



Member of the European Parliament

Commissioner Andris Piebalgs
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
Brussels

17 February 2009

Dear Commissioner,

Continued availability of incandescent light bulbs for medical purposes

We are writing in follow-up to the European Parliament Environment Committee's vote today *not* to object to the draft implementing measure to Regulation 2005/32/EC establishing eco-design requirements for non-directional household lamps.

In your letter to Chairman Ouzký of 16 February, you offered assurance that "*particular attention has been given to the issue of citizens suffering from light sensitive conditions, and the risk of aggravating their symptoms in the presence of energy saving lamps.*" You refer to the opinion of the Scientific Committee for Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR) and conclude that the concerns of potential sufferers should be addressed by the use of double envelope compact fluorescent lamps and those alternative bulbs (such as improved halogens) which will remain available beyond the phase-out of incandescent light bulbs.

Whilst we very much welcome the energy savings that will be achieved by the measure and the setting of minimum efficiency requirements for appliances in general as required under the Eco-Design Directive, we would also like to seek assurances that, should Member States consider it necessary to continue to make incandescent bulbs available on medical grounds, for example through pharmacies, they will be able to do so.

The SCENIHR report itself found that "*additional experimental and epidemiological studies are needed before final conclusions can be drawn regarding several conditions*" (p.22); also that "*There is sufficient evidence to show that ultraviolet and in some cases visible radiation from lights can provoke a clinically significant skin reaction to light sensitive patients.*" (p.27). Attestations from high level medical practitioners support the notion that concerns over health impacts are genuine; and it seems that even those halogens which will remain available are not a complete solution - they are as yet little-tested, and early reports from patients suffering from lupus and ME are suggest they still provoke severe symptoms.

In other words, it is very possible that the Commission's purported fallback does not serve all needs, and that certain members of the population may have a genuine medical requirement for straightforward incandescent light bulbs. It would be most unfortunate - not to mention provoke a very unhelpful backlash against urgently needed energy efficiency measures - if channels did not remain open through which to attend to legitimate (and serious) health concerns.

Thank you for your attention, and we look forward to hearing from you. We know that many of our colleagues will also be very anxious to receive such assurances.

Yours sincerely,



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Letter as sent by email, 17/2/09 at 17:01 from caroline.lucas@europarl.europa.eu