

Quality of petrol and diesel fuels

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The European Commission has presented its first annual report on the quality of gasoline and diesel fuel used for road transport in the European Union (reporting years 2001 and 2002). The monitoring of fuel quality in 2001 and 2002 shows that the specifications for petrol and diesel laid down in Directive 98/70/EC are in general met. Only very few violations were identified. Member States need to take action in order to ensure full compliance. Most of them are doing so already, and details of the action taken by Member States with regard to non-compliance are included, where provided, in the individual country chapters of the detailed reports for the years 2001 and 2002. The Commission will continue urging Member States to ensure full compliance with the fuel quality requirements laid down in the Directive. For the abatement of air pollution and the introduction of new engine technology it is important to note that the share of 50 ppm fuels increased significantly from 2001 to 2002, while the shares of 10 ppm fuels remained nearly constant. Six Member States have defined national fuel grades for low (<50 ppm) or sulphur free (<10 ppm) fuels. Low sulphur fuels are available in many countries across the EU (for petrol in Austria, Germany, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom; for diesel in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Netherlands and the United Kingdom). However, there are still five countries which did still not introduce separately marketed low (<50 ppm) or sulphur free (<10 ppm) fuels at all (France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain). Sulphur free petrol was only available in Austria, Germany and Ireland, and sulphur free diesel was only available in Sweden. The fuel quality monitoring systems established at national level differ considerably and require harmonisation in order to provide transparent and comparable results. The implementation of Directive 2003/17/EC is expected to improve the quality of reporting in this respect when Member States are required to report in accordance to the new European Standard, EN 14274, or with systems of equivalent confidence.