



*European Communities
Commission
Release*

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July 7, 1975

Seminar on "Biological sampling for monitoring
population exposure to lead"

A seminar on "Biological sampling for monitoring population exposure to lead" began today under the joint sponsorship of the Commission of the European Communities (Health Protection Directorate), Luxembourg, and the Western Health Board, Regional Hospital, Galway, Ireland.

It will judge the organisation of the extensive number of epidemiological surveys on lead which have been carried out in Europe in the past few years. The seminar will end on Wednesday.

About 50 participants, including representatives of the nine Member States of the European Communities, are attending this Seminar as well as observers from the World Health Organisation.

On April 16, 1975 the Commission submitted proposals to the Council of Ministers aimed at protecting human health from the presence of lead in the environment. One deals with biological standards and with screening the population for lead exposure, and the other deals with air quality standards for lead.

These proposed directives have been submitted in accordance with the Action Programme on the Environment adopted by the Council of Ministers on November 22, 1973 in which lead and its compounds are considered as pollutants for top priority consideration.

The directive on biological standards provides for biological sampling of the population to determine the lead levels in terms of the biological standards for different sectors of a population group.

The Galway Seminar, after evaluating the previous epidemiological surveys, will develop guidelines for biological sampling to be used in conjunction with the directive.

The application of these guidelines will be evaluated within the framework of a pilot project to be conducted in Ireland. The scheme for this project will be presented and discussed at the seminar. In this context the experience gained by the Western Health Board, Regional Hospital, Galway, acting in conjunction with the Commission, during a study of blood lead levels and enzyme activities in Galway and the lead mining area in Western Ireland will be of great benefit and value in the planning of this pilot project for future European studies.

Past experience of blood analyses to determine lead content has shown that there is room for considerable improvement in Community countries. The application of the directive requires that all blood lead measurements should give comparable results. During the seminar, therefore, a comparative programme on such measurements will be initiated and will take account of the sampling problems.