



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 18 December 2013  
17963/13  
(OR. en)  
PRESSE 593

## **Fluorinated greenhouse gases**

The Permanent Representatives Committee<sup>1</sup> today approved a compromise agreed with the European Parliament on a draft regulation on fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-gases). It thereby endorsed the agreement reached between the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and representatives of the European Parliament on 16 December.

The agreed regulation will allow to reduce F-gas emissions by two-thirds of today's levels by 2030. The use of F-gases in some new equipment, such as refrigerators and air conditioners, will be banned where viable and more climate-friendly alternatives are readily available. The new regulation will not only benefit the climate, but also create great business opportunities for EU companies on the market for alternative technologies.

The regulation is aimed at protecting the environment by reducing emissions of F-gases. It establishes rules regarding containment, use, recovery and destruction of those gases. In addition, the new law imposes conditions on the placing on the market of products and equipment containing or relying upon F-gases, whilst setting out quantitative limits for the placing on the market of hydrofluorocarbons (HFC).

The regulation also introduces bans on the placing on the market of the following products:

- domestic refrigerators and freezers containing HFCs with a global warming potential (GWP) of 150 or more as from 1 January 2015;
- refrigerators and freezers for commercial use containing HFCs with a GWP of 2500 or more from 1 January 2020, and containing HFCs with a GWP of 150 or more from 1 January 2022;

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<sup>1</sup> The Permanent Representatives Committee is composed of the ambassadors of the 28 EU member states. Its role is to prepare decisions of the Council.

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- stationary refrigeration equipment that contains or relies upon for its functioning HFCs with a GWP of 2500 or more from 1 January 2020;
- centralised refrigeration systems for commercial use with a capacity of 40kW or more that contain or rely upon their functioning, fluorinated gases with a GWP of 150 or more, from 1 January 2022;
- movable room air-conditioning appliances that contain HFCs with GWP of 150 or more from 1 January 2020;
- single split air-conditioning systems containing less than 3 kg of F-gases that contain F-gases with a GWP of 750 or more from 1 January 2025;
- foams that contain HFCs with a GWP of 150 or more, extruded polystyrene from 1 January 2020 and other foams 1 January 2023; and
- technical aerosols that contain HFCs with a GWP of 150 or more from 1 January 2018.

The regulation introduces a phase-down mechanism involving a gradually declining cap on the total placement of bulk HFCs (in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent) on the market in the EU with a freeze in 2015, followed by a first reduction in 2016-2017 and reaching 21 % of the levels sold in 2009-12 by 2030.

The Regulation will apply from 1 January 2015.

## **Background**

Fluorinated gases are man-made gases used in a range of industrial applications. Because they do not damage the atmospheric ozone layer, they are often used as substitutes for ozone-depleting substances. However, F-gases are powerful greenhouse gases, with a global warming effect up to 23 000 times greater than carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), and their emissions are rising strongly. The most common F-gases are HFCs, which contain hydrogen, fluorine, and carbon. They are used in a multitude of applications including commercial refrigeration, industrial refrigeration, air-conditioning systems, heat pump equipment, and as blowing agents for foams, fire extinguishers, aerosol propellants, and solvents.

## **Next steps**

The agreement paves the way for the formal adoption of the new regulation. The text still needs to be formally adopted by the Parliament, whose vote in plenary is expected to take place early next year, and by the Council, which is due to take its decision after the vote in Parliament.