

Quality of petrol and diesel fuels

1996/0163(COD) - 17/10/2007 - Follow-up document

This Communication is the Commission's fourth annual report on the quality of petrol and diesel as well as the volumes sold in the Community. It covers the year 2005 and has been prepared in accordance with Article 8 of Directive 98/70/EC.

In short, the report finds:

The monitoring of fuel quality in 2005 shows that the specifications for petrol and diesel laid down in Directive 98/70/EC have, by and large, been met. For petrol the main parameters where limit values were exceeded concerns research octane number (RON), summer vapour pressure and distillation/evaporation at 100/150°C. For diesel, the main parameters where limit values were exceeded is sulphur content, distillation 95% point, cetane number and density. Although several Member States reported non-compliant samples, in general far fewer samples exceeded the limit values (and the limits of tolerance for the test methods) compared to previous years. However, several EU-10 Member States reported significant numbers of non-compliant samples. Belgium reported a higher proportion (~3.5%) of non-compliant samples than other Member States, but has improved compliance levels on previous years.

For the abatement of air pollution and the introduction of new engine technology it is important to note that the share of <10 ppm and <50 ppm sulphur fuels increased significantly between 2001 and 2005 in the EU-15. From 2005, it was mandatory for all fuel to meet the <50 ppm sulphur level, and for fuels of <10 ppm sulphur to be introduced in all Member States. Average sulphur content in 2005 is substantially below that reported in 2004.

The share of <10 and <50 ppm fuels has been increasing between 2001 and 2004. For 2005 the proportions have increased significantly, with the <50 ppm sulphur limit becoming mandatory, and the requirement for introduction of <10 ppm sulphur fuels across the EU. Zero sulphur fuels were available in the majority of Member States in 2005 (UK, Malta and Cyprus still need to introduce these fuels). However, according to current indications there are still cases where the grades do not appear to be labelled in certain Member States. Sulphur content for diesel proved a particular problem in 2005 (mainly in the EU-10), due to the new mandatory <50 ppm level from the start of 2005. Several of the EU-10 Member States had problems with sales of higher sulphur grades early in the year, and there appeared to be a higher number of samples contaminated with higher sulphur diesel or gas oil than in previous years.

The Commission is not aware of any negative repercussions on vehicle emissions or engine functioning related to these exceedances, but continues to urge Member States to take action in order to ensure full compliance. Most are doing so already, and details of action taken by Member States with regard to non-compliance are included, where provided, in the individual country chapters of the detailed report for 2005. The Commission will continue monitoring compliance with the fuel quality requirements laid down in the Directive and aims to improve its analysis of the data provided from reporting year 2006 onwards.