

REPRODUCTION AUTHORIZED

Brussels, 19 February 1974

No 7/74

** A REDUCTION IN THE SULPHUR CONTENT OF GAS OIL helps to reduce the level of air pollution; therefore the Commission of the European Communities has recently proposed to the Council of Ministers the adoption of Community requirements for the gradual reduction of the sulphur content, which will ultimately be limited to 0.3% and 0.5% on 1 October 1980 for the two grades of gas oil, which will then be the only grades allowed on the Community market.

ANNEX I gives a summary of this proposal.

** We asked various consumer organizations in the Community interested in consumer protection to review periodically THE MOST RECENT DEVELOPMENTS in each of the nine Community Member States IN MATTERS OF DIRECT CONCERN TO CONSUMERS.

This bulletin is published by the

Commission of the European Communities
Directorate General of Information
Division for industrial information and consumers
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1040 - Brussels - Tel. 35 00 40

Further information is available from the Commission's press and information offices in the countries listed on the inside cover.

The information published in this bulletin covers the European Communities' activities in the fields of industrial development, protection of the environment and consumer welfare. It is therefore not limited to recording Commission decisions or opinions.

PRESS AND INFORMATION OFFICES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

BELGIUM

1040 BRUSSELS
Rue de la Loi 200
Tel. 35 00 40

DENMARK

1457 COPENHAGEN
4 Gammeltorv
Tel. 14 41 40

FRANCE

75782 PARIS CEDEX 16
61, rue des Belles-Feuilles
Tel. 553 53 26

GERMANY

53 BONN
Zitelmannstraße 22
Tel. 23 80 41

1 BERLIN 31
Kurfürstendamm 102
Tel. 886 40 28

GREAT BRITAIN

LONDON W8 4QQ
20, Kensington Palace Gardens
Tel. 727 8090

IRELAND

DUBLIN 2
41 Fitzwilliam Square
Tel. 66 223

ITALY

00187 ROME
Via Poli, 29
Tel. 68 97 22 à 26

LUXEMBOURG

LUXEMBOURG
Centre européen du Kirchberg
Tel. 479 41

NETHERLANDS

THE HAGUE
29, Lange Voorhout
Tel. 070-46 9326

SWITZERLAND

1202 GENEVA
37-39, rue de Vermont
Tel. 34 97 50

UNITED STATES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20037
2100 M Street, N.W.
Suite 707
Tel. (202) 872-8350

NEW YORK 10017
277 Park Avenue
Tel. 371 2804

ANNEX 2 contains a text sent to us by the Netherlands Consumer Association.

** THE HARMONIZATION OF COMMUNITY LAWS ON MOTOR VEHICLES should be completed in 1975. The Commission is continuing its work in order to complete this harmonization programme, which is essential to the free movement of motor vehicles in the Community. In particular it has recently amended a directive on the braking system (distribution of axle loads) of certain categories of motor vehicle to adapt it to the technical progress made since its adoption.

ANNEX 3 contains a list of the directives already adopted by the Council of Ministers in this field, together with those submitted to it but not yet approved.

** In his PROGRAMME SPEECH to the European Parliament, Mr Scarascia Mugnozza, a Commission Vice-President, stated "Considerable work has been done, [and] action programmes on social policy, on industrial policy, on scientific research and on the environment have all been agreed". After reviewing Community activities during 1973, Mr Scarascia Mugnozza stressed that "Europe's main asset... is its citizens. Men are the only wealth. That is the very foundation of political economy, whether Liberal or Marxist. That, above all, gives the promise of a better tomorrow for a continent whose human, intellectual, scientific and cultural potential is very great.

./.



For present difficulties must not make us forget the true meaning behind THE BUILDING OF EUROPE, WHOSE AIM IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A HUMAN ONE. On the contrary, these difficulties emphasize the true goal of our efforts and our work over the coming months."

** The Commission will continue to promote OBJECTIVE INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC ON NUCLEAR ENERGY. In most Community countries, the building of nuclear power plants causes reactions in public opinion with regard to the implications for the environment of the operation of such plants and of the risks and possible consequences of accidents. Information to the public should concern just as much the reasons for the use of nuclear power plants as the precautions taken to avoid dangers inherent in this type of energy production. In order to ensure a uniform level of protection and public health in the Member States, the Commission has tried to arrange systematic joint consultation between the various parties concerned on safety practices, criteria and requirements.

** The importance of THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY is far more than merely economic and closely affects the environment and the quality life. This was stated by Mr Spinelli, the member of the Commission with special responsibility for industrial affairs, in a speech he made at the opening of the Constructa 1974 Fair in Hanover on 2 February. He also said that a group of government experts had been instructed by the Commission to define the objectives and methods of a harmonized set of basic rules to be observed by constructors, and that the Commission

is seeking to promote an action programme in the following three main fields in collaboration with the trades and industries concerned:

- the establishment of a common nomenclature and framework in order to provide estimates valid throughout the Community;
- standardization, or at least harmonization at Community level of existing codes and rules relating to construction in the various Member States;
- research, which is essential for the economic development of the industry and for human welfare.

** THE SITUATION IN THE SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY will be examined at a meeting to be held by the Commission on 22 February 1974 with the trade unions and shipbuilders. At this meeting, chaired by Mr Spinelli, the member of the Commission with special responsibility for industrial affairs, proposals put forward by the Commission for the industry will be extensively debated.

** At the Commission's request, the obstacles to free COMPETITION ON THE NETHERLANDS GRAMOPHONE RECORD MARKET have been removed. Some 20 manufacturers had formed a group which was controlling almost 90% of the market, and severely restricting the possibilities of buying and selling on that market. The group was therefore in conflict with the rules of the Community Treaty.

- ** The maintenance of employment is the first concern of the PAPER INDUSTRY UNIONS which met the representatives of the Commission on 8 February in Brussels, in order to consider what Community action could be undertaken in this industry.
- ** Research on the INDUSTRIAL USE OF SOLAR ENERGY is still at the preliminary stage, and the Commission is thinking of launching a solar-energy programme progressive in terms both of money spent and of technological orientation. This was the reply made by the Commission to a written question from a Member of the European Parliament. It also stated that present knowledge was adequate to permit the use of solar energy in the home, but that a great effort still had to be made to make the technique commercially viable.
- ** The problem of RADIOACTIVE WASTE is being studied by a group of experts of the Member States which is convened regularly by the Commission under the Community programme on environmental protection (see IRT No. 185). The particular problems studied are the foreseeable quantities of waste, the disposal sites and how long producers of radioactive waste are to be held liable for it.
- ** 18 booklets - one by each African or Malagasy State associated with the Community - set out the CONDITIONS OF INDUSTRIAL FIRMS IN THOSE COUNTRIES. These booklets give basic information on the economy and industrial policy of each State, examine the conditions for establishing and running firms (customs rules

and tariffs, taxation, cost of factors of production) and give a list of useful addresses for the potential promoter or investor. They can be obtained free of charge from the Commission of the European Communities (DG VIII/B/1, 200 rue de la Loi, 1040 Bruxelles).

- ** The Commission has recently decided to organize an ECONOMIC SURVEY AMONG CONSUMERS of the new Community Member States - Britain, Ireland and Denmark.
- ** The following documents are available from the Official PUBLICATIONS Office of the European Communities (Post Box 1003 - Luxembourg):
- Investigation on the development of software ("Industry" Series - 1973, No. 7)
 - Explanatory notes to the Common Customs Tariff (5th amendment) 1 January 1974
 - Report of the results of the business surveys carried out among heads of enterprises in the Community (3-1973)
 - Quarterly report on the economic situation in the Community (4-1973).

IS No 7/74, 19 February 1974, ANNEX 1 p.1

REDUCTION OF SULPHUR CONTENT IN GAS OIL

The reduction of the sulphur content in gas oil helps to reduce the level of atmospheric pollution. The European Commission recently proposed, therefore, that the Council of Ministers adopt Community measures to reduce this sulphur content progressively, reaching final limits of 0.3% and 0.5% respectively on 1 October 1980 for the two grades of gas oil which will then be the only grades allowed on the Community market.

Two grades of gas oil

Only two grades of gas oil will be allowed on the internal Community market from 1 October 1976. In order to obtain a reduction in the present level of pollution or, in certain areas to maintain the present level, considered to be acceptable, there is to be a reduction by stages in the sulphur content of the two grades of gas oil:

- (i) from 1 October 1976, the maximum permissible sulphur content in the first grade of gas oil will be 0.5%, and this will then be lowered to 0.3% from 1 October 1980.
- (ii) from 1 October 1976, the maximum permissible sulphur content in the second grade will be 0.8%, and this will then be lowered to 0.5% from 1 October 1980.

Use of the second grade of gas oil will be restricted to regions and areas with a low level of atmospheric pollution or to those where the contribution from the sulphur in gas oil to atmospheric pollution is of little importance. It is left to Member States to

define these areas, but they are required to inform the Commission of the criteria governing their decisions so that the Commission may assess to what extent the criteria chosen and the application of these criteria will guarantee the protection of public health and of the environment. This freedom of choice gives a certain flexibility, particularly to Member States which have industrial regions which are at a disadvantage in competition but in which atmospheric pollution is not as yet a problem.

The European Commission will re-examine these proposals in the light of the progress made in formulating criteria of noxiousness and quality objectives for the atmosphere. Spot checks will be made to ensure that the gas oils conform with the Directive, the sulphur content being determined by a standard method.

Removal of barriers to trade

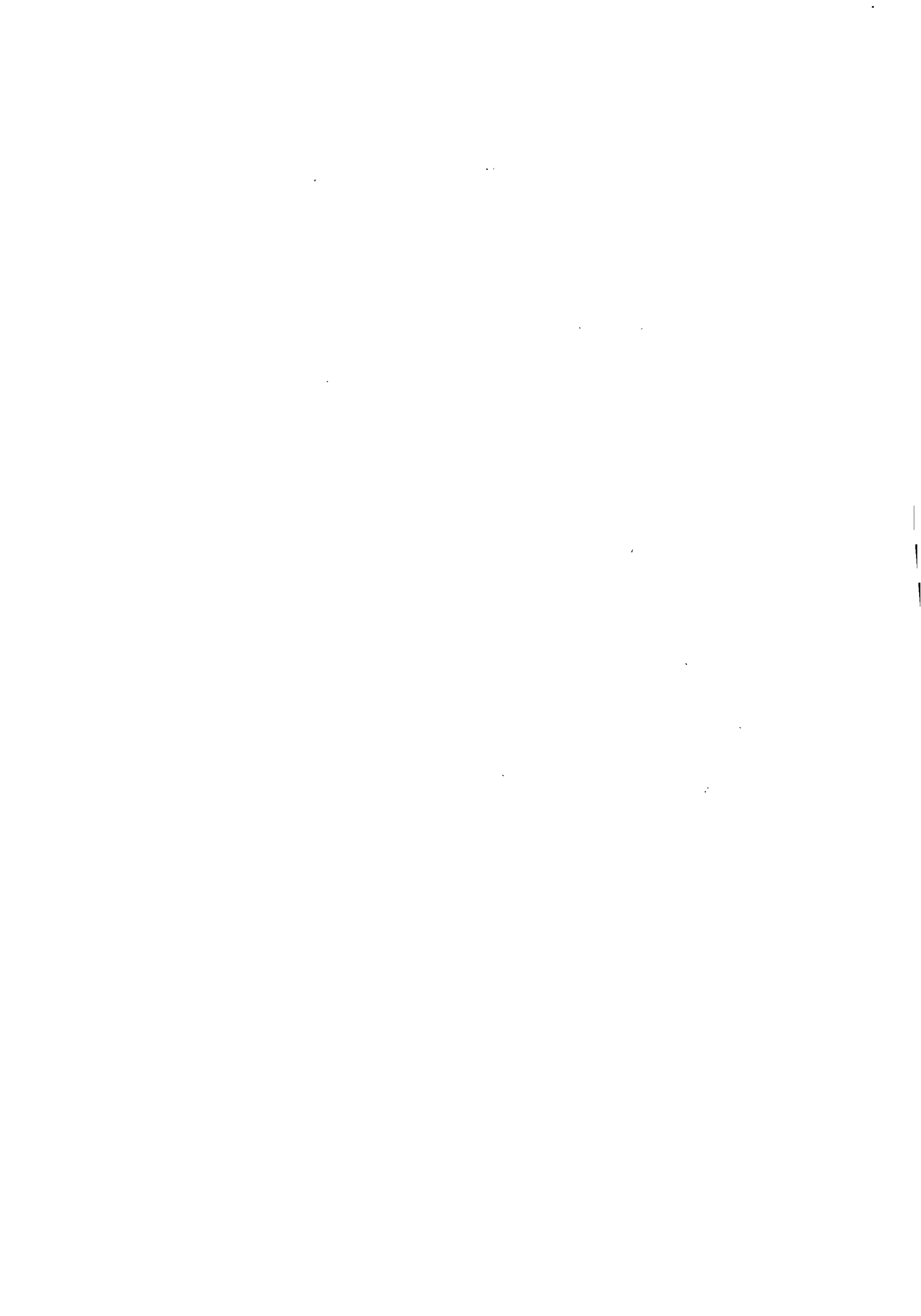
Comparison of the existing and proposed laws and regulations in the Member States governing the maximum permissible sulphur content in liquid fuels reveals differences not only in the rules limiting the maximum sulphur content but also in the methods of reducing pollutant emissions from various types of fuel. This situation compels the oil companies to adapt their products to the different rules in force in the countries of destination and thus constitutes a barrier to intra-Community trade in these products. In order to facilitate this trade, the proposal for a directive which has been drafted by the European Commission replaces the present national laws by Community rules.

Increase in production costs

In order to produce gas oils in accordance with the proposed limits, in particular the limits scheduled for 1980, it will be necessary to process a larger quantity of crude oil in desulphurization plants, and additional investment will therefore be required to increase the capacity of these plants. Their capacity will increase by less than 5%, particularly if the present trend of a considerable rise in crude oil prices continues until the proposed measures come into force.

The increase in the volume of crude oil to be processed will also entail a higher energy consumption by the desulphurization plants, and, consequently, an increase in crude oil requirements. Again, few statistics are available, but the estimates show figures of less than 0.5%.

The European Commission considers, however, that these increases are fully justified by the importance of the hygienic and environmental aims pursued.



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CONSUMER PROTECTION IN THE NETHERLANDS

We requested various consumer organizations within the Community, which are concerned with consumer protection to give an occasional outline here of the most recent developments in each of the nine Community countries in matters directly affecting consumers. These texts are, of course, published on the sole responsibility of their authors. We received the following text from the Netherlands Consumers' Association (Consumentenbond).

Information on prices

The consumers' organizations in the Netherlands, Consumentenbond and Konsumenten Kontakt, are at present engaged in a campaign to inform the public about prices. The reason for this campaign, which is to last ten weeks, is the very steep price increases of the last few weeks. The aim is to make consumers in the Netherlands more aware of existing differences in prices and to show them that the most expensive product is not always the best. The information is given in the form of large notices covering half a page which are paid for by the government authorities and published in newspapers of national, regional and local importance. The information contained in the notices is also broadcast on radio and television.

The first notice was published on Wednesday 6 February. The prices listed included the price of bread, milk, cotton sheets, beer, peanut butter, kales, refrigerators, and frozen cod fillet.

Price controls

After consulting organizations of consumers, employers, industrial workers and the middle classes, the Minister for Economic Affairs adopted a series of measures to halt the rise in prices. These measures are as follows:

- (i) extension of the period which must elapse before the price rises submitted to the Ministry can come into force;
- (ii) freezing of prices for petroleum products;
- (iii) freezing of fees for doctors, dentists, lawyers and other liberal professions;
- (iv) making it compulsory for the liberal professions to give details of their fees;
- (v) wider powers for the division of the Ministry for Economic Affairs which controls price rises (Economische Controle Dienst).

The government also intends very shortly to make it compulsory for the price per standard quantity to be indicated on the packaging of products.

Law on children's toys

A bill on children's toys was published several weeks ago. The bill is based on the 'law on goods' (warenwet), the purpose of which is to give greater scope for the inspection of goods to the 'Keuringsdiensten van Waren', the department responsible for applying this law in order to prevent dangerous toys from being put on the market. This bill was drafted in conjunction with consumer-, supplier-, and producer-organizations. It specifies

IS No 7/74, 19 February 1974, ANNEX 2 p.3

the requirements which must be met by children's toys and, more especially, babies' toys, with particular stress on the details to be shown on the packaging. These requirements relate more specifically to inflammability, the use of dangerous substances and the presence of sharp edges.

Conditions of delivery and payment

At the request of the Ministry for Economic Affairs, the Working Party on Individual Rights of the Committee on Consumer Affairs (a sub-committee of the Economic and Social Committee) is at present studying a request from the 'Consumentenbond' that its proposals should be given more publicity by being broadcast on radio and television during the time allocated to the government. These proposals, which were presented last year, relate to the conditions of delivery and payment of suppliers.

HARMONIZATION OF LEGISLATION ON MOTOR VEHICLES

The harmonization of laws on motor vehicles in the Community must be finished by 1975. The European Commission is at present working to complete this harmonization programme, which is essential to the free movement of motor vehicles within the Community.

The European Commission recently amended a Directive on the braking systems (axle load distribution) of certain categories of motor vehicles in order to take into account the technical progress made since the adoption of this Directive. This was the second Directive to be amended by the European Commission in conjunction with a Special Committee, made up of Representatives of the Member States, and responsible for adapting the Directives adopted by the Council to the new technical knowledge which has been acquired.

Fourteen Directives on motor vehicles have already been adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Community since 1970, and ten others have been proposed, but not yet adopted by the Council.

DIRECTIVES ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date</u>
1. Type-approval of motor vehicles and their trailers	February 1970
2. Permissible sound level and the exhaust system of motor vehicles	February 1970
3. Space for mounting and the fixing of rear registration plates on motor vehicles and their trailers	April 1970

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date</u>
4. Liquid fuel tanks and rear protective devices for motor vehicles and their trailers	April 1970
5. Measures to be taken against air pollution by gases from positive-ignition engines of motor vehicles	April 1970
6. Steering equipment for motor vehicles	June 1970
7. Audible warning devices for motor vehicles	August 1970
8. Doors of motor vehicles	August 1970
9. Rear-view mirrors of motor vehicles	March 1971
10. Braking devices of certain categories of motor vehicles	September 1971
11. Suppression of radio interference from motor vehicles	July 1972
12. Measures to be taken against the emission of pollutants from diesel engines	August 1972
13. Device to prevent unauthorized use of the vehicle	December 1973
14. Interior fittings (internal parts of the cabin or passenger space other than the internal rear-view mirror or mirrors, roof or sliding roof, arrangement of controls, seat back and rear portion of seat)	December 1973

IS. No 7/74, 19 February 1974, ANNEX 3 p.3

DIRECTIVES AMENDED BY THE COMMISSION FOLLOWING THE OPINION OF THE
COMMITTEE FOR ADJUSTING DIRECTIVES TO TECHNICAL PROGRESS

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date</u>
1. Exhaust system of motor vehicles	November 1973
2. Braking systems (load distribution on the axles)	January 1974

PROPOSALS FOR DIRECTIVES PRESENTED TO THE COUNCIL BUT NOT YET
APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date sent to the Council</u>
1. Direction indicators on motor vehicles	July 1965
2. Field of vision, windscreen wipers and windscreen washers of motor vehicles	August 1968
3. Electrical current for motor vehicle trailers	August 1968
4. Safety glass in motor vehicles	September 1972
5. Interior fittings of motor vehicles (protection of the driver from the steering wheel in the event of impact)	September 1972
6. Interior fittings of motor vehicles (strength of seats and their attachment points)	May 1973
7. Fitting of lighting and light signalling devices on motor vehicles and their trailers	December 1973
8. Design of fog lights for motor vehicles	December 1973

IS No 7/74, 19 February 1974, ANNEX 3 p.4

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date sent to the Council</u>
9. Exterior projections on motor vehicles	December 1973
10. Design of reflex-reflectors for motor vehicles and their trailers	January 1974