

Air pollution: scheme to monitor the average emissions of carbon dioxide CO₂ from new passenger cars

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The European Union's strategy to reduce CO₂ emission is based on a three-pronged approach: - The commitment of the automobile industry to achieve an average specific CO₂ emission figure for new passenger cars of 140g CO₂/km by 2008/09. - Fuel-economy labelling of cars in a bid to give consumers a more informed choice. - Fiscal measures in order to promote car fuel efficiency. Under provisions encapsulated in EU Decisions (1753/2000/EC) relating to the reduction of CO₂ emissions from cars, the European Commission is expected to provide an annual Report on the overall effectiveness of the strategy. This is the fourth annual Report prepared. Yet, it is the first year in which the Commission relies on its own figures (presented by the Member States) as opposed to relying on figures presented to it by the automotive industry. In total, and all things considered, the average CO₂ emission from passenger cars in the EU decreased from 186g CO₂/km in 1995 to 166 g CO₂/km in 2002 - a reduction of 10.8%, (well short of the 35% expected). The Community's stated aim is to reduce CO₂ emissions from passenger cars by achieving an average specific CO₂ emission figure of 120 g CO₂/km by 2005 and by 2010 at the latest. The Commission, however, considers it unlikely that the preferred aim of 120g CO₂/ km by 2005 will be achieved. To meet this target would require an average annual reduction of 3.5% - significantly higher than what has been achieved annually so far. Nevertheless, the Commission reports that as far as the European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA) and the Japanese Automobile Manufacturers Association (JAMA) are concerned good progress has been made in that they have met the intermediate target. On the other hand progress from the Korean Automobile Manufacturers Association (KAMA) remains unsatisfactory and the Commission urges a greater effort on their behalf in order to meet their Commitments to CO₂ reduction targets. The Commission Report also notes that both ACEA and JAMA have introduced passenger cars emitting 120 g CO₂/km or less. ACEA reached over 580 000 and JAMA around 44 000 registrations of such cars in 2002. KAMA is still to introduce such models on to the market. On the question of labelling the Report notes that by the end of 2003 all of the EU Member States, bar Germany had implemented the Directive. The Commission is now awaiting Member States' reports before it can study what future need or need not to be taken. Concerning work on fiscal measures the Report notes that the European Parliament responded positively to Commission proposals focusing on registration and annual circulation taxes. The Commission concluded that fiscal measures are an important complementary instrument as a means to achieving the EU-target of 120 g CO₂/km for new cars by 2005 and 2010 at the latest and that national vehicle taxes should establish a more direct relation between tax level and the CO₂ performance of each new passenger car. Council has been debating these issues since May 2003. Other related measures being used in the EU strategy to reduce CO₂ emission from cars include measures to minimise CO₂ levels from light commercial vehicles (LCV). The Commission has recently carried out an initial study on options for CO₂ emission and policy developments for LCVs covering the period 2005-2015. The final results of the study will be known by the end of 2004. Similarly, the Commission has begun work on mobile air conditioning in cars given the growing evidence that it contributes significantly to the emission of CO₂ gases.