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## COMMISSION MULLS MEPS' CALL FOR POST-DIESELGATE SHAKEUP

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13.01.2017

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EurActiv (12 January 2017)

The European Commission is considering stripping DG Grow, its internal market unit, of the power to police car emissions after the Dieselgate scandal that erupted in September 2015.

MEPs in a committee investigating the response to the scandal recommended transferring policing powers for car emissions testing to DG Envi, the Commissions environment department

A report from the MEPs blamed disorganisation within the executive for it taking too long to catch car manufacturers cheating on emissions tests.

The responsibilities between the European level and the national level has not been right and therefore its extremely important we change the current system, Dutch Liberal MEP Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy said in a committee meeting today (12 January).

But one EU source close to the car emissions legislation told EurActiv.com that it is unlikely the Commission will shuffle those tasks between the DGs.

Responsibility for air quality and vehicle emissions must be under one single portfolio and not split between two DGs in the Commission who often are in a situation of pursuing contradictory goals, UK Labour MEP Seb Dance said today.

Its appropriate that all legislative responsibilities in the area of vehicle emissions currently held by DG Grow be transferred to DG Envi, Dance added, referring to the executives department dealing with environment legislation.

EU Internal Market Commissioner Elżbieta Bieńkowska is in charge of the executives legislation on car emissions testing and vehicle types, and was in the hotseat after Volkswagens use of manipulating software was exposed in Europe.

A director from DG Grow told MEPs today that their report on Dieselgate touches on a number of institutional issues that concern the Commission as a whole. The executive will reflect on the recommendations and respond to MEPs, she said in todays meeting.

Stripping DG Grow of its authority on vehicle emissions would signal a reversal of the prevailing trend in the Commission to highlight the business case on green legislation, for example by putting DG Grow in the lead on those files.

Tensions between the two departments go back several years. The pending Circular Economy package of recycling and waste bills was rewritten in 2014-2015. DG Grow replaced DG Envi in the

driving seat of the legislation.

DG Grow also very much looks after the interest of consumers, the environment and public health, Commission spokeswoman Lucia Caudet told EurActiv.

#### US REGULATOR: ONLY AN EU SUPERVISOR CAN STOP ANOTHER DIESELGATE

Only a central European agency with the resources and power to test cars and trucks will prevent another Dieselgate scandal, the US Environmental Protection Agency director behind the enforcement system that snared Volkswagen has said.

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The draft report put together by MEPs in the special Emissions Committee suggests the Commission and authorities in European countries don't have the proper power to police car companies and should set up a central EU agency to stop more manufacturers from cheating.

The report was published last month and will be voted on in the Emissions Committee later this month before it is sent to a vote in the Parliament's plenary session in April.

EU national governments came under fire in the report for watering down and delaying EU legislation on emissions testing and car type approval systems. But the Commission enabled that, according to MEPs.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency first exposed Volkswagen's use of software in cars to cover up its illegal levels of the air pollutant NOx in 2015. Yesterday, US authorities indicted six Volkswagen executives for conspiracy. The company agreed to pay billions of dollars in settlement fees after pleading guilty to charges of using the cheat software in the US.

MEPs in the inquiry committee have criticised former EU Industry Commissioner Antonio Tajani for delaying legislation to improve rules on how national authorities approve car types based on how much they pollute. Tajani is now the centre-right European People's Party's candidate to become the next Parliament president in a vote next week.

Emissions Committee MEPs also recommended the Commission set up an EU agency to oversee the approval of car types. So far, Bieńkowska has insisted there is no need for a new centralised EU agency.

The inquiry committee was set up in January 2016 to investigate the EU response to the Dieselgate scandal.

#### DIESELGATE RESEARCHER SAYS COMMISSION OVERHAUL WON'T BRING BIG CHANGE

One of the researchers that put Volkswagen's emissions cheating on the map said the European Commission's proposal to more strictly police the car industry won't deliver fundamental change.

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#### BACKGROUND

US regulators found that Volkswagen designed software for close to half a million diesel cars that gave false emissions data during the laboratory tests. Experts consider that tests on the road are

more difficult to be gamed.

A special inquiry committee in the European Parliament was set up in January 2016 to investigate how Volkswagen cars could have cheated the testing system without the fraud being picked up at any stage by the European Commission.

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