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Lamp Manufacturers are working towards reducing the amount of mercury needed in energy saving lamps

In the context of the European Environmental Bureau conference “Mercury-containing lamps under the spotlight” as well as the ongoing review of the RoHS Directive exemptions, ELC members commit to reduce existing levels of mercury needed for energy saving lamps below the limits currently required under this Directive.

Energy saving fluorescent lamps contain very small amounts of mercury to convert electricity into light more efficiently. Over the past 25 years, lamp manufacturers have developed innovative ways to increase lamp performance while minimising the use of mercury. The mercury content of lamps has therefore been reduced by more than 90% in that time.

The ELC, however, points out that different mercury limits are needed depending on the technical characteristics of each lamp group concerned (such as technology, phosphor, size, length, wattage, lifetime, production process, dosing technology, purpose, etc.). If mercury limits are too ambitious, this could for instance result in a reduction of the lamp’s life, leading to higher mercury consumption overall.

Under the European Union’s WEEE Directive¹, the European lamp industry has established an EU-wide infrastructure for recycling energy saving lamps. This allows the various materials they contain – mercury included - to be recovered and recycled or disposed of in an environmentally sound way. More than 80% of the material in lamps is recycled, resulting in fewer resources being needed to produce new goods.

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The ELC represents the leading lamp manufacturers in Europe:

Aura Light AB, BLV Licht- und Vakuumtechnik GmbH, G.E. Lighting Europe Ltd, Havells Sylvania, Narva Lichtquellen GmbH, OSRAM GmbH and Philips Lighting BV.

¹ The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive (2002/96/EC) aims to minimise the impact of electrical and electronic goods on the environment