

Sulphur content of marine fuels

2002/0259(COD) - 20/11/2002 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to present a proposal for a Directive amending Directive 1999/32/EC as regards the sulphur content of marine fuels. **CONTENT:** shipping is an international industry, and air pollutant emissions are a transboundary problem, so in this respect Community legislation can be more effective than national or local measures. Ship SO₂ emissions contribute to the exceedance of critical loads for acidification, which is damaging ecosystems in northern Europe, and to the formation of particulate matter, which can damage human health throughout the European Union. Seagoing ships are now one of the biggest sources of SO₂ emissions in the EU, and reducing their emissions is now more cost-effective than abating emissions in other sectors. For these reasons, explained in more detail in the Explanatory Memorandum to this proposal, the Commission believes that Community legislation in this area is necessary. This proposal aims to reduce ships' emissions of sulphur dioxide and particulate matter by modifying Council Directive 1999/32 on the sulphur content of marine fuels. In particular, the proposal aims to: - introduce a 1.5% sulphur limit for marine fuels used by all seagoing vessels in the North Sea, English Channel and Baltic Sea, in line with MARPOL Annex VI sulphur limits, in order to reduce the effect of ship emissions on acidification in Northern Europe and on air quality; - introduce a 1.5% sulphur limit for marine fuels used by passenger vessels on regular services to or from any Community port, in order to improve air quality around ports and coasts, and create sufficient demand to ensure an EU-wide supply of low sulphur fuel; - amend existing sulphur provisions for marine gas oils used by seagoing and inland vessels, in order to improve local air quality in ports and on inland waterways. These marine fuels amendments are the main substantive elements of this proposal. Moreover, two other elements are proposed: - consequential amendments to the inland heavy fuel provisions arising from Directive 2001/80/EC relating to large combustion plants, and - the creation of a Regulatory Committee to agree future technical amendments which do not require political co-decision.