

Sulphur content of marine fuels

2002/0259(COD) - 13/04/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, 2nd reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the report by Satu HASSI (Greens/EFA, FI) and agreed on the text of compromise amendments reached in informal negotiations with the Council. The final outcome is, however, less ambitious than that envisaged in the environment committee.

The directive aims to reduce the sulphur content in marine fuels to 1.5% by 2007 (2 years after the entry into force of the directive). It will apply to all vessels in the Baltic, the North Sea and the English Channel, and passenger ships in all EU waters. The figure must be reduced to 0.5% in port areas where ships will be required to switch off all engines and use shore-side electricity while at berth in ports. A new recital states that human beings and the natural environment in coastal areas and in the vicinity of ports are particularly affected by pollution from ships with high sulphur fuels. Specific measures are therefore required in this regard.

Whilst the environment Committee had hoped to fix a second phase for new limits to come in by 2010, following negotiations with Council, a revision clause has been introduced. The compromise text states that the Commission should draw up a report by 2008, and that, in the light of progress made, and following a cost-benefit analysis, it "will closely examine the proposals to reduce, if possible, the limits to 0.5%" in zones under the auspices of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). A new limit value, less than 0.5%, could then be considered. The Commission may consider submitting proposals on economic instruments as alternative or complementary measures in the context of the 2008 review, provided that environmental and health benefits can be clearly demonstrated.

A new recital states that the Directive should be seen as the first step in an ongoing process to reduce marine emissions, offering perspectives for further emission reductions through lower fuel sulphur limits and abatement technologies, and for economic instruments to be developed as an incentive to achieve significant reductions.