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Toyota zero emissions ad ruled misleading

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An advert for the Toyota Prius in the European Voice newspaper which breached the European car labelling directive, has today been ruled misleading by the Belgian advertising standards authority.

Friends of the Earth Europe's car efficiency campaigner, Jeroen Verhoeven, filed a complaint against the advertisement which showed an image of a Toyota Prius and included the words 'Zero emissions low'. The advertisement did not contain any CO2 emission or fuel consumption data, as is obliged under Belgian law, and thus violated European labelling directive 1999/94/EC.

An initial complaint filed to the Belgian Jury d'Ethique Publicitaire (JEP) on the grounds that the advert breached the directive prompted the response that according to the jury's reading of the advert 'this car does not have any CO2 emissions'. Subsequently, Mr Verhoeven filed a second complaint about the misleading nature of the advert, citing the JEP's own misreading as evidence.

According to Jeroen Verhoeven, this case is just one example of a massive 'misinformation campaign' by carmakers. "Car manufacturers are using 'greenwash' advertising to confuse consumers whilst at the same time blocking EU proposals for a target of 120g CO2/km by 2012. If Toyota is serious about reaching 'zero emissions' anytime soon then why are they blocking a 2012 target?" he said.

Following evidence that the majority of car advertisements do not comply with the European car labelling directive, Friends of the Earth Europe and several other campaign groups have formed the Advertise CO2 coalition which aims to put pressure on carmakers to provide comprehensive fuel consumption and CO2 emission data to consumers.

"If carmakers genuinely want to reduce fuel consumption, they need to respect the legal requirements and give comprehensive CO2 emissions information in their advertisements as a minimum," added Mr Verhoeven.

Friends of the Earth Europe campaigns for sustainable and just societies and for the protection of the environment, unites more than 30 national organisations with thousands of local groups and is part of the world's largest grassroots environmental network, Friends of the Earth International.

Friends of the Earth Europe