Quality of petrol and diesel fuels

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In accordance with the requirements under Directive 98/70/EC, as amended by Directive 2003/17/EC, the Commission presents its **sixth annual report** on the quality of petrol and diesel, as well as the volumes sold, in the EU for the year 2007.

Fuel quality is environmentally important because it affects engine pollutant emissions and thus air quality as well as the ease and cost with which pollutant and greenhouse gas emission limits can be achieved by manufacturers. The monitoring of fuel quality in 2007 shows that the **specifications for petrol and diesel laid down in Directive 98/70/EC are in general met and very few exceedances were identified**. For petrol the main parameters where exceedances were identified were research/motor octane number, summer vapour pressure and distillation/evaporation at 100/150°C. For diesel the main parameters where exceedances were identified were sulphur content and distillation 95% point. As exceedances are relatively rare and most Member States take action to remove non-compliant fuel from sale, the Commission is not aware of any negative repercussions on vehicle emissions or engine functioning due to these exceedances. However, the Commission urges Member States to continue to take action to ensure full compliance so that such problems do not arise in the future. The Commission will continue monitoring compliance with the fuel quality requirements laid down in the Directive and propose appropriate and proportionate action where necessary.

All petrol and diesel sales in the EU are now of low-sulphur or sulphur-free fuels. Of all petrol sold, 53% was low-sulphur and 47% sulphur-free. Of all diesel sold the equivalent split was 58% and 42%.

The share of sulphur-free and low-sulphur fuels increased from 2001 to 2005. Lower sulphur content helps the abatement of air pollution and the introduction of new engine technology. The average sulphur content of fuels has stabilised since 2005, when low-sulphur fuels became mandatory and sulphur-free fuels were introduced across the EU. However in a number of Member States they are **still not always labelled properly at the pump**. Without labelling, consumers have no ability to choose sulphur-free fuels and are less likely to utilise technology requiring these fuels. This significantly undermines the value of having fuels meeting this criterion available. Therefore, this lack of labelling could hamper the introduction of vehicles using technology requiring sulphur-free fuels. As a result the full potential offered for reductions in CO2 from the road transport sector may not be realised.

Reporting on labelling could help the automotive industry gain confidence in fuel availability so that vehicles taking full advantage of the sulphur-free fuels are more widely introduced, leading to lower pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions. Very limited information has been provided by Member States on the geographical availability of sulphur-free fuels; most Member States simply stated that they were widely available, but provided no supplementary information to provide a measure of the geographical availability.

The fuel quality monitoring systems established at national level differ considerably and require further uniformity in order to provide transparent and comparable results. The implementation of Directive 2003/17/EC has led to improved quality of reporting as it requires Member States to report on monitoring in accordance to the new European Standard, EN 14274, or with systems of equivalent confidence. Where Member States do not report according to EN 14274 format, justification for this must be provided.