

Citizens' summary

Reducing sulphur emissions from shipping

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

Sulphur emissions from international shipping need to be further reduced because:

- Ship emissions impair **air quality** not only at sea but also on land;
- Air pollution is dangerous for **human health** and the environment;
- Compared to land-based sources, no efforts for a **significant reduction** of ship emissions have been taken so far;
- Reducing emissions of key pollutants such as sulphur dioxide from ships can be more **cost-effective** than further reducing emissions from land-based sources;
- If no action is taken, emissions of sulphur dioxide from ships will **exceed** emissions from land within the next 10 years.
- The main fuel for the propulsion of ships is heavy fuel oil. This tar-like material remains after the processing of crude oil in refineries. It contains up to 5% of sulphur that is released as sulphur dioxide together with other toxic pollutants following combustion in the ship engine. Sulphur dioxide is responsible for **acid rain** and part of it is converted into fine dust. Fine dust is **dangerous** for human health by causing respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

WHO WILL BENEFIT AND HOW?

- **Everyone** will benefit from better air quality and a better environment;
- The proposed legislation will be accompanied by an overview of potential supporting measures for the shipping sector that will stimulate **innovation** and create **high quality jobs**;
- **Clarification** of legislation will improve access to environmental information.

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN AT EU LEVEL?

- Air pollution is transported beyond **national borders** and requires common rules and actions;
- Ship owners and harbours compete on the European market – it is up to the EU to ensure an **even enforcement** of rules and thereby ensure a functional internal market.

WHAT EXACTLY WILL CHANGE?

- The maximum sulphur content in ship fuels will be **progressively reduced** to 0.5%.
- In some very **fragile ecosystem** such as the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and the English Channel the maximum sulphur content will be progressively reduced to 0.1%. This requirement will also apply to passenger ships operating in other EU sea areas, including the Mediterranean Sea.
- Ship operators may continue to use heavy fuel oil if they use exhaust gas cleaning systems that achieve at least the same sulphur **emission reduction**.
- These provisions were agreed at the International Maritime Organisation and are binding for most of the world's ships. Transposition into EU law will make sure that these rules are **enforced** properly in the EU.
- In addition, EU legislation on the quality of ship fuels will be **clarified and updated**.

WHEN IS THE PROPOSAL LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?

- The new rules should come into effect in **2015** for sensitive areas (0.1% provision) and in **2020** for other international waters (0.5% provision).