



# Car Fuel FACTSHEET Consumption Testing

## What is wrong with fuel consumption testing in the EU?

Existing European Union rules concerning the testing of a car's fuel consumption are open to massive abuse.

This is due to **loopholes in the official fuel consumption tests<sup>1</sup> that car manufacturers can exploit.**

In essence, consumers are provided with claims about a vehicle's fuel consumption which do not reflect what can be achieved under real life conditions.

Numerous [studies](#) have highlighted the problems with fuel consumption testing. In 2014, the Italian consumer organisation and BEUC member *Altroconsumo* tested two vehicles according to official testing requirements. Even when certain known loopholes were exploited to the limit, the car maker's advertised fuel consumption results were between 20% and 50% lower than what Altroconsumo's testing could achieve.

The loopholes in the current testing regime are numerous. They allow for wing mirrors to be removed, tyres to be inflated beyond recommended settings and special lubricants to be used. Combined, these tricks can have a substantial impact on the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and fuel consumption of a car.

## What is the impact of ineffective testing?

- Prospective car buyers are being misled by car manufacturers advertising of fuel economy performances which cannot be replicated in the real world. They are **paying far more on fuel costs than would be otherwise expected.**
- With mounting distrust in the fuel consumption figures provided by car makers, there is a distinct potential that prospective car buyers are giving less weighting to the fuel economy performance of cars.
- Not being able to know the real carbon emission reductions from the automobile sector also makes it **difficult to understand the performance of the car industry to cut its carbon footprint.** This undermines EU climate targets.

## How can fuel consumption testing be improved?

There is a need for better and more harmonised testing standards than the NEDCs. A new testing protocol, the **Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicles Test Procedure (WLTP)**, has been adopted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The WLTP should be swiftly adopted under EU law and be operational by 2017 in order for consumers to have a more realistic picture on fuel consumption.

## Safeguards to protect consumers

It is essential that – when new tests are in place – that consumers can compare one car model with another. For this purpose, it is crucial that conformity tests are conducted. Such checks basically re-test cars when driving on the road and validate tests made in laboratories. Ensuring a robust regime is in place for conformity testing will allow authorities to check whether test results of vehicles before sale, at point of sale and after sale match up.

<sup>1</sup>The existing official EU testing protocol is known as the New European Driving Cycle.



## 🗨️ Correlation exercise – modifying CO<sub>2</sub> targets

In 2014, the EU agreed CO<sub>2</sub> targets of 95g CO<sub>2</sub>/km for passenger vehicles by 2021.

These targets were based on the NEDC test. With new tests it is crucial that the **conversion of NEDC values into WLTP values do not reward car producers** who have made the most extensive use of the NEDC loopholes. The targets themselves must remain equally ambitious.

## 🗨️ CO<sub>2</sub> taxation changes

Several Member States have adopted tax systems where the registration and/or circulation tax correlates to the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of the vehicle.

As the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of each vehicle is likely to be higher when tested under the WLTP, the tax levels must be adapted as soon as the WLTP is applied. Otherwise consumers could end up paying more in annual road taxes if their vehicle falls out of a specific tax band.

### Key recommendations

1. The WLTP should be swiftly adopted under EU law and operational by 2017.
2. The creation of an EU-wide car approval authority is needed to ensure the application of more coherent testing standards and procedures in Europe.
3. Conformity checks must be carried out by national authorities on vehicles both before sale and once in use.
4. The 2021 CO<sub>2</sub> targets for passenger cars should be modified to represent WLTP test results. This process should not reduce the 95g/km target or delay implementation of the WLTP.
5. In those countries where car tax correlates to emissions, the tax levels must be adapted as soon as the WLTP is applied.
6. Those Member States wherein the tax base does not correlate to emissions should further explore and implement taxation schemes which reward consumers for investing in low emission vehicles.
7. The Car Labelling Directive must be revised in order to provide consumers with better information at the point of sale and in all [advertisements](#).