

Quality of petrol and diesel fuels: level of sulphur

2001/0107(COD) - 10/09/2002

The committee adopted the report by Heidi HAUTALA (Greens/EFA, FIN) amending the Council's common position under the second reading of the codecision procedure. Although Parliament had proposed at first reading that the maximum sulphur content of 10 mg/kg should be compulsory from 2008, the committee now recommended that the date of 1 January 2009 put forward in the Council's common position be accepted. However, it reinstated a number of amendments adopted by Parliament at first reading, seeking inter alia to delete the derogations permitting the marketing of petrol and diesel with a high sulphur content from 1 January 2005 for up to two years and to delete the possibility of a review of diesel specifications during the 2005 review. It argued that producers could prepare better for 2009 if they were certain there would be no more changes in the meantime. The committee also reiterated Parliament's first reading proposal that the Commission should establish, via the comitology procedure, criteria for determining what would constitute availability of 10mg/kg petrol and diesel on a "balanced geographic basis" during the introductory phase. On the question of including non-road mobile machinery and agricultural and forestry tractors in the scope of the directive, the committee sought to achieve a compromise between Parliament's first reading amendments and the common position, by providing for a progressive reduction in the sulphur content followed, in a second stage, by compliance with the same requirements as for road vehicles. Whereas the Council had proposed that fuels used by non-road machinery and tractors should be subject to a sulphur content limit of 1000mg/kg by 1 January 2008, the committee proposed that the sulphur content be limited to 350mg/kg by 1 January 2005 at the latest, and that such fuels should meet the specifications set out in Annex IV (for road vehicles) no later than 1 January 2009. The committee also amended the title of Annex IV to reflect its proposed changes. Lastly, it stipulated that tax incentives should be used to encourage the use of cleaner conventional fuels and alternative fuels, in particular for non-road machinery and tractors so as to offset any increased costs.