

Non-paper: Transition to zero-emission light-duty vehicles

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Mobility is essential and brings many benefits. However, the transport sector accounts for around one quarter of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions, and emissions are increasing over time. In addition, the sector is one of the main causes of air pollution in our cities. Reaching the EU's target of becoming climate neutral by 2050 and the first step of at least 55 percent greenhouse gas emissions reduction by 2030 will require a swift transition of the transport sector. As the Commission has stated in its 'Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy', the success of the European Green Deal depends on our ability to make the transport sector sustainable. Reducing the emissions from road transport will be key in this regard, as they alone account for approximately 70 percent of the total EU transport greenhouse gas emissions, with light-duty vehicles playing a vital role.

Car manufacturers are increasingly directing investments into the development and production of zero- and low emission vehicles, but the transition needs to be accelerated. In order for us to deliver on our short and long-term climate ambitions and ensure a shift towards a sustainable transport sector, we must speed up the transition of road transport by committing to zero-emission mobility and give clear signals to manufacturers, fleet owners and consumers. Thus, an important task for us as legislators is to incentivise manufacturers to make zero-emissions vehicles available to the market.

The 'Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy' does include many forward-looking and productive initiatives but unfortunately, a concrete plan with proposals for policy initiatives and incentives for the transition to zero-emission vehicles remains to be seen. We welcome the Commission's intention to urgently assess what is required in practice for the transport sector to contribute to achieving climate neutrality by 2050. Towards this purpose, we – the signing Member States – count on an ambitious and cost-effective enabling framework with coherent policies and regulation needed to support an accelerated and balanced shift towards zero-emission vehicles as well as predictability for the industry, including:

- 1) A phase-out date for the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans in the EU in line with the objective of climate neutrality by 2050** – To facilitate the necessary and timely transition towards zero-emission mobility, the Commission is encouraged to present an assessment and a specific proposal for a phase-out date or target year and how this can be achieved via EU legislation and measures. Furthermore, the EU regulation should support a gradual phase-out of the most emitting new cars and vans.
- 2) Ensuring that the EU legislation facilitates the green transition – both at EU level and for individual Member States.** We need a transparent legal framework at EU level that allows Member States to move ahead by taking action at national level to incentivise early phase-out of new petrol and diesel cars and vans.
- 3) Ambitious and cost-effective policies and regulation at EU level to drive emission reductions in road transport** – In this regard the regulation setting CO₂ emission performance standards for new passenger cars and for new light commercial vehicles (Regulation (EU) 2019/631) plays a vital role to support an EU-wide phase-out of petrol and diesel cars and vans. The current CO₂ emissions standards must be strengthened significantly to accelerate the transition towards zero-emission road transport. In addition, the incentive mechanism should be strengthened to provide as much incentive as possible for manufacturers to develop and produce new zero-emission vehicles. The revised regulation should include the above-mentioned phase-out provisions.

4) Strengthen infrastructure for zero-emission mobility – A key element in the transition is evidently the necessary infrastructure, focusing on charging and refueling infrastructure for zero-emission solutions. This will foremost require an extensive deployment of public charging.

Moving towards zero-emission vehicles will require a comprehensive approach facilitating the transition throughout the European Union, rather than their migration from one EU country to another. Thus, it will also be relevant to consider adopting EU-wide measures that could prevent possible negative effects of an increase of used vehicles previously registered in another EU Member State or third country.

Ensuring that EU's road transport policies and regulations are fully in line with the new 2030 target and the target of climate neutrality by 2050 will not only be vital in order for the EU to reach our climate goals and a significant step towards a sustainable transport sector. Ambitious policies and regulations – as setting a clear and unambiguous phase-out date for petrol and diesel cars and vans and stricter CO₂ standards – will also provide predictability for the automotive sector and spur the transition towards zero-emission mobility. This will also ensure that the EU will stay competitive in the automotive sector as well as the development of technology for zero-emission vehicles and thus support the decarbonisation of the entire transport sector.