

Sulphur content of marine fuels

2002/0259(COD) - 06/07/2005 - Final act

PURPOSE : to reduce the sulphur content of marine fuel, thereby reducing the impact of ships' emissions of sulphur dioxide (SO_x) and particulate matter on acidification and human health.

LEGISLATIVE ACT : Directive 2005/33/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 1999/32/EC as regards the sulphur content of marine fuels.

CONTENT : the Council adopted, by qualified majority, a Directive limiting the sulphur content of liquid fuels used on board seagoing vessels.

The main purpose of the Directive is to extend the scope of Directive 1999/32/EC, which lays down the maximum permitted sulphur content of heavy fuel oil, gas oil and marine gas oil used in the Community, to all petroleum-derived liquid fuels used on board ships operating in Member States' waters. The new provisions should lead to a substantial reduction in sulphur dioxide emissions (over 500 000 tonnes per year), to the benefit of highly populated ports and coastlines and acid-sensitive ecosystems.

Among other things, the Directive will:

- remove existing derogations relating to marine gas oil;
- give effect to the 1,5% sulphur limit applying within SO_x emission control areas agreed through the International Maritime Organization;
- apply the same limit to all passenger ships operating on regular services to or from Community ports;
- require ships at berth in Community ports to use fuel containing no more than 0,1% sulphur;
- provide for the use of approved abatement technologies as an alternative to low-sulphur fuel.

The Directive also takes account of the new rules laid down by the MARPOL Convention regarding the prevention of air pollution from ships, which entered into force in May 2005.

ENTRY INTO FORCE : 11/08/2005.

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