

**Question for written answer E-014016/2013
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Kartika Tamara Liotard (GUE/NGL)

Subject: Totally inadequate protection for public health and the environment from current particulate standards

New research conducted by Utrecht University in the Netherlands highlights that current European particulate standards, especially those for fine particles (PM2.5), provide totally inadequate protection for public health.

1. Has the Commission noted the Utrecht study entitled 'Effects of long-term exposure to air pollution on natural-cause mortality: an analysis of 22 European cohorts within the multicentre ESCAPE project'?
2. The Utrecht study is not the first to highlight that current standards are failing to prevent people getting ill and dying prematurely. The World Health Organisation has also already indicated that particulate standards in Europe are far too lax and should be lowered from 25 to 10 micrograms per cubic metre (m³). Overly lax standards and the resulting unclean air result not only in a lower quality of life, but also in higher health-care costs. Does the Commission adapt its policy if new studies indicate that air quality in Europe is inadequately guaranteed, or does it think that the current standards are the most feasible?
3. The Utrecht study highlights that significantly more people die in areas where the maximum legally permissible PM2.5 concentration is just met compared with cleaner areas. The EU's air quality strategy strives 'to achieve levels of air quality that do not result in unacceptable impacts on and risks to human health and the environment'. Does the Commission think it is acceptable that 7 % more people die at a (legal) concentration of 25 microgram/m³ than at a lower concentration of 20 microgram/m³?
4. Is the Commission going to take specific action on small fine particles (PM2.5), given the increasingly frequent indications that they mainly cause health problems?
5. 2013 was declared 'The European Year of Air'. The Commission announced that it would launch 'a package of measures' during this year which needed to deliver cleaner air. What does this package entail and when is it being presented?
6. Is the Commission prepared to answer questions 1 to 4 separately?