

EPEE deplores today's Environment Committee Vote on Fluorinated Gases

Brussels, 11 October, 2005: The European Partnership for Energy and the Environment (EPEE) considers the results of this morning's Environment Committee Second Reading vote on a Regulation on Fluorinated Gases a step back for sensible policy making on climate change; as the Committee chose the most costly and disproportionate options to reduce F-gases emissions.

Speaking on the vote outcome, EPEE Director General Friedrich Busch stated:

"We urge the European Parliament as a whole to reject the Environment Committee's report on F-gases."

The Committee supported a single environmental legal base which will likely lead to fragmented climate change policy. EPEE supports a legal base that balances internal market and environmental concerns by having common product rules across EU 25.

The Committee adopted a raft of amendments which will make a range of appliances using F-gases illegal without consideration of their likely negative impact, high costs and consequences. These amendments include a ban on all domestic refrigerators (with a charge of less than 150 grams), a ban on commercial and industrial refrigeration and a ban on all stationary air-conditioning. These bans are disproportionate and technologically prescriptive.

EPEE supports an internal market legal base for products; supports choice in refrigerants and their responsible use.

Friedrich Busch stated:

"The draft law will deliver substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The Committee's obsession with legal base and bans will add unnecessary and unjustified costs with little real environmental benefit."

EPEE now hopes that a European Parliament Plenary vote (Session week 24 October) will reverse the far-reaching change in approach made to the Common Position by the Environment Committee, and move to support a reasonable EU-wide framework for the use of F-gases based on the containment, measurement, and single market principles.

For further information, please contact:

Darcy Nicolle or Mary B. Walsh

European Partnership for Energy and the Environment Secretariat

Tel: +32 2 739 1614

E-mail: secretariat@epeeglobal.org

Website: www.epeeglobal.org

Notes to the Editor:

****The European Partnership for Energy and the Environment (EPEE)** is a group of businesses involved in the development and manufacture of equipment which relies on HFCs as a refrigerant in cooling, heating and air conditioning applications where energy efficiency and safety are important. It represents a broad-based group of responsible companies, national associations and European associations active in the European air-conditioning, heat-pump and refrigeration industry. It was formed in September 2000 to contribute to the development of effective European policies to reduce greenhouse gases from the use of refrigerants. Further information can be found on-line at www.epeeglobal.org.

The central mission of EPEE is to contribute to the development of effective European policies to limit greenhouse gas emissions from the use of refrigerants. We believe that hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), hydrocarbons, ammonia water and CO₂ are all viable refrigerants depending on application and operational requirements. In all cases emission of greenhouse gases from refrigerant use must be minimised and full Life Cycle Climate Performance (LCCP) must be wisely considered when selection is made of what refrigerant best meets the unique application needs. In addition, each refrigerant property must be taken into account in the selection process.

In our view, any policy aimed at the reduction of the emission of greenhouse gases from the use of refrigerants should be based on the desire to minimise their Global Warming Impact. This approach takes into account the direct emissions of the refrigerant as well as the indirect emissions of CO₂ from the electricity used. Energy related emissions from the use of refrigerants in refrigeration systems represent on average 85 % of the total. Measures to promote energy efficiency should therefore be a prime focus of climate change policies.

Background to the proposed Regulation

The approach and need for EU legislation on f-gases was agreed by stakeholders in the conclusions of the final report of the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP). This programme proposed a range of cost-effective proposals to help the EU meet its emission reduction target under the Kyoto Protocol. The ECCP process carried out thorough assessment of the fluorinated gases and was undertaken by all the stakeholders, government, industry, environmental NGOs and academia.

See <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/climat/eccp.htm>

The agreed approach was clearly orientated toward better monitoring and containment of these gases, based on the successful containment policies already in place in the Netherlands and Sweden. This view was consequently endorsed by the Commission and Council of Ministers in autumn 2001. The Ministers welcomed a future proposal which would look at containment of emissions, monitoring as well as marketing and use restrictions 'where appropriate, for relevant applications where viable alternatives are available and if improvement of containment is not feasible, taking into account existing voluntary initiatives by some fluorinated gases industry sectors, where the development of alternatives is still ongoing.'

The European Commission published its proposal for a Regulation on certain fluorinated greenhouse gases, initially with a single Internal Market legal base, on 11 August 2003. The First Reading took place

in Spring 2004, where the Parliamentary Plenary voted on a full ban on all F-gases (including the less potent HFC-152a) in cars' air conditioning systems. The Environment Council reached a Common Position in October 2004, whereby they split the proposal into two separate texts, the Mobile Air-Conditioning (MAC) Directive and the dual legal base F-gases Regulation. Having been appointed a new Rapporteur (the previous one did not return after the 2004 Parliamentary Elections), the legislation then went into an "open"¹ Second Reading at the European Parliament in September 2005.

What are Fluorinated gases?

The fluorinated industrial gases (Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), Perfluorinated Carbons (PFCs) and Sulphur Hexafluoride (SF₆)) are widely used in daily-life applications such as refrigerators, air conditioning, thermal insulation and medical sprays. The gases are fluorinated to confer on them distinct environmental and safety benefits (non-ozone depleting, low toxicity and low flammability) for every-day use.

However, the high Global Warming Potential (GWP) of these gases has raised environmental concerns and the three gases were therefore included in the basket of six greenhouse gases identified in the Kyoto Protocol, together with carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O).

Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) are a family of industrial fluorinated gases. They are non-flammable, energy efficient, recyclable and have a very low toxicity. HFCs are used as a replacement for ozone depleting substance such as CFC and HCFCs. They do not deplete the ozone layer because they contain no chlorine.

Who will be affected by this proposal?

The domestic and commercial refrigeration and air-conditioning sector, food retailing sector, health care sector, the car industry (manufacturers and part suppliers), international transport industry, semiconductor industry, electrical grid operators, the fire fighting industry, the magnesium smelters, aerosols manufacturers and the building construction sector.

Why are HFCs used in refrigeration and air-conditioning?

HFCs are used as a refrigerant because of their stability and low toxicity which make them suitable for use in a wide range of applications. Other refrigerants are available but they have specific characteristics that constrain their use, such as ammonia which is highly toxic and can be used in large out-of-town cold stores, or hydrocarbons which are very flammable and should be used only in small amounts.

Is there a perfect refrigerant?

¹ An "open" reading allows for fundamental aspects of proposed legislation to be changed, including not only re-examining the Council's common position but also re-opening issues which were decided on during the Parliament's first reading. MEPs have a lot more flexibility for tabling amendments when a Reading is "open."

The perfect refrigerant does not exist. To choose the best refrigeration, users must balance the different properties of each refrigerant. The major factors are health, safety, environmental requirements, energy efficiency as well as economic and technical feasibility.
