NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition No 0572/2019 by Per Thomas Nillson (Danish) on lack of enforcing of the law on engine idling in the municipality of Copenhagen

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner draws attention to the fact that in the municipality of Copenhagen, the law introduced in 1990 (Idle State Regulation) which prohibits keeping of the engine idling for more than one minute, seems not being enforced by the Copenhagen police. The police in Copenhagen, in his view, cannot or does not wish to make someone liable for a fine for the infringement of such a law, considering it an excessive effort.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 5 November 2019. Information requested from Commission under Rule 227(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 18 February 2020

Engine idling while the vehicle is stopped for longer than a minute can be considered as a part of general traffic regulations. Development and implementation of traffic regulations are generally under Member State competence.

When it comes to environmental impacts of idling, especially on exhaust emissions of vehicles, it is not always straightforward to quantify these. Obviously, as long as the vehicle is idling and the engine is running, there will be exhaust emissions from the tailpipe. Intentionally leaving the vehicle idling – much like a faucet that drips – can be seen as wasteful and leading to ‘unnecessary’ pollution. Idling emissions in general include particulate matter and noxious gases such as nitrogen oxides (NOₓ). Emission rates of both these pollutants (expressed as mass emission per unit of time) are much lower during idling than during driving, where the highest instantaneous emissions may be encountered during acceleration periods. On the other hand,
once treatment equipment is installed in vehicles (such as SCR – selective catalytic reduction installed in diesel vehicles or three-way catalysts installed in petrol vehicles), this can have a lower efficiency effect just after starting the engine.

In addition, it must be noted that both the Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicle Test (WLTP) laboratory test and the on-road Real Driving Emission\(^1\) test procedure, applicable at type approval, account fully for idling events. Therefore, all new vehicles need to ensure proper reductions of pollutants (both particles and NOx) also during idling.

Finally, when it comes to obligations as regards air quality, under the Ambient Air Quality Directive\(^2\) (Directive 2008/50/EC), Member States need to ensure that air pollutant concentrations in ambient air are in line with the prescribed air quality standards (including with limit values for nitrogen dioxide (NO\(_2\)), of which the main source are usually transport emissions). The choice of measures however for fulfilling these obligations is left to the discretion of the Member States. Based on the latest verified data, there were no exceedances of EU air quality standards in Denmark in 2018.

**Conclusion**

The petitioner intends to continue with his demands towards the Danish authorities. The Commission considers that the matter at hand is within the remit of a Member State and cannot be enforced on a European level.
