



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 24.7.2018
C(2018) 4899 final*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senát for its Opinion on the Communication 'Towards the broadest use of alternative fuels - an Action Plan on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure under Article 10(6) of Directive 2014/94/EU, including the assessment of national policy frameworks under Article 10(2) of Directive 2014/94/EU' {COM(2017) 652 final}.

This Action Plan is part of the Clean Mobility Package adopted by the Commission on 8 November 2017 with the aim of supporting the implementation of the European Union's commitments under the Paris Agreement.

It presents the Commission's view on the overall state of play and progress with regard to the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure in the European Union. Directive 2014/94 of 22 October 2014 on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure requires Member States to submit to the Commission National Policy Frameworks that set a framework until 2030 for market development of alternative fuels and their infrastructure. These frameworks were due by 18 November 2016. The Commission has assessed the content of these frameworks. Its assessment, which has been published as part of the above Action Plan, demonstrates that the level of ambition of the National Policy Frameworks varies significantly between Member States. On average, the planning included in the National Policy Frameworks falls short of the needs assessed by the Commission.

The assessment also indicates that if no additional action is taken, gaps will remain on the European Union's core transport networks, hampering European-wide mobility of alternatively fuelled vehicles and vessels and the completion of the internal market in this sector. This concern is particularly relevant for the period post-2020 when a stronger increase of alternative fuels vehicles take-up is expected.

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The Action Plan aims at accelerating the roll out of alternative fuels infrastructure in the Union, in particular through facilitating the implementation of the National Policy Frameworks and further through supporting the development of a network of fast and interoperable charging and clean refuelling stations across Europe, boosting investment in alternative fuel infrastructure, and improving consumer acceptance.

The Commission agrees with the Senát that a sufficiently dense infrastructure for the recharging or refuelling of vehicles is a key factor for enabling the broader use of alternative fuels vehicles. Moreover, the price of alternative fuel vehicles, in particular for battery-electric cars, is still comparatively high, constraining market take up. However, given accelerating market dynamics and related strategic investment programmes of major automotive manufacturers, the Commission expects a significant reduction in the cost of such vehicles in the coming years. In this respect, on 17 May 2018 the Commission adopted under the Third Mobility Package, 'A Strategic Action Plan for Batteries' to provide an European Union framework to encourage the establishment of a competitive, innovative and sustainable manufacturing and a full value chain of electric batteries in the European Union.

In a perspective to 2020 and beyond, a significantly higher number of vehicle models will become available on the market. Lower life-cycle cost of alternative fuels vehicles (natural gas, electricity, hydrogen) compared to conventional fuel will provide benefits to consumers. Our assessment also indicates that a basic infrastructure is already available in many parts of the European Union. The expected mass-market development should therefore lead to a densification of the current infrastructure.

The Commission agrees that the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure in urban areas is the key priority. The large majority of trips are undertaken in urban settings. In fact, Directive 2014/94/EU requires the deployment of sufficient infrastructure to circulate with compressed natural gas and electricity vehicles in urban areas by 2020. This will contribute to the overall completion of the infrastructure along the Trans-European Transport Network corridors.

The Commission also takes note of the Senát's statement that Member States have different initial conditions for the development of infrastructures for alternative fuels as well as of different types of alternative fuels. The Directive in fact only requires Member States to build up an appropriate infrastructure for the fuels indicated in the Directive, leaving them the possibility of selecting the most convenient option according to the development of their alternative fuels market and energy supply conditions.

The Commission also takes note of the Senát's concerns on the possible inconsistency between the proposal for revising Directive 2009/33/EC on the promotion of clean and energy-efficient road transport vehicles and the proposal for setting emission performance standards for new passenger cars and new light commercial vehicles post 2020, on the one hand, and the requirements of the Directive 2014/94/EU addressing alternative fuels infrastructures, on the other hand.

This concern touches in particular on the treatment of zero emission vehicles that are counted preferentially as part of the overall emission reduction requirement or are counted as part of an overall low- and zero-emission procurement minimum target requirement. However, the Commission would like to point out that there is no technology prescription in the proposal for a Regulation setting emission performance standards for new passenger cars and for new light commercial vehicles¹. Vehicles below the low-emission thresholds are just counted preferentially because they contribute overproportionally to emission reductions. Similarly, the proposal for a Directive amending Directive 2009/33/EU on the promotion of clean and energy-efficient road transport² aims to contribute to the reduction of emissions from transport – it hence sets a requirement to Member States for a minimum share of low- and zero-emission light-duty vehicles in public procurement. For the heavy-duty vehicle, these procurement targets are defined on the basis of a wider set of alternative fuels.

The Commission agrees that the transition to alternative fuels will require time. Currently, a very small share of vehicles on the road run on alternative fuels. Conventional powertrain technologies need to continue their progress in the direction of the emission reductions. In this respect, the Commission considers that the revised Type Approval Framework³ currently under discussion at the European Parliament and the Council should also contribute to the reduction of CO₂ and pollutant emissions from conventional fuel vehicles.

Finally, the Commission would like to inform the Senát that a meeting between the Commission services and the Czech authorities to discuss the Czech National Policy Framework took place on 5 March 2018. We consider the outcome of this meeting very positive. Another meeting with the Czech authorities could be usefully held to address the concerns expressed by the Senát.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Senát and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Violeta Bulc
Member of the Commission*

¹ COM(2017) 676 final

² COM(2017) 653 final

³ COM(2016) 31 final