

Promotion of clean and energy-efficient road transport vehicles

2005/0283(COD) - 21/12/2005 - Initial legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to contribute towards the creation of a market for "clean" vehicles in order to reduce pollutant emissions in the transport sector.

PROPOSED ACT : Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTENT : considering the continuing growth of the transport sector and its knock-on effects in terms of pollution and dependence on oil, the Commission stresses the need to develop a market for "clean" vehicles. In the EU as a whole, road transport accounts for approximately one-quarter of total energy consumption and CO₂ emissions. The potential for reducing vehicle emissions and making energy savings is substantial. However, the technologies needed remain more expensive than conventional vehicle manufacturing technologies.

As far as the European vehicle mass production industry is concerned, manufacturers are unlikely to produce special vehicle series to respond to local or even national incentives aimed at improving energy efficiency or reducing pollutant emissions. Action at Community level is therefore needed in order to encourage the investments required for the manufacture of vehicles that are more energy-efficient and less polluting.

The resulting increased demand would provide support for vehicle manufacturers to develop vehicles with better performances in terms of energy consumption and pollutant emissions. This could then allow a turn-around in demand and create markets of sufficient size and the necessary economies of scale to broaden industrial production to large series.

The objective of this proposal is to reduce pollutant emissions by the transport sector and contribute to the establishment of a market for clean vehicles. This is particularly relevant for agglomerations and zones in difficulties to meet the requirements of the Air Quality Directive (Directive 1996/62/EC on air quality and Directive 1999/30/EC on limit values of pollutants in ambient air).

An environmentally enhanced performance standard has already been established in EU legislation for vehicles above 3.5 t weight for optional use, such as tax incentives. This proposal takes a next step and uses the existing "Enhanced environmentally friendly vehicle" (EEV) for Heavy Duty Vehicles, above 3.5 t weight, as defined in Directive 2005/55/EC to implement it on a mandatory basis for part of the fleet.

Public bodies (State, regional or local authorities, bodies governed by public law, public undertakings and operators contracted by public bodies to supply transport services) will be obliged to allocate a minimum quota of 25% of their annual procurement (purchasing or leasing) of heavy-duty vehicles (with a weight greater than 3.5 tonnes) to "enhanced environmentally friendly vehicles" as defined in the European Performance Standard (EEV). Heavy duty vehicles include buses and most utility vehicles, such as refuse collection lorries. An extension of the clean vehicle procurement obligation to passenger cars and light duty vehicles based on a thorough impact assessment could be considered at a later stages once environmentally enhanced performance standards have been developed for them.