

Dieselgate 10-year anniversary: time for the EU to clean up its fleet

Ten years ago, the Dieselgate scandal exposed how Europe's biggest carmakers deliberately installed defeat devices to cheat emissions tests on millions of vehicles. These cars polluted up to 10 times above legal limits¹, poisoning the air we breathe and damaging citizens' health.

A decade later, justice is still missing. While the US forced VW to buy-back vehicles or fix them in addition to imposing fines², up to 19.1 million vehicles on European roads are likely to still have defeat devices³.

The toll is ongoing: 40% of Dieselgate-related premature deaths are yet to come (124,000 already lost, 81,000 still projected)⁴, which contribute to the 70,000 premature deaths caused by road transport air pollution every year⁵.

Now the EU has a chance to act. The Commission's new roadworthiness package can finally take high-emitting Dieselgate cars off our roads.

Signatories call on the EU and Member States to implement the following:

- **Systematic screening of fleets and roadside inspections using remote sensing technology** to identify high emitters
- **Periodic Technical Inspections (PTI) should be run on a yearly basis for vehicles over 10 year-old**
- **Identified high-emitting vehicles should either be fixed or scrapped and the cost should be borne by carmakers, not society.** This should complement Member States' mandatory requirements to properly investigate whether car manufacturers have been using prohibited defeat devices and require them to urgently implement retrofit programmes to genuinely clean up any excessively polluting vehicles that are found to be fitted with such devices.

Verifying older vehicles on an annual basis also ensures technical defects affecting safety can be identified swiftly. These more frequent checks, combined with additional requirements to

¹ Transport & Environment. (2016). *Dieselgate: Who? What? How?*. [Link](#).

² In the US, Volkswagen was forced to buy-back vehicles or offer effective emissions fixes and was [fined](#) \$1.45 billion. It also paid almost [US\\$3 billion](#) of additional funds to help US states implement action to reduce pollution from road transport.

³ International Council on Clean Transportation. *It's time for Europe to address diesel defeat devices once and for all*. (2023). [Link](#).

⁴ Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air. (2025). *Health impacts of diesel vehicles suspected of using prohibited defeat devices in the EU and UK*. [Link](#).

⁵ European Commission. (2022). *Commission proposes new Euro 7 standards to reduce pollutant emissions from vehicles and improve air quality*. [Link](#)

verify all safety systems are functional would contribute to preventing 1,850 deaths and over 140,000 injuries to 2050⁶.

Finally, Europe must stop exporting high-polluting and unsafe used vehicles. Between 2015 and 2022, over 6 million used vehicles were shipped outside the EU, predominantly to African countries, adding old, dirty and unroadworthy cars to their fleets. Ensuring that only vehicles meeting minimum emission and safety standards are exported is essential to curb the growth of both climate and air pollution emissions and to reduce road deaths and serious injuries.



European Transport Safety Council



⁶ European Commission. (2025). *EC Staff Working Document Impact Assessment Report Accompanying the document Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2014/45/EU on periodic roadworthiness tests for motor vehicles and their trailers, Directive 2014/47/EU on the technical roadside inspection of the roadworthiness of commercial vehicles circulating in the Union, and Directive 1999/37/EC on the registration documents for vehicles.* [Link](#).