



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 16 October 2012**

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<b>ENV</b>	<b>778</b>
<b>TRANS</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>FISC</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>SAN</b>	<b>232</b>

**NOTE**

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from: General Secretariat  
to: Delegations

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Subject: Guidelines for the mutual acceptance of low emission zones vignettes and the exchange of best practices  
= Information from the Czech delegation

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Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Czech delegation on the above- mentioned subject, which will be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 25 October 2012.

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**Guidelines for the mutual acceptance of low emission zones vignettes  
and the exchange of best practices**

**- information from the Czech delegation -**

Vehicular traffic has a significant impact on air quality, particularly in cities. One tool that helps to reduce this burden is the creation of low emission zones, which restrict access to vehicles that do not comply with specific emission categories. The introduction of low emission zones helps to reduce air pollution in areas where people are most at risk from pollutants in the ambient air and where there is a need for more vigorous efforts to improve the overall quality of life.

This tool appears to be effective given the absence of better tools to reduce air pollution through regulating traffic flow. The introduction of low emission zones also encourages owners of older vehicles who frequently drive into city centres to replace these with more modern versions with better emission levels.

Recently, an increasing number of EU Member States have begun to introduce low emission zones for the reasons mentioned above. However, the rules for entering designated low emission zones differ within the European Union, they are not mutually compatible and EU citizens therefore find them difficult to understand.

The Czech Republic is now introducing a system of low emission zones which is based on a system that already exists in another European state in order to minimise mutual barriers to movement and to simplify the use of vignettes for citizens and visitors of both countries. Mutual recognition of emission vignettes is currently being discussed between the Czech Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany at expert level.

Keeping in mind the principle of subsidiarity in this matter, the Czech Republic is convinced that ensuring the widest possible mutual recognition of low emission vignettes and the exchange of best practices between EU Member States would lead to significant financial savings and a reduction in the administrative burden, as well as better mobility of citizens throughout the EU in cities where these zones are introduced.

The Czech Republic would welcome it if the European Commission were to initiate a debate on the exchange of best practices in this area between the Member States and to consider preparation of non-binding guidelines, which Member States could follow if they were interested in the mutual acceptance of low emission zones vignettes.

In our opinion, greater awareness of existing low emission zone systems and the use of possible non-binding guidelines to ensure their compatibility would also be beneficial with a view to new low emission zones being established in countries that have not previously used this tool, thereby preventing any further fragmentation of these systems and the creation of additional barriers to the movement of citizens within the EU.

The Czech Republic is convinced that improving air quality should be one of the primary objectives of European environmental policies and that it is therefore important to highlight the importance of such measures, particularly with regard to air protection being the Commission's priority for 2013.

