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F-gas Roundtable: Commission stresses that tackling illegal trade is a major priority

EFCTC members participated in the F-gas Roundtable on 14 October in Brussels. Bente Tranholm-Schwarz, Deputy Head of Unit in DG Climate Action, concentrated her comments on illegal trade in HFCs stressing that “every kilogram entering the EU illegally is one kilogram too much.”

She detailed the findings from a Commission study of European import/export statistics and noted that these data are consistent with the EU HFC quotas up to 2018, indicating that customs evasion is the main method for illegal HFCs. She noted that it was not possible to quantify the amounts of illegal HFCs entering the EU from the data available but stressed that the Commission did not deny the presence of illegal trade and was taking all relevant actions to prevent it.

These included raising the issue up the political agenda to the Council of Ministers, discussions with Member State experts and enforcement authorities, working with Poland to develop best practice guidance for Customs as well as developing the Customs Single Window with DG for Taxation and Customs Union to enable interactive verification of imports at the border. Discussion on data sharing with China and Turkey was also underway.

“We welcome the extensive list of actions being undertaken by the Commission and Member States to tackle this problem of illegal trade in HFCs. This is extremely positive start.” said EFCTC Chairman Dr. Nick Campbell, “EFCTC believes that significant illegal activity is taking place particularly through countries neighbouring the EU and we need to see these actions accelerate and broaden. Use of illegal HFCs carries with them safety, health and environmental risks and must be stopped as soon as possible. EFCTC has set up an Action line www.efctc.org to assist in the reporting of illegal activities. Our independent consultant has already shared a number of potential illegal activities with the Enforcement Authorities in the Member States concerned. We look forward to working with the Commission and Member States to take forward and accelerate activities that will help stamp out illegal activities.”

The European FluoroCarbons Technical Committee is a Cefic Sector Group that monitors legislation related to HFCs (hydrofluorocarbons), and HFOs (hydrofluoro-olefins) in the EU and at global level. Fluorocarbons are used as feedstock, as refrigerants, as solvents and as blowing agents for insulation plastic foams.

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