

**Question for written answer E-002861/2019
to the Commission**
Rule 138
Guido Reil (ID)

Subject: Energy-saving light bulbs and mercury

In 2009, environment ministers reached agreement on a ban on mercury at the United Nations.

At the same time, an EU-wide ban on incandescent bulbs was introduced with effect from 1 September 2009. The intention was to reduce energy use and, therefore, carbon dioxide emissions. Incandescent bulbs have been replaced by energy-saving bulbs, but they contain mercury. During production of the bulbs, mercury is released in an uncontrolled manner and evaporates during the dosage process. However, the biggest problem is disposing of the bulbs. The producers themselves indicate that only 20% of energy-saving light bulbs are delivered to recycling centres, while about 80% are thrown out with household waste. In the process, the body of the lamp is almost always destroyed, and volatile mercury can escape again¹.

Germany has a relatively high recycling rate. However, in many other EU countries only very little recycling takes place, if any.

How does the Commission explain and assess the apparent contradiction between the above UN agreement and the relevant European policy?

In its impact assessment, how did the Commission assess the risks to the environment and human health posed by the use and improper disposal of energy-saving light bulbs?

Can the Commission indicate how many energy-saving light bulbs were disposed of with household waste in the individual Member States from the beginning of 2010 to the end of 2018?

¹ Stephan Walch and Lars Duester, 'Kritische Anmerkungen zum EU-weiten Verbot von Glühlampen in Bezug auf Quecksilber', Magazin Unterricht Physik, 2009, No 111, 77-79.