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Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases

European Parliament to debate and vote on a report about F-Gases

Climate-friendly alternatives exist for almost all applications. These alternative gases, with negligible global warming potential (GWP) compared to F-gases, are either already available or widely used, or are in development. Eliminating F-gases emissions will help the EU and its Member States meet their emission targets under the Kyoto Protocol.

The **fluorinated greenhouse gases** covered are:

- Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)
- Perfluorocarbons (PFCs)
- Sulphur hexafluoride (SF6)

Their warming impact on the atmosphereis very high and many of them have **long atmospheric lifetimes**. For example, sulphur hexafluoride has **a global warming potential 23,900 times that of carbon dioxide (CO2)**, which is the most common greenhouse gas.

The Doyle's (EPP-ED, IRL) reports on F-gases cover two pieces of legislations:

- A Directive on mobile air conditioning (pdf) based on the internal market legal basis
- A Regulation on F-gases (pdf) **excluding mobile air conditioning** based on a dual legal basis

While the Greens can live with the Directive, it is clear that **the Regulation is very weak**.

1. **Directive to phase out HFC-134a from air conditioning systems in new vehicles**

The Directive will **phase out HFC 134a**, the refrigerant currently used in car air conditioning system, **from 1 January 2011 onward** for new vehicle models and from 1 January 2017 for all new vehicles. Although not going as far as expected, **the Greens will support the Conciliation deal on this matter.**

2. **Regulation on certain fluorinated gases**

It gives priority to a **containment policy rather than to their replacement by climate-friendly alternatives** which actually exist for most applications (refrigeration, air-conditioning, insulating foams). This Regulation **fails to recognise the availability of alternatives** and to set in stone a shift away from f-gases for the EU, which would have had a significant knock-on effect on the worldwide market.

Member States that have already adopted stronger environmental-friendly legislations (Denmark and Austria) have managed to get an exemption clause to maintain stricter national rules for at least the next 6

years BUT this could be challenged by the Commission in two ways:

- The Commission has declared that it could **go into court against this exemption clause**;
- The Commission might continue to **proceed with its current infringement procedure against Danemark and Austria**.

The Green's main concerns are:

- It gives a **blank-cheque to the F-gas chemical industry**;
- It **avoids many bans on a lot of applications which do not need these dangerous gases** like in your household fridge;
- It will **slow down the introduction of innovative alternatives**;
- It will fall on Member States to proof that national stricter measures, if any, than the ones adopted under this Regulation are "based on new scientific evidence relating to the protection of the environment or the working environment on grounds of a problem specific to that Member State arising after the adoption of the harmonisation measure [...]" (Art 95 (3) of the ECT).
- It might **not stop the current infringement procedure from the Commission against Danemark and Austria for having a stricter law than the EU one**, although we have managed to get a derogation clause for DK and A in the final compromise.

Read also the letter of the Greens to Mr. Dimas, Environment Commissioner

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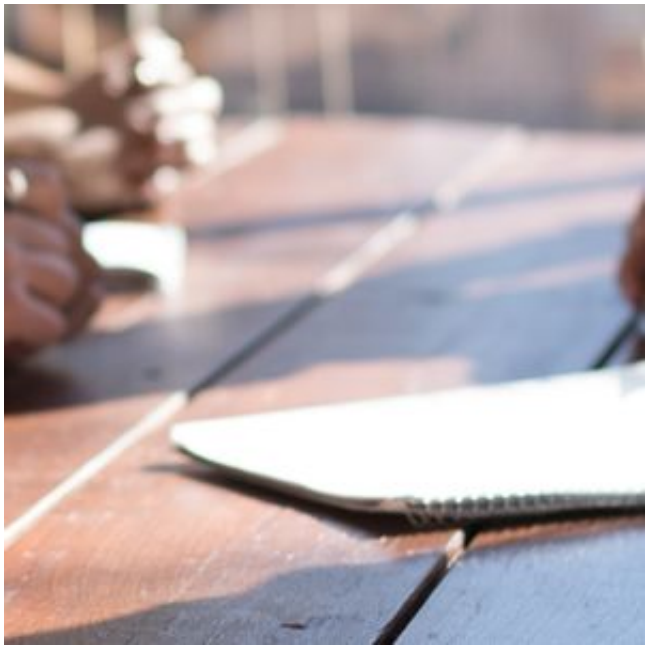
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