

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000903/25
to the Commission
Elena Kountoura (The Left)
(4 March 2025)

Subject: Urgent need to renew and modernise the commercial heavy-duty vehicle fleet to achieve the EU's climate goals

In order to achieve the ambitious targets of the European Green Deal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport by 90% by 2050, the fleet of heavy-duty vehicles, trucks and buses needs to be renewed and modernised. These vehicles, as the oldest in the road transport sector, contribute disproportionately to air pollution, which makes their upgrade critical for the transition to a sustainable and environmentally friendly transport system ⁽¹⁾.

Among the Member States, Greece has the oldest truck fleet ⁽²⁾. Despite this significant gap, no measures, incentives or subsidy programmes have been established to date for the replacement of old vehicles with new — zero or low-emission — commercial heavy-duty vehicles.

Given that: a) the purchase of new vehicles is very high cost, making it economically unprofitable and practically impossible to renew the existing fleet, b) the lack of a second-hand market for used zero-emission trucks and buses further limits the availability of these vehicles, and c) carbon emissions in transport remain high and there is no apparent progress towards achieving climate targets ⁽³⁾:

1. How does the Commission comment on the lack of adoption of subsidy programmes in several Member States, such as Greece, for the purchase of zero- or low-emission commercial vehicles?
2. Does the Commission intend to put in place additional initiatives to subsidise the purchase of new — zero or low-emission — heavy-duty vehicles, so as to give professionals the opportunity to replace old, polluting vehicles?

Submitted: 4.3.2025

Answer given by Mr Hoekstra on behalf of the European Commission
(14 April 2025)

The Commission recognises that incentives can be useful in certain cases to support the transition to zero-emission vehicles.

However, the adoption of subsidy programmes and other incentives is a decision taken at Member State level. At EU level, the CO₂ standards Regulation for heavy-duty vehicles sets the framework for the transition to zero-emission commercial vehicles, creating predictability for investors and manufacturers.

In the Industrial Action Plan for the European automotive sector ⁽¹⁾ the Commission announced several initiatives to accelerate the uptake of zero-emission heavy-duty vehicles.

These include a targeted amendment of the Eurovignette Directive ⁽²⁾, to extend the deadline to fully exempt zero-emission heavy-duty vehicles from road charges.

The Plan also stresses the importance of finalising interinstitutional negotiations on the revision of the Weights and Dimensions Directive, to ensure payload parity between zero-emission heavy-duty vehicles and diesel vehicles.

The Commission also published a communication to decarbonise corporate fleets ⁽³⁾, which notably encourages national authorities to provide financial support and incentives for public transport authorities and operators switching to zero-emission buses.

This contributes to the preparation of a legislative proposal to decarbonise corporate fleets, expected by end 2025. As part of the work on corporate fleets, the Commission will also look into measures to accelerate the uptake of European zero-emission trucks.

¹ Trucks are responsible for 6% of total EU carbon emissions and over 25% of total road transport emissions. https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/transport/road-transport-reducing-co2-emissions-vehicles/reducing-co2-emissions-heavy-duty-vehicles_en.

² The average age of trucks in Greece is 22.6 years, compared to the European average of 14.1 (EU-27), while buses are 17.6 years old, compared to the European average of 12.2. <https://www.acea.auto/figure/average-age-of-eu-vehicle-fleet-by-country/>.

³ From 2005 to 2022, emissions from heavy-duty vehicles, rather than decreasing, increased by 1%. https://climate.ec.europa.eu/document/download/7bd19c68-b179-4f3f-af75-4e309ec0646f_en?filename=CAPR-report2024-web.pdf.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025DC0095&qid=1742550809591>

⁽²⁾ <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2022/362/oj>

⁽³⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025DC0096&qid=1742550887847>