

## Towards cleaner air for Europe

During its September session, Parliament will vote on the report adopted by its Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) on a proposal to revise EU air quality legislation. The report as voted would form Parliament's position for negotiations with the Council, which has still to agree on its general approach.

### Background

Air pollution is the [single largest environmental health risk](#) in the EU, causing chronic disease and premature mortality. Particulate matter (PM) and specifically fine particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 µm or less (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and ground-level ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) are the most harmful air pollutants to human health in Europe. While [significant improvements](#) in air quality have been achieved over the past four decades, [most EU city dwellers](#) remain exposed to health-damaging air pollution levels. The European Environment Agency estimates that in the EU-27, exposure to concentrations of PM<sub>2.5</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub> above World Health Organization (WHO)-recommended levels caused 238 000 and 49 000 premature deaths, respectively, in 2020. Under its European Green Deal, the European Commission proposed a revision of the [Ambient Air Quality Directives](#) in October 2022. These directives set air quality standards for key pollutants, while defining common methods to monitor, assess and inform the public on air quality.

### European Commission proposal

The [proposal](#), merging the two existing directives, would set EU air quality standards for 2030 that are more closely aligned with the WHO's guidelines, as [updated in 2021](#). It also includes a mechanism for the regular review of the standards, based on the latest scientific information. To achieve them on time, Member States would have to establish air quality plans ahead of 2030. Provisions on air quality monitoring and assessment would be updated. The proposal would establish a right for people to be compensated where damage to their health has occurred as a result of a violation of EU air quality rules.

### European Parliament position

The [report](#) adopted by the ENVI committee on 27 June sets stricter 2030 limit and target values for several pollutants, including PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, sulphur dioxide and O<sub>3</sub>. It clarifies that future reviews would need to ensure full and continuous alignment with the most up-to-date WHO guidelines. It proposes to make a distinction between the air quality plans required to ensure the attainment of the new air quality standards ('air quality roadmaps') and those required in the event of standard exceedances. The report would require Member States to monitor black carbon, ammonia and mercury in locations where high concentrations of such pollutants are likely to occur (whereas the proposal envisages such monitoring for ultrafine particles alone) and increase the number of related sampling points. There would also be an increase in the number of monitoring supersites at urban background locations. Air quality indices would have to be comparable across all Member States and accompanied by detailed information on the associated health risks for each pollutant. The Commission would adopt delegated acts to specify how the index should be calculated and presented. Rules on compensation would be specified. Member States would have to ensure that financing measures for improving air quality are prioritised in the use of revenues from penalties.

First-reading report: [2022/0347\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: ENVI; Rapporteur: Javi López (S&D, Spain). For further information see our 'EU Legislation in progress' [briefing](#).



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