

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2444/08
by Hiltrud Breyer (Verts/ALE)
to the Commission

Subject: Use of dental amalgam

In a recent opinion the EU's SCENHIR Committee concluded that, apart from allergies, there were no acute or long-term health risks associated with the use of mercury in dental fillings. Some EU Member States do not share SCENHIR's positive opinion: the use of dental amalgam has been forbidden in Sweden, Norway and Denmark since 2008. Europe's dentists use some 90 tonnes of mercury every year. In applications other than dental fillings mercury is looked upon as highly toxic. In 2005, given the health and environmental risks, the Commission launched a mercury strategy, which did not, however, include any measures to limit or ban the use of dental amalgam.

1. SCENHIR comes to the conclusion in its opinion that there is no connection between dental amalgam and conditions such as Alzheimer's, autism, developmental disorders in children and autoimmune diseases. Environmental scientists in Freiburg, on the other hand, have found evidence of these links. Is the Commission aware of these investigations? Does it not acknowledge any connection between dental amalgam and the abovementioned conditions?
2. Is the Commission aware of any long-term studies on possible health damage from the use of dental amalgam? If not, does it not consider it problematic that there are apparently no long-term studies of the dangers of dental amalgam?
3. What is the Commission's view of the amalgam bans in Sweden and Denmark? Has the Commission been notified of these? Does it accept the bans?
4. How does the Commission propose to apply the precautionary principle in the case of dental amalgam?
5. Will the Commission take account of Parliament's call for a proposal limiting the use of dental amalgam? The proposal should have been presented by the end of 2007.
6. What is the Commission's view of a total ban on mercury in dental fillings?