Quality of petrol and diesel fuels

1996/0163(COD) - 15/09/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, 3rd reading

Adopting the reports by Mr Bernd LANGE (PSE, D) and Mrs Heidi HAUTALA (V, FIN), the European Parliament approved: - the joint proposal to reduce air pollution from motor vehicles (454 votes to 3 with 7 abstentions); - the joint proposal to reduce air pollution from motor vehicles in relation to light commercial vehicles (465 votes to 11 with 3 abstentions). - the joint proposal on the quality of petrol and diesel fuels (474 votes to 10 with 3 abstentions). Under the agreement, Parliament achieved its major objective of making fuel quality standards for diesel mandatory for 2000 and pollution emission limits mandatory for 2005 (Council had wanted to have only indicative arrangements for 2005). In exchange, Parliament accepted the less stringent figures proposed by the Council for the specifications themselves (although these were a considerable improvement on the figures originally put forward by the Commission). Parliament rejected the Commission?s original ?cost-effective? approach as limited and inadequate and the principle of taking account of benefits to health (reduction in respiratory, cardio-vascular and other diseases) and to the environment when assessing the cost of measures to improve air quality was included under the terms of the agreement with the Council. In accordance with the wishes of the European Parliament, the three directives provide for a regulatory committee which limits the powers of the Council in favour of the Commission. In addition, the powers of the committee will be limited so that the limit values approved may only be modified by means of the co-decision procedure. A) Quality of fuels: The agreement between the European Parliament and the Council will allow the air quality to be improved by adding oxygen to diesel fuel and significantly reducing the content of sulphur, benzene, olefins and aromatics. Following pressure exerted by Parliament: fuels which comply with the standards set for 2005 will progressively be introduced on the market from the year 2000. In addition, the agreement states that fiscal incentives may promote the introduction of more advanced fuels. As soon as vehicles using the new fuels appear in one or two Member States, which will no doubt be soon, there will be the added force of market pressure for the fuels to go on general sale and be made available to motorists travelling in other Member States. Under the terms of the Directive, the marketing of leaded petrol will be banned on 1 January 2000, except where climatic conditions warrant it or severe socio-economic problems would result, in which case the deadline may be delayed to 1 January 2005. Similarly, subject to derogations valid until 1 January 2003, unleaded petrol and diesel fuel marketed after 1 January 2000 will need to meet stricter environmental specifications and stricter specifications will enter into force on 1 January 2005 (subject, however, to derogations which apply until 1 January 2007). Member States may benefit from these derogations if they cannot meet the required specifications. To do so they must submit a request to the Commission, which may only grant these derogations under strict conditions and only for limited periods. In addition, Member States may in specific areas impose stricter environmental specifications than those provided under the Directive if atmospheric pollution is a serious and recurrent problem. B) Limit values of emissions: In the case of passenger vehicles, Parliament emphasised the need to install on-board diagnostic (OBD) systems which can monitor the durability of anti-pollution equipment. It also required unrestricted transmission of data to repair workshops and spare part manufacturers on request. However, at the request of the Council, the durability test provided for (type V) will be maintained. Anti-pollution equipment must remain efficient for at least 80,000 km or five years from the year 2000 but, at Parliament?s request, the ?kilometrage? parameter will be extended to 100,000 km from 2005 (despite the fact that the European Parliament would have preferred it to be extended to 120,000 km). Type-approval and the certificate of compliance will be refused to any vehicle which does not comply with the Directive. Petrol or diesel engines in service (as opposed to new engines) are also covered by the Directive. The agreement also includes Parliament?s amendment on the establishment of a test procedure to check low ambient temperature emissions after a cold start. A voluntary agreement needs to be concluded with the car industry on reducing CO2 emissions. Parliament has called on the Commission to plan the introduction of compulsory legislation if negotiations fail. The Council shares Parliament?s opinion, the objective of which is to reduce the average fuel consumption of passenger vehicles to 120g of CO2 per km. C) Other aspects of the compromise: - fiscal incentives can be used to

encourage the more rapid commercialisation of vehicles fitted with advanced anti-pollution equipment; - encouragement of more rapid replacement of cars with old engines; - possibility for Member States to introduce measures encouraging the equipment of old motor vehicles with anti-pollution devices; - the Commission should also study the role of chemical additives to fuels in reducing emissions; - Parliament would like to see additional efforts made with a view to the commercialisation of vehicles that are more respectful of the environment; - approval of a Directive to combat emissions from light commercial vehicles. This text covers vehicles used for the distribution of goods in towns, where an improvement in air quality is most urgent. Numerous provisions in the ?passenger transport? directive could also be applied to delivery vans. However, as these vehicles are tuned differently, numerous parameters would need to be adjusted. D) Follow-up: the agreement provides for follow-up work on these standards in a different form in the future. The current Directives will be examined in the light of a proposal to be submitted by the Commission by the end of 1999. They will be examined periodically. However, given that the standards provided for 2005 will now be mandatory, the field covered by this proposal has been drastically reduced, in accordance with the wishes of the European Parliament. This follow-up work will apply to technical progress and the oil supply situation and will concentrate, among other things, on the period after 2005. This means that the Commission cannot make any proposals to alter the parameters which are mandatory for 2005. They can only be ?adapted? (by which Parliament understands ? improved?). The Commission may also propose specific parameters for fuels used by fleets of buses, taxis and commercial vehicles (which make a significant contribution to urban pollution) and parameters which apply to liquefied petroleum gas, natural gas and biofuels.