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PRESS RELEASE

Europe's citizens hit by Parliament vote

Brussels, 8 April 2004 – The European Portable Battery Association is disappointed and very worried at the decision of the European Parliament's Environment Committee, on 6 April, to ban more than a third of all portable batteries currently sold every year on the European market.

Over two billion batteries currently used by Europe's citizens will be banned. These include batteries contained in essential medical and electronic applications, including insulin pumps and glucometres and in everyday electronic appliances such as children's toys, TV remote controls, watches, alarm clocks, as well as many other uses.

As a result, the outcome of the vote will impact on at least 40% of the appliances used in the EU. The EP Environment Committee vote also neglects the market realities in the Accession Countries where cheaper, Zinc Carbon, batteries make up the largest part of the battery market. **The result of the vote will lead to a ban of at least 80% of all batteries used in the Accession Countries.**

Marketing restrictions

“Critically, the decision of the Environment Committee to exempt batteries which use less than two percent mercury, but not those which have miniscule traces of lead and which are an integral component of button cell batteries, means that many exemptions listed in Annex II are actually not exemptions at all! This has really not been thought through properly!”

said Rémy Burel Varta CEO and Chairman of EPBA Board.

The EP Environment Committee vote in favour of a marketing restriction on a wide range of batteries containing certain heavy metals is wholly disproportionate and unwarranted from environmental, consumer choice, economical and technical viewpoints.

EPBA is opposed to any restrictions which cannot be justified by an EU environmental risk assessment. No such assessment has been carried out for the restrictions on lead and mercury. The assessment on cadmium concluded that a ban was unjustified.

Furthermore, no economic and social impact assessment has been carried out for this ban on one third of the batteries in use today.

Alternatives

There are **no** alternatives to a whole range of button cell batteries on the market today. The European Commission itself has said that it is concerned that safe and reliable alternatives to these applications in many cases do not exist and that these often have shorter life spans and so contribute to creating additional

waste. These concerns were again raised by the Commission, at the Environment Committee discussions on 6 April.

“The clear message is that choice will be severely restricted and the consumer will end up bearing the brunt of the extra costs of finding alternatives” said Rémy Burel.

Collection targets

The decision of the Environment Committee to set national portable battery collection targets as a percentage of sales from two years previously will not be measurable with sufficient accuracy. Batteries often do not enter the waste stream for many years after final use.

The rates set are unachievable in most EU countries, let alone in the Accession Countries where there is no, or only a nascent, collection infrastructure and very low consumer awareness of the need for separate collection.

EPBA welcomes the Commission’s proposed revision of EU battery legislation, the objective of which is to ensure efficient collection and recycling systems in an enlarged Europe and to address the need for a harmonisation in the best interests of the EU consumer, environment and industry.

“The EP vote on 6 April however, is a significant set back to the realisation of these goals,” concluded Rémy Burel

EPBA will continue to work with MEPs in the run up to the plenary vote in April in Strasbourg. .

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