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Sulphur rules for ships/Air pollution

Tougher EU rules to benefit public health and the environment

The European Parliament environment committee today voted on new legislative proposals aimed at reducing sulphur pollution from ships (1), which are being shepherded through the EP by Green rapporteur/draftsperson **Satu Hassi** MEP. Speaking after the vote, Satu Hassi said:

"Today's vote brings us a step closer to tougher EU rules on sulphur pollution from ships. Urgent action is needed to stem the rapid growth in pollution from shipping, with air pollutant emissions from shipping expected to outstrip land-based emissions by 2020. Highly polluting shipping fuels have a serious impact on the environment but also on public health: air pollution from ships is estimated to cause 50,000 premature deaths per year in Europe.

"The committee has today voted to endorse the tougher limits on sulphur emissions from shipping, in line with the internationally-agreed IMO standards (2). Crucially, it also voted to extend limits to areas outside the designated sulphur emissions control areas (3). This would not only deliver significant health benefits, it would also ensure a more harmonised environment for the economic actors affected."

(1) The proposed EU legislation implements internationally-agreed (at the IMO) standards tightening limit values for sulphur emissions from ships, ensuring they can be properly enforced at EU level.

(2) The proposed maximum limits for sulphur content of marine fuels will be lowered in the designated sulphur emission control areas (SECA) from 1.5% to 0.1% from 2015. In Europe, this concerns the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and the English Channel.

(3) The committee voted to introduce a 0.5% sulphur limit to all EU seas outside sulphur control areas already by 2015, 5 years earlier than foreseen in IMO, and a further step for EU seas of 0.1% by 2020, as well as to extend the 0.1% limit to territorial seas of member states (i.e. 12 nautical miles from the coast) from 2015. The Commission proposal to extend the 0.1% limit to passenger ships outside the sulphur control areas from 2020 was maintained with a possibility for limited derogation for Greece.

Shipping operators will have to comply with the stricter limits by shifting to distilled, low-sulphur fuel or by installing emission abatement equipment, such as scrubbers.

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