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Car manufacturers mislead on fuel consumption claims

Car manufacturer fuel consumption testing procedures have been examined for the first time by a consumer organisation in Europe. The outcome shows them to be misleading, often grossly understating how much fuel a car consumes.

The laboratory test run by BEUC's Italian member Altroconsumo was carried out by an independent body and pushed the current test procedure¹ for measuring the fuel consumption of cars to the allowed limits. Manufacturers claimed their cars were 18% - 50% more efficient. The cars tested were a Fiat Panda 1.2 and Volkswagen Golf 1.6 TDI.

A first in the EU, Altroconsumo is now going to court in Italy to help owners of these two cars get their money back. Those affected may have paid up to €500 more a year in petrol than could have been expected from the company advertisements².

BEUC has long called on the EU to replace the outdated car consumption test currently in use with a new procedure adopted under United Nations auspices in 2014.

Proving previous research³, this test by BEUC member Altroconsumo revealed how manufacturers use loopholes like overinflating tyres or reducing the vehicle weight to conclude significantly lower consumption figures than in real-life driving situations.

Monique Goyens, Director General of The European Consumer Organisation commented:

"Consumers buying supposedly efficient cars are misled too often. If a car guzzles 2 litres more than advertised, consumers pay the price for what is essentially a company's green marketing trick.

"Those who want to make a fuel-conscious decision when buying cars deserve accurate information. The deplorable side-effect of this practice is that drivers might disregard fuel consumption information altogether.

"Manufacturers do use tricks to make their cars look more fuel efficient. The testing system from the 1970s is broken and urgently needs an update. Car drivers deserve a swift EU response imposing more accurate testing."

Clearer CO₂ labelling

Prospective car buyers across Europe are not only misled on fuel consumption claims, but fuel consumption and CO₂ emission labelling of new vehicles is also inadequate. The needed changes in EU law for testing should go hand-in-hand with amendments to the EU's car labelling Directive. This update should ensure cars are rated on their total emissions, to avoid having big SUV's being categorised as the equal to small, fuel-efficient cars.

For a detailed Questions & Answers document click [here](#)

An infographic illustrating the test procedures tricks is available [here](#)

Note:

- ¹ NEDC stands for New European Driving Cycle. It lays down the conditions under which a car manufacturer measures a new car's fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions performance. A new testing protocol, the Worldwide Harmonised Light vehicles Test Procedure (WLTP), has been adopted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in March 2014. BEUC wants this test to apply to car approvals by 2017.
- ² On the basis of a mileage of 15,000 km per year.
- ³ *Mind the Gap! Why official car fuel economy figures don't match up to reality*, Transport & Environment March 2013: <http://bit.ly/XdTs35>.
From laboratory to road, International Council for Clean Transport, May 2013: <http://bit.ly/1IQEJQT>
- ⁴ *Empower EU consumers through visible and clear labelling information on CO₂ emissions from new passenger cars*, BEUC & ANEC, July 2014: <http://bit.ly/YAcP88>

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