

Attributable to an EC official

The ongoing development of EURO 7

The Commission is working on a predictable and realistic trajectory to zero emission mobility, to protect citizens' health and our environment, and strengthen the competitiveness of our automotive industry.

In addition to review of the CO2 targets for new cars and vans, work is ongoing on a proposal to reduce air pollutant emissions from new cars, vans, buses and lorries, i.e. the Euro 7 proposal. We welcome the fact that most new vehicle models placed on the market emit well below the limits set in the so-called Euro 6/VI Regulation. We need to remember that these limits were set almost a decade ago, hence today there is room for improvement, with new technologies available in the market.

The ongoing analysis is showing signs that there is untapped potential for lowering emissions for already regulated pollutants and for pollutants not yet regulated, such as ammonia, nitrous oxide, formaldehyde, and particles smaller than 23 nm, or particles from brake wear.

The objective of Euro 7 initiative is to ensure that vehicles are clean when used in real driving conditions, and not only when tested in the laboratory or under some limited conditions on the road. For this reason, we are now studying appropriate boundaries for any conditions of use, including many that are currently not tested like short trips, towing or high speeds, etc.

Particularly important is that we look into effective methods to ensure that vehicles stay clean over their whole life. Today we focus to control the emissions only during the first 5 years of the life of the vehicle. We need to remember that cars have an average lifetime of 11.5 years in Europe, while in some countries the average is more than 16 years. We cannot afford covering only less than one third of a vehicle life anymore.

Finally, we need a simple yet effective regulation: focused on the whole vehicle compliance on the road, covering the whole range of vehicles, from cars to big lorries. This, keeping in mind that value of performance limits will have to remain different for light and heavy duty vehicles. We need to simplify the number of tests that need to be performed during type approval or repeal those that become obsolete and shift the focus to tests done on vehicles on the road by market surveillance authorities that are not linked to the manufacturers the vehicles of whom they test.

On the process

The Commission services have asked a consortium of the most renowned universities, laboratories and consulting houses in Europe (CLOVE) to study all these challenges and identify emission control technologies that can help achieve highest performance of cars powered by combustion engine. The consortium's technical analysis show that technologies, although to a large extent available, are not yet fully used. Their costs are comparable with the price of many of the commodity features which are sold in today's vehicles, and they have important potential to reduce a big part of the 400.000 annual premature deaths due to air pollution in Europe.

The consortium put together packages of these emission control technologies, analysed with experiments and modelling their emissions and proposed new tests and new limits that are considered as feasible, yet ambitious.

In the course of preparatory work, the Commission services also enlisted the help of all stakeholders' community in the field, in a very open and transparent way, with regular meetings of the Advisory Group on Vehicle Emission Standards (AGVES), with more than 250 participants. During these meetings, the consortium has been testing their potential proposals, asking for input from the other experts and stakeholders.

The latest meeting took place on the 8th April. New and complementary options and scenarios have been presented by the consortium. Discussions will continue and we already plan a follow up meeting on the 27th April to possibly complete the discussion. The results of the consortium will be used as an input to an impact assessment process conducted under the Commission's sole responsibility and also taken into account for the development of the final proposal by the Commission, along with all other input provided by stakeholders and the internal scientific experts at the JRC.

The Commission plans to table its proposal for the future Euro 7 standards by the end of this year. Entry into force will depend on the co-decision process and in any case will have to take into account need for adequate lead time to adapt vehicle performance.

Dispelling myths

Myth:

The Commission intends to ban combustion engine.

Fact:

The Commission did not and does not intend to ban any powertrain technology. This was made clear by the Executive Vice President Timmermans during his meeting in the European Parliament on September 28th 2020. Accordingly, the objective of the envisaged Euro 7 legislation is to make combustion engine as clean as technologically possible in a cost-efficient way.

This approach was confirmed during the discussion in AGVES meeting on 8th April.

Regarding the limits of pollutant emissions, including NOx and particles, the objective of the discussion in AGVES was to present and receive comments on possible scenarios and options. Decisions in this respect will be taken based on the full Impact Assessment currently under preparation.

Assessment of possible limits options has been carried out and improved by the consortium over the past months, based on additional tests and extensive modelling, which led to scenarios that were discussed in AGVES. Those consortium scenarios foresee a reduction of the current limits by 66 to 84%, depending on the type of vehicle.

Myth:

The recent developments in emissions regulations, i.e. the introduction of the Real Driving Emissions Regulation (RDE) made cars so clean that there is no need for a further step in the Euro standards because air quality in cities will soon be no problem anymore.

Fact:

While the RDE compliant vehicles are much cleaner than earlier Euro 6 vehicles, which was approved without RDE, there are still situations where cars emit much more than expected, such as short trips, like the ones regularly taken in cities, or when driven under very demanding conditions. The new framework we are now developing, focuses on ensuring that the limits are both ambitious, and cover comprehensive driving conditions and increased durability, at relatively low cost.

Moreover, the current pollutants limits were set more than a decade ago. It is not sustainable to envisage that such rules are adequate to address situation of today and in the next 20 years to come. Furthermore, countries like US and China already have more ambitious emission regulations in place than Europe and are currently working on even more ambitious targets. It is therefore highly important that EU sets the pace and does not lag behind other world regions, so that we can also support Europe's competitiveness.

We have to remember that the air quality standards are currently under review.

The Commission would propose to align air quality standards more closely with the World Health Organization recommendations (which will be updated in 2021).

As long as cars have emissions uncontrolled in certain kinds of trips, or when they are more than five years of age, like in today's Regulation, we run the risk to never reach good air quality in cities. The upcoming more ambitious CO₂ targets will help to improve air quality, but they will not be sufficient alone to eliminate air pollutants in cities.