

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3343/00
by Ursula Schleicher (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: L-cysteine from human hair

L-cysteine is an amino acid used in the manufacture of various cosmetics. L-cysteine itself is produced in a number of ways: by fermentation in Germany; by synthesis and biotransformation in Japan, using chicken feathers in France and by hydrolysis of human hair in China. The L-cysteine made from human hair is the cheapest.

Annex II to the cosmetics directive (76/768/EEC)¹ contains a list of substances that may not be used as ingredients for cosmetic products, including, under number 416: cells, tissue or products of human origin.

According to my information, the Commission plans to issue a derogation authorising the manufacture of L-cysteine from human hair.

1. Did the Commission take ethical aspects as well as scientific ones into account in its consideration of this derogation?
2. Does the Commission have information about the circumstances under which Chinese human hair is obtained?
3. Is production of L-cysteine from human hair envisaged in the European Community, or is the L-cysteine manufactured in this way to be imported from China?

¹ OJ L 262, 27.9.1976, p. 169.