

VOC EMISSION CONTROL AND  
ITS COSTS IN  
THE UK PETROCHEMICAL SECTOR:

**Impact of the 'Gothenburg' Protocol &  
National Emission Ceilings Directive**



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# SUMMARY

This report begins by reviewing the background to, and genesis of, the UNECE 'Gothenburg' Protocol and EU National Emission Ceilings Directive. It is noted that neither of these initiatives has been predicated on the basis of immediate environmental need but solely upon computer model predictions. The study proceeds to consider in detail forecasts of VOC emissions in the UK and the anticipated cost of their control with particular reference to the petrochemical sector.

The most recent and reliable of these forecasts is of special interest. It implies that the UK should be able to achieve its obligation under the UNECE Protocol, and that currently forming part of negotiations to agree ceilings under the NECD, without the need to develop emission control plans beyond those already agreed. This seemingly comfortable position is likely to bring HMG under renewed international pressure to adopt a more challenging NECD target. It also conceals the costs, yet to be incurred, of implementing already agreed measures.

A continuing theme throughout this report is the paucity of public domain, UK specific, good quality, contemporary data on the cost-effectiveness of VOC control techniques available to the petrochemical industry. Not only does the lack of appropriate information hinder policy-makers and their advisers in developing realistic and achievable regulatory targets, it also presents a significant disadvantage to individual plant operators when in discussion with enforcement agencies. It is in industry's own best interests to remedy quickly this lack of appropriate information. Additionally, to aid objective implementation of already agreed emission reduction plans, the necessary technical resource should be allocated to ensuring the veracity of official IPPC guidance notes.