# German car industry looks set to win out over EU emissions targets

Internal VW document showed that the car giant was prepared to go much further than the EU's proposals, but chose not to

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A leaked document, apparently from a senior Volkswagen lobbyist, seems to show that the company was prepared to accept tough targets for electric car production and $CO_2$ reduction, but that the German car industry has directly intervened to water down EU Commission targets for the reduction of vehicle emissions.

On Wednesday, the EU Commission is due to release a draft proposal for the reduction of vehicle Co2 emissions post-2020. That draft had included such stipulations that between 15 and 20 per cent of a car maker's model range should consist of battery-powered electric vehicles (EVs) by 2030, and and ten per cent should be plugin hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs - although that ten per cent can potentially be incorporated into the overall EV number). The proposal included the concept that production of such vehicles would be done on a credit system - the more of them a car maker built, the less it would have to do to reduce emissions from its conventional internal combustion engines. The fewer electric car, the more it would have to do.

The original proposal also stated that there should be a target for a 25-35 per cent reduction in vehicle Co2 levels from 2020-2030 (based on a 2020 baseline), with a mandatory target for 2025.



However, according to environmental pressure group, Transport & Environment (T&E), not only has the German car industry succeeded in having the proposals watered-down ("rendered toothless" in the words of T&E) but that an internal VW document showed that the company was prepared to go much further than the Commission's proposals, but chose not to.

The VW document, titled Political Status and Outlook for the $CO_2$ target shows that, under certain circumstances, Volkswagen would be prepared to work to a target of 22 per cent of its range being EVs by 2025, and 34.5 per cent by 2030.

However, Volkswagen, and it seems the rest of the German car industry, has decided instead to try and have the Commission's proposals neutered. According to German newspaper Suddeutsche Zeitung, a phone call took place between Matthias Wissmann, head of the German auto lobby group the VDA, Germany's EU Commissioner Gunther Oettinger, and Martin Selmayr, Chief of Staff for Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

A spokesman for the EU Commission confirmed to The Irish Times that a call did indeed take place. "During the call, Mr Wissmann outlined VDA's position on the upcoming proposal on CO2 standards for cars and vans. The Commissioner explained the rationale behind the preparation of the draft proposal and did not comment on the content of any of the proposals that will be part of this package. The phone call took place as part of an inclusive, broader stakeholder engagement by the Commission aimed at listening to the views of all interested parties."



T&E claims that subsequent to the conversations, the mandatory Co2 reduction target for 2025 was significantly weakened. By how much has not yet been officially stated, but according to T&E, it is now easier for the car industry to achieve it. While the proposals for the numbers of EVs and plugin hybrids that a car maker should make are retained, the penalties for not meeting those EV production targets have been removed entirely, yet the credits for meeting or exceeding them were retained.

According to Greg Archer, T&E Clean Vehicles Director said, "As the VW leak shows carmakers can accept an EV mandate and targets more ambitious than the Commission is proposing. But some European carmakers are fixated on preserving the market for dirty diesel in Europe for as long as possible, despite collapsing sales, in a desperate attempt to recoup their past unwise investments."

The car industry is defending its lobbying, saying that the current market for electric vehicles is too fragmented and the regulatory framework too disp
levels in the original proposal.

"Our data demonstrates that, even though it is growin
extremely patchy, which makes it difficult to envisage

crediting system," stated Erik Jonnaert, secretary general of the ACEA, the umbrella body that represents Europe's car makers. "Many people take the Norwegian market as a benchmark. But just like its €64,000 GDP, more than twice the EU average, Norway's EV share of 29 per cent is an exception in Europe."

The Commission spokesman said the latest the final decision will be taken by the Commission on Wednesday. "Any speculation about the preparations for the adoption is misleading, irresponsible and leads to confusion."


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