery industry. It is a reality - and therefore cannot be ignored – that some production facilities only produce batteries which are, after yesterday's vote, forbidden to be used any longer.

How can one explain to people using hearing aids or insulin pumps that these critical medical devices cannot be used anymore due to an ill-advised decision taken by the EP? How can one explain to employees of a battery production plant, that their jobs are lost due to an ill-advised decision taken by the EP?

**Restrictions**

The decision to ban batteries used in 40 % of everyday appliances was taken without even a basic and essential economic and social impact assessment. In addition, in the case of cadmium, lead and mercury, no EU environmental risk assessment has supported any need for restrictions on batteries !

The exemptions listed in Annex II for batteries which contain less than two percent of mercury by weight does not cover those which have miniscule traces of lead used, in particular button cell batteries. This means that many exemptions are actually not exemptions at all. There are no safe and reliable alternatives to a whole range of button cell batteries on the market today. The European Commission has already raised these concerns both at the Environment Committee discussions on 6 April and at yesterday's plenary debate. They were ignored.

Less than two weeks before Enlargement of the EU, the EP gives the wrong signal to the citizens of the Accession countries. The EP Plenary vote totally neglects the economic and social realities in these future Member States. First, the vote will result in ban of at least 80% of all batteries used there. Secondly, experience in these countries showed that the battery consumer cannot afford the more expensive batteries which the EP would like to see being used. In an enlarged Europe, the Zinc Carbon ban has a price tag of approx. €770 million ... to be paid by the consumer.

**Collection targets**

EPBA broadly supports the Commission's proposed revision of EU battery legislation as the objective is to ensure efficient collection and recycling systems in an enlarged Europe and to address the need for European harmonisation. However, the adoption by the European Parliament of collection targets as a percentage of sales from two years previously is unrealistic and unachievable in most EU countries, including the Accession Countries.

**Sustainable schemes**

The lack of a mandatory and permanent visible fee is in contradiction with the information requirements yesterday's vote will entail. The sustainability of the collection schemes depends on the collaboration of an informed consumer who knows that the battery will be treated at end of life and therefore needs to be disposed of properly.

EPBA is willing to work with MEPs in the Second Reading to address some of the oversights and inconsistencies of the First Reading adoption of this report.

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