

Air quality: Health committee endorses deal with Council

Plans for more ambitious national caps on emissions of key pollutants by 2030, including NOx, particulates and sulphur dioxide, already informally agreed with the Dutch presidency of the Council, received the support of the Health committee on Tuesday. Air pollution causes about 400,000 premature deaths in the EU per year. The agreement now needs to be endorsed by the Environment Committee and Parliament as a whole.

"The evidence on poor air quality is clear - air pollution doesn't stop at member state borders", said lead MEP [Julie Girling](#) (ECR, UK). "I am very pleased to have struck an agreement during the Dutch presidency to reduce health impacts by about 50% by 2030. Ensuring member states are on track to reach their targets is key and I am confident this first reading agreement will contribute to better air quality for citizens across the EU."

The agreement was endorsed by the committee on Tuesday, by 43 votes to 14, with 3 abstentions.

Emission reduction targets

In an annex, the proposal sets out the national emission reduction commitments for the main pollutants: sulphur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOC), ammonia (NH₃), and fine particulates (less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter).

Annex II aims for emission reductions resulting in a 49.6% health improvement, a compromise between Parliament's starting position of 52% and the Council's 48%.

2025 target and national trajectories

Parliament argued that having binding targets for 2025 would be important to ensure that member states were on track to meet their 2030 targets. The final compromise says that member states may follow non-linear reduction trajectories, if this is economically or technically more efficient, provided that from 2025 these converge progressively towards the linear trajectory and that they do not affect any reduction commitment for 2030.

In addition, member states would have to explain the reasons for any deviation from the linear trajectory as well as the measures designed to bring them back into line with it.

Car emissions

As advocated by MEPs, the agreement includes wording reiterating the EU commitment to identifying and responding to source control legislation that is failing to work, as demonstrated by the discrepancy between real world emissions and NOx test emissions from EURO 6 diesel cars.

Methane

Member states insisted that methane be excluded from the scope of the directive. However, the Commission confirmed that it could trigger a review on this point.

Next steps

The agreement will be put to a vote by the full House in November.

Note to editors

In 2010 air pollution caused over 400,000 premature deaths in the EU and over 62% of EU territory exposed to eutrophication, including 71% of Natura 2000 ecosystems. Its total external costs are in the range of €330-940bn per year, including direct economic damage of €15bn from lost workdays, €4bn healthcare costs, €3bn crop yield loss and €1bn damage to buildings (European Commission figures).

Non-compliance with existing air quality standards and the EU's new international obligations under the Gothenburg Protocol prevent better protection of EU citizens and their environment. Areas not in compliance with PM10 and NO2 standards amount to 32% and 24% of EU territory respectively, and 40m citizens are still exposed to PM10 levels above EU limit values.

Further information

[Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety](#)

[Julie Girling \(ECR, UK\)](#)

[Meeting documents](#)


[EP research: National emissions ceilings directive](#)


[EC memo](#)

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