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EMIS hearing 4 July 2016

Mr Jos Dings, Executive Director of NGO Transport & Environment

“I never experienced any moment Member States where not opposing (the legislative process).”

On the 4th of July, the Committee of inquiry into Emission Measurements in the Automotive Sector (EMIS) invited Mr Jos Dings for a hearing. The Executive Director of the NGO Transport & Environment (T&E) focused on air quality during his preliminary speech, to show what the overall picture beyond the committee work should be: after the disappointing negotiations on the directive on national emission ceilings (NEC), EMIS members should bear in mind that what lies behind dieselgate is the thousands of people in Europe dying every year of air pollution.

Being asked when his organisation got aware of diesel emissions issues for the first time, Jos Dings recalled there already had been an issues in the US back in the 70's, and that cars manufacturers already tried to minimize the problem at that time. From the year 2006 on, T&E knew about discrepancies between diesel engines pollutant emissions and limits allowed by EU legislation. He clearly pointed out that the European Commission therefore could not have ignored the fact. However, actors involved in the legislative process, namely the former Commissioner on Industry Mr Günter Verheugen, did not allow any criticism. Does this also explain why the emissions issue was so quickly fixed for heavy duties, whereas it took more than ten years to fix it for passenger cars? Taking into account that portable emissions measurement system (PEMS) were available from the year 2011 on, T&E had hoped that the latest diesel engine emission legislations being driven by the European Commission (Euro6) will prevent any issue of this kind...until mid-2015, when they found out that pollutant emissions of Euro 6 passenger vehicles were even more extensive than Euro 4.

The Members of the European Parliament also asked about the so-called regulatory moratorium announced by Commissioner Antonio Tajani. Jos Dings confirmed that it came rather sudden, and though not an official decision from the European Commission it is a very clear signal how serious the European Commission takes these issues. On the question on how and when Member States opposed during the legislative process over the years, Jos Dings was very clear: “I never experienced any moment Member States where not opposing.”

Should we then conclude that the legislation is too vague, like some Member -States and cars manufacturers have kept saying over the past weeks? Jos Dings clearly stated that even If he admits that the legislation is far from being perfect, it should not be an excuse for Member States to legitimize their inaction. In his opinion, the core of the problem is the lack of enforcement by the latters. Hence, the

solution should be the same as in the aviation sector: a European Agency in charge of road transport, fully independent, with dozens of skilled agents to type-approve vehicles and do a proper market surveillance, just like the US Environment Protection Agency.

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