



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Environment: Fewer risks from hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment

Brussels, 20 July 2011 – The ban on heavy metals and other dangerous chemicals in electrical and electronic equipment has now been extended to a much wider range of products, with new rules entering into force tomorrow. The new law will improve the safety of electronic products such as thermostats, medical devices and control panels, and will prevent the release of hazardous substances into the environment. Member States have 18 months to transpose the new rules.

The new law is a revision of the RoHS Directive on the restriction of hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment. It will continue to ban lead, mercury, cadmium, hexavalent chromium and the flame retardants Polybrominated biphenyls (PBB) and Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE). The previous RoHS Directive covered several categories of electrical and electronic equipment including household appliances, IT and consumer equipment, but it has now been extended to all electronic equipment, cables and spare parts. Exemptions can still be granted in cases where no satisfactory alternative is available. The list of banned substances will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik said: *"Where there are alternatives available it is not acceptable to expose people or the planet to dangerous substances. We all come into daily contact with products and these new rules increase further the level of safety we can expect. They improve consumer safety, health and environmental protection, and they also improve the way the rules will work at national level."*

The **key elements of the new Directive** are as follows:

- A gradual extension of the rules to all electrical and electronic equipment (EEE), cables and spare parts, with a view to full compliance by 2019;
- A review of the list of banned substances by July 2014, and periodically thereafter;
- Clearer and more transparent rules for granting exemptions from the substance ban;
- Improved coherence with the [REACH Regulation](#) on the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals;
- Clarification of important definitions; and
- [CE marking](#) denoting compliance with European norms reserved for electronic products that also respect RoHS requirements.

In view of the significant extension of the scope, the new Directive introduces transition periods of up to 8 years for the new products affected by the rules.

Photovoltaic panels are exempted from the new Directive in an effort to help the EU reach its objectives for renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Implementation and compliance are important aspects of the new rules, which include a mechanism to make it easier for the Commission to monitor compliance.

Next Steps

The Commission is striving to ensure a smooth transition between the "old" and "new" RoHS Directive. To facilitate compliance for manufacturers, the [RoHS FAQ guidance document](#) will be updated before the deadline for transposition in the Member States. The Commission will also review articles covered by the change in scope between the old and new Directive, and which have not yet been subject to an impact assessment, with a view to their inclusion in the Directive.

Background

[Directive 2002/95/EC](#) on the Restriction of the use of certain Hazardous Substances in Electrical and Electronic Equipment (RoHS I) entered into force on 13 February 2003. It sets strict limit values for lead, mercury, cadmium, hexavalent chromium, polybrominated biphenyls or polybrominated diphenyl ethers in specified types of electrical and electronic equipment and is to be regularly adapted. The legislation has prevented thousands of tonnes of banned substances from being disposed of and potentially released into the environment. It has led to important changes in product design in the European Union and worldwide, and has also served as a model for similar laws outside the European Economic Area.

The revision was launched in 2008. Agreement between the European Parliament and the Council was reached in 2010 and the Directive was adopted in June 2011. Member States have 18 months to transpose the Directive. Until then, RoHS I continues to apply.

Further information:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:174:0088:0110:EN:PDF>

See also:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/rohs_eee/index_en.htm

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