

Press release – MEPs want new cars to respect emission limits under real driving conditions



On Thursday, Parliament adopted its position with 485 votes to 169 and 42 abstentions on the Commission proposal to re-introduce legal exemptions (through a so-called [conformity factor](#)) on nitrogen oxide (NO_x) emissions from light passenger and commercial cars (Euro 5 and Euro 6) for type approval of vehicles tested under real driving conditions in order to comply with the EU General Court [ruling of 13 December 2018](#).

Real driving emissions tests

Previously, data on car emissions such as NO_x were obtained through laboratory tests. The EU is the first region in the world to use real driving emissions (RDE) tests to measure such pollutants emitted by vehicles while driven on the road. However, emissions from these vehicles in real-world driving conditions tend to be significantly higher.

To address technical uncertainties regarding measurements obtained through [Portable Emission Measurement Systems \(PEMS\)](#), which measure emissions from engines while they are being used, the Commission introduced the so-called '[conformity factor](#)', which allows for higher emissions under real driving conditions to take into account a margin of error.

To reduce NO_x emissions, Parliament wants the conformity factor currently in place to be annually lowered, based on assessments by the [Joint Research Centre](#). After being immediately lowered from 1.43 to 1.32, it should be gradually reduced and cease to apply by 30 September 2022, after which only the raw data from tests carried out under real driving conditions would be used to determine compliance with EU emission limits.

The report also asks that the Commission establish by June 2021 more stringent requirements for the portable measuring equipment to be used for RDE tests.

Quote

Following the vote, Parliament's rapporteur on the file, [Esther De Lange](#), said: "Today's outcome is based on a broad agreement between the political groups. We have to be realistic about the discrepancy between emissions measured in laboratories and those measured in real-driving conditions by taking into account statistical and technical uncertainties linked to these measurements. At the same time, it's important to show ambition by gradually lowering the value for the conformity factor through annual downward revisions, based on the scientific assessments of the Joint Research Centre."

Next steps

Parliament is now ready to start negotiations with EU member states to agree on final rules.

Background

According to the [2019 Air Quality Report](#) by the European Environment Agency, air pollution led to more than half a million premature deaths in 2016 and is the number one environmental cause of premature death in the EU. As passenger cars produce 40% of total EU NOx emissions, they are a significant source of air pollution, especially in urban areas.

Emission measurements in the automotive sector were the subject of an EP inquiry committee (EMIS), set up in 2016 after the 'diesel scandal'. You can read its key recommendations [here](#).