

Car emissions: MEPs adopt inquiry conclusions and call for improving the system

[28-02-2017 - 19:13]

Member states have not been up to the task in implementing EU legislation on vehicles and establishing appropriate market surveillance, although the use of defeat devices is one side of a wider problem: the large discrepancies between NOx emissions of diesel cars in lab tests compared to those measured on the roads. The process towards a new RDE test has taken longer than expected, said the Committee of Inquiry into Emission Measurement in the Automotive Sector (EMIS) on Tuesday.

Conclusions of the inquiry

The EMIS committee's final report was approved by a very broad majority (**40 votes to 2, with 2 abstentions**). It is the fruit of twelve months' intensive work to reconstruct events and collect and analyse evidence, in particular on the series of events that led to the car emission cheating test scandal which broke in September 2015 and on the role played by the EU Commission and member states before and after the scandal.

The document consists of a factual section with all the gathered evidence and of the final conclusions drawn from the investigation.

The inquiry concluded that the VW scandal that broke in 2015 is just an aspect of a much wider problem, which affects the automotive sector as a whole: the large discrepancies between nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions of diesel cars in the laboratory and on the road.

The conclusions of the report clearly identify the responsibilities of the EU Commission and member states as regards the application of EU rules on pollutant emissions from cars. First and foremost, according to the inquiry, EU countries contravened their legal obligation to monitor and enforce the ban on "defeat devices" and to require car manufacturers to remove defeat strategies from their vehicles. They also contravened their duty to adopt sufficient sanctions for breaches of EU law.

The member states and the Commission were both deemed responsible for not following up on the evidence they possessed about the discrepancies, and on the fact that emission control strategies in vehicles focussed on passing emission tests instead of on real-world conditions. The report also pointed out that the significant delay in the adoption of emission tests reflecting real driving emissions was due to maladministration on the side of both the Commission and the member states.

Finally, the inquiry identified further gaps in the EU car type-approval system, due in particular to the lack of EU oversight.

Recommendations to improve EU legislation and its enforcement

The EMIS Committee also approved a set of draft recommendations to the Commission and the Council, by **37 votes to 3, with 4 abstentions**.

The committee calls for the urgent finalisation of the RDE package, the reduction of the "conformity factor" that allows cars higher NOx emissions in the new RDE tests than in the lab, and the swift adoption of the new regulation on type-approval and market surveillance. Members call for the introduction of stronger EU oversight of the system, in particular by setting up a dedicated EU Agency.

Press release

Such increased oversight must result into stricter and more effective enforcement of vehicles' emission measurement rules by the Member States.

The committee welcomes the adoption of the Commission's interpretative guidelines on defeat devices and emission strategies and expects that they are implemented swiftly by the member states in their testing of vehicles in use.

The committee recommends that, for a better functioning of the system in the future, competences over air quality and vehicles emissions legislation be placed under a single Commissioner's portfolio, and that a strengthened role be played by the Commission's Joint Research Centre.

Finally, Members call for increased consumer protection and for further focus on clean mobility in the future.

"For the first time in a decade an inquiry committee has made a firm report, adopted with an overwhelming majority, in which maladministration by the Commission and the Member States is clearly demonstrated. If the law had simply been implemented and enforced, we would not have been confronted with this scandal. It is now up to the Commission and the Member States to restore trust in our industries and in the European legislation. The member states in particular must follow-up on our recommendations to strengthen the EU system of type approval and market surveillance," said committee Chair **Kathleen Van Brempt** (S&D, BE), "The member states who continue to oppose the strengthening of market surveillance at the EU level must stop putting unacceptable practices of some car manufactures above the interests of European consumers and citizens".

"We have to make sure that each Member State implements and enforces the rules. And it goes without saying that a proper check of the cars already driving on our roads is imperative" added co-rapporteur **Jens Gieseke**.

"Thanks to the pressure from the European Parliament, EU Commissioner Bieńkowska has engaged personally in the file and launched legal proceedings against some of the governments still failing to act on dieselgate. But it is shocking that so little has changed at the level of the national authorities and the car industry, even eighteen months after the Volkswagen scandal erupted. The Italian supervisor still lets Fiat off the hook, the German authorities are still failing to issue fines to Volkswagen. Just two examples of wavering and half-hearted enforcement. This is not only bad for clean air and consumer protection, but also for the internal market and the rule of law." added co-rapporteur **Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy**.

Ms Van Brempt concluded, "the EMIS Committee has come to an end, but we will not rest on our laurels. In our report we call the European Commission to publish within 18 months a comprehensive report on the action taken on our conclusions and recommendations. We will follow up on this and keep on fighting for a future where clean air is not only guaranteed in the laboratories where cars are tested, but also in the cities where our citizens live".

Next steps

The full House is to discuss both documents and vote on the draft recommendation at the Strasbourg plenary session in early April.

Further information

- Parliament's Committees of inquiry and special committees (In-depth analysis, June 2016): <https://epthinktank.eu/2016/06/06/parliaments-committees-of-inquiry-and-special-committees/>
- Motor vehicles: New approval and market surveillance rules [EU Legislation in Progress, November 2016]: <https://epthinktank.eu/2016/11/08/motor-vehicles-new-approval-and-market-surveillance-rules-eu-legislation-in-progress/>
- Audiovisual material for professionals: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/emission-measur-em>
- EuroparlTV - Car emissions scandal: inquiry committee votes on final report and recommendations: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20170224STO63921/car-emissions-scandal-inquiry-committee-votes-on-report-and-recommendations>

Press release

Contacts

Janez VOUK

Press Officer

Telephone number: (+32) 2 28 31053 (BXL)

Telephone number: (+33) 3 881 74466 (STR)

Mobile number: (+32) 475 78 48 56

Email: janez.vouk@europarl.europa.eu

Email: emis-press@europarl.europa.eu

Twitter: EP_Emissions