

PRESS RELEASE: EUROPEAN FEDERATION FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

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The European Commission has proposed to weaken an eleven-year-old climate target for new cars just five days after the global scientific community warned policymakers to take serious and urgent action on climate change. The Commission plans to introduce a legally binding target for average CO₂ emissions from new cars of 130 grammes per kilometre, ten grammes more than the standing target of 120 g/km set in 1996.

The impact of the weakened target will be 100 million tonnes of additional CO₂ emissions over the period 2012-2020, equivalent to twice the annual emissions of Sweden.

The proposal does, for the first time, say that carmakers will now face binding legislation to improve fuel efficiency. The announcement follows the failure by the car industry to cut carbon dioxide emissions from new cars at the rate needed to meet the voluntary target agreed in 1998.

Jos Dings, director of T&E said: "Today's announcement finally recognises, ten years late, that regulation is needed on CO₂ emissions just as it is on safety and other forms of air pollution from cars."

The existing target for new cars set by the European Union in 1996 was for the average new car to emit 120 grammes of CO₂ per kilometre by 2005, equivalent to 4.5 (diesel) or 5.0 (petrol) litres of fuel per 100km. The target date has already been delayed until 2010 and now until 2012. The Commission proposal to allow measures undertaken by other stakeholders to count towards the car industry target is the third weakening of the strategy.

Jos Dings comments: "Not only is the car industry failing on its voluntary commitment to cut CO₂ emissions, the Commission now wants to reward this failure with a weaker fuel-efficiency target. It's a very disappointing response to calls last week by the IPCC for serious action on climate change."

Some eighteen million cars are sold in Europe every year. The average car has a lifespan of well over a decade meaning gas guzzlers sold this year will still be emitting high levels of CO₂ for many years to come.

"Climate change is a long-term challenge and the car industry also needs a long term outlook. An 80 grammes target by 2020 would ensure that we double fuel efficiency within a decade. It's up to the European Parliament and heads of state to produce a longer term solution to this long term problem." said Dings.

John Hontelez, Secretary General of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), commented: "The German car industry, aided by the German government and a German commissioner, has apparently succeeded in weakening the proposal. The Commission has rewarded carmakers' refusal to make fuel efficiency a priority with a more lenient standard than is needed to stop the continuing growth of greenhouse gas emissions from cars in Europe. This undermines the Commission's resolve to lead, regionally and globally, on fighting climate change."

Ends.