



PRESS RELEASE

Black smoke at full steam: ships will keep polluting the air

(Brussels, 13th April 2005) Today the European Parliament adopted a second reading agreement on the sulphur content of marine fuels.¹ The new directive will limit the sulphur content of marine fuels to 1.5% for ships in the North and the Baltic Sea as well as for ferries everywhere in the EU. However, the new directive will only reduce shipping emissions by less than 10% even though a reduction of 80% was initially demanded by the European Parliament. This strong position has recently been reiterated by Green rapporteur Satu Hassi, who had drafted a report calling for much further reductions. It was adopted by the Environment Committee in March.

“This is a wasted chance for cleaner air in Europe”, says Kerstin Meyer, EEB Air Pollution Policy Officer. “Ship emissions could be reduced much further at very low cost. Air pollution causes severe environmental and health damage all over the EU. It is irresponsible that European governments and the Commission blocked initiatives towards a more ambitious directive”.

Air pollution from ships has been continuously increasing throughout the last 15 years. This directive will not stop this trend. Even with the directive in place, ship emissions will outgrow all EU land-based emissions in the year 2020.

The EEB’s criticism is that two main elements are lacking in the final directive: sulphur limits for marine fuel are not applied in the Mediterranean or the North East Atlantic and there is no second step to further reduce the sulphur content of marine fuels to 0.5%. If included, these elements would have brought significant emission reductions and given a long-term perspective to the oil and shipping industries.

Recent preliminary studies for the Commission have again stressed the alarming impact of air pollution on biodiversity and human health all over Europe. Air pollution was found to cause more than 300,000 premature deaths in the 25 member countries of the EU in the year 2000.² Furthermore, recent NGO analysis has demonstrated that lowering the sulphur content to 0.5% is very cost-effective: By 2020, the annual net benefits would amount to between 6.6 and 10.4 billion Euro, i.e. the benefits would be up to 7.5 times higher than the costs.³

“Currently there are discussions in many Member States about how to meet the EU limit values for air quality. But at the same time Member States governments in Brussels obstructed further measures, when there was a real chance to improve air quality”, says Kerstin Meyer.

For more information:

Kerstin Meyer, EEB Policy Officer Air Pollution,
Office: +32 2 289 13 07, Mobile phone: +32 497 800862, kerstin.meyer@eeb.org

Air pollution from ships (Nov 2004): [http://www.eeb.org/activities/air/ship-briefing-nov04-\(1\).pdf](http://www.eeb.org/activities/air/ship-briefing-nov04-(1).pdf)
EEB website: <http://www.eeb.org/activities/air/shipping/Index.htm>

¹ **Note to the editors:** A second reading agreement is an “early agreement” between the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament.

² CAFE Scenario Analysis Report No 1: Baseline Scenarios for the Clean Air for Europe Programme, Final Report, October 2004, http://www.iiasa.ac.at/rains/CAFE_files/CAFE-baseline-full.pdf.

CAFE CBA Baseline Analysis 2000 to 2020 – Service contract for carrying out cost-benefit analysis of air quality related issues in particular in the Clean Air For Europe (CAFE) programme (January 2005), AEA Technology, UK.

³ Cost-benefit analysis of using 0.5% marine heavy fuel oil in European sea areas. The Swedish NGO Secretariat on Acid Rain (January 2005), http://www.acidrain.org/pages/publications/reports/cba_briefing_jan05.pdf