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European Union

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**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations

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Subject: Adoption of measures at EU level to tackle air pollution related to the  
import of used cars  
– Information from the Bulgarian, Polish and Slovak delegations

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Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Bulgarian, Polish and Slovak delegations on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 9 October 2018.

**Adoption of measures at EU level to tackle air pollution related to the import of used cars**

**- Information from the Bulgarian, Polish and Slovak delegations**

1. The Bulgarian, Polish and Slovak delegations would like to draw the Council's attention to the need for the European Union and its Member States to act even more quickly and firmly in order to achieve tangible results in the fight against air pollution.
2. Poor air quality is the biggest environmental risk to the health of European citizens, causing 400 000 premature deaths every year. According to Eurobarometer, after climate change, this is the second most important environmental issue for Europeans. Nearly two-thirds of all Member States experience air quality problems. During the ministerial discussion held at the Informal Environment Council in April 2018, transport and household heating with solid fuels were pointed to as the main causes of poor air quality in residential areas. The possible solutions outlined included simplifying regulations, strengthening the role of European funds and funding instruments, raising public awareness, and changing people's attitudes and daily behaviour.
3. Air pollution caused by the harmful emissions from motor vehicle exhaust gases is a widespread problem, as is evident from the growing number of European cities introducing various forms and degrees of restrictions on the movement of cars on their territory combined with investments in alternative transport solutions.
4. A serious problem for many Member States, including Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia, is the high level of fine particulate matter caused by road transport and the use of solid fuels for household heating.

5. Despite the legislative measures adopted at national level, the increasing number of used internal combustion engine cars (especially diesel) imported from Member States with higher average incomes, where some restrictions have been introduced for such vehicles, to Member States with lower average incomes, remains a pressing issue. The number of Western European cities which adopt bans, restrictions, fees etc. related to the movement of internal combustion engine vehicles, including diesel ones, is constantly growing. In Bulgaria between July 2017 – April 2018 the overall number of diesel cars, including new and used ones, increased by 7%.
6. The problem could not be solved by imposing a direct ban on the import of such cars in the Member State concerned, as this would undermine the fundamental principles of the functioning of the European Union and, in particular, the Single Market.
7. A fair approach requires that the one who distorts the market should take the responsibility for such action. This means that the Member States introducing such bans should not be able to "export" cars that are not "retrofitted" and do not meet certain standards. In order to be operational, however, this responsibility must be laid down at a supranational, European level.
8. In order to achieve legal certainty and predictability, greater clarity and robustness is needed with regard to safeguards against imports of used cars in line with the single market rules and, at the same time, resulting in better protection of the health of European citizens and the environment.
9. In view of the above, Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia would like to alert the Council, the Member States and the European Commission to the gravity of this issue and the need to discuss and take measures, including legislative ones, to tackle the problem at European level.

