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EU unveils controversial car emissions proposal

[UPDATE 2008-01-03] The European Commission has proposed tough CO₂ emission limits of 120 g/km by 2012 and economic fines for non-compliance, with criticism from carmakers and NGOs. Efficiency requirements for Mobile Air Conditioning will be released next year.

2007-12-20

On 19 December, Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas confirmed the original European Commission (EC) proposal to limit CO₂ emissions from new cars to 120 g/km by 2012. The proposed legislation foresees a target of 130 g/km through vehicle technology alone, with the remaining 10 g/km coming from complementary measures, such as efficient air conditioning. Dimas affirmed that the EC will come forward "at a later date" with concrete proposals to set efficiency requirements for car components with the highest impact on fuel consumption, including Mobile Air Conditioning.

In its official press release, the Commission pointed out that its proposal will "encourage the car industry to invest in new technologies and actively promote eco-innovation." The legislation is a compromise reached after long negotiations over how to fight climate change without penalizing European carmakers. The legislation will apply to all new cars sold in the EU, including those made by U.S., Japanese, South Korean and Chinese manufacturers.

Key provisions

The EC proposal builds on the following key points:

- **Weight-based limit value curve:** The draft defines a limit value curve of permitted CO₂ emissions for new vehicles according to the vehicle mass. From 2012 on, a manufacturer must ensure that the average emissions of all cars it sells in the EU are the average of the permitted emissions for those cars given by the curve*.
- **Heavy cars to improve more than light ones:** The limit value curve is set in such a way that heavier cars have to improve more than lighter models. Manufacturers can still make cars with emissions above the limit value curve provided these are balanced by cars below the curve.
- **Rising penalty scheme:** A carmaker exceeding the allowed emission limits will face steep fines based on the number of grams per kilometer an average vehicle is above the curve, multiplied by the number of vehicles sold. The penalty will rise from €20 per g/km in 2012 to €95 in 2015.
- **Emissions trading:** Under the legislation, manufacturers can group together and pool their CO₂ emissions to meet the EU target. Makers of heavier cars will be able to buy emission credits from producers whose fleet is below the limit.

UPDATE: Reactions

Both industry and environmental groups criticized the Commission proposal, the latter stating that the proposal lacked an ambitious long-term goal and its staggered fine scheme would give carmakers too much time to comply. Meanwhile, manufacturers of heavier cars, including German carmakers, accused the EC of a "competition war" against them, and a selective distortion where automotive manufacturers would pay a much higher penalty per ton of CO₂ emitted than other industries. On contrast, French and Italian manufacturers rejected the proposal as a means to reward buyers of heavy cars, demanding even

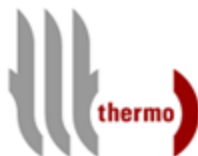


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higher penalties.

Dimas, however, insisted that the chosen calculation method would be "balanced" and "socially equitable" without any financial loss for carmakers. The European Commission estimates that consumers will have to pay around €1,300 more for a new car due to the necessary technical adjustments. The additional cost, however, will be recovered through the reduced fuel consumption, it concludes.

Next steps

In 2008, the Commission proposal will be examined by the European Council and the European Parliament. A Parliament speaker has already warned of the risk that Member States could water down the original EC proposal over the coming months.

Background

Passenger cars alone are responsible for around 12% of EU CO₂ emissions. Despite improvements in vehicle technology, emissions from road transport rose by 26% between 1990 and 2004. This increase acted as a brake on the EU's progress in cutting overall GHG emissions, which fell by just under 5% in the EU-25.

The EU decided to introduce mandatory measures after voluntary commitments by European, Japanese, and Korean carmakers to reduce CO₂ emissions to an average of 140 g/km by 2008/2009 had failed.

More information:



[Proposal for a Regulation \(COM\(2007\) 856 final\), 19 Dec \(209 KB\)](#)

[European Commission, Press Release 19 Dec 2007](#)

[European Commission, FAQ on the proposed regulation, 19 Dec 2007](#)

[Read the article "Commission sticks to original CO₂ target", 5 Nov 2007](#)

[Read the article "EU Parliament votes for more efficient car A/C", 24 Oct 2007](#)

[More about the EU car emissions strategy in our Policies section](#)

* Formula: Permitted specific emissions of CO₂ = 130 + a x (M - M₀) where : M = mass in kg / M₀ = 1289.0 / a = 0.0457

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