

Quality of petrol and diesel fuels

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In accordance with the requirements of Directive 98/70/EC the Commission presents its **seventh annual report** covering the year 2008 on the quality of petrol and diesel fuel used for road transport in the European Union. The report summarises Member States' submissions on the quality of petrol and diesel, as well as the volumes sold, for the year 2008. All Member States except Luxembourg, which had already failed to deliver a report in 2007, submitted national reports for 2008.

The quality of Member State's monitoring system design, level of compliance with limit values, and information provided in report submissions is still improving. The Commission will continue monitoring compliance with the requirements laid down in the Directive and propose appropriate and proportionate action where necessary.

Sales: all petrol and diesel sales in the EU are now of low-sulphur and sulphur-free fuels. Of all petrol sold, 55% was low-sulphur and 45% sulphur-free (<10 ppm). Of all diesel sold the equivalent split was 49% and 51%. The variety of RON and sulphur grade fuels available across the EU decreased in 2005 with the new mandatory limit of <50ppm sulphur. The majority of petrol sales in 2008 comprised RON 95 (84%, with 46% low sulphur and 38% sulphur-free).

Fuel quality monitoring in 2008 showed that the specifications for petrol and diesel laid down in Directive 98/70/EC are in general met and again few exceedances were identified. For petrol the main parameters where exceedances were identified were research/motor octane number (RON/MON), summer vapour pressure and distillation/evaporation at 100/150°C. There was also an increase in the number of samples exceeding sulphur content limit values. For diesel the main parameters where exceedances were identified were sulphur content, distillation 95% point and cetane number. As exceedances are relatively rare and most Member States take action to remove noncompliant 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.

Low sulphur content helps the abatement of air pollution and the introduction of new engine technology. Average sulphur content fell in 2008 and is substantially below the level reported in 2004. This was the largest fall since 2005, when low-sulphur fuels were made mandatory and sulphur-free fuels were introduced across the EU. 2008 is the final year that low-sulphur fuels will comply with the Directive. Therefore the fall in average sulphur content may have been the result of Member States preparing for the 2009 limit of <10ppm.

The report notes, however in a number of Member States **sulphur-free fuels are still not always labelled properly at the pump**. This may have delayed the introduction of vehicles using technology requiring sulphur-free fuels before full mandatory introduction in 2009. Without labelling, consumers can not choose these fuels and are less likely to utilise technology requiring sulphur-free fuel. This undermines the value of having fuels meeting this criterion available. As a result, the full potential offered for reductions in CO2 from the road transport sector may not have been realised. Also, 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. However, this should no longer be an issue in 2009 when sulphur-free fuels will become mandatory.

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.