

Air pollution: Environment Committee MEPs push for tougher rules

- Stricter 2030 limits for several pollutants compared to Commission proposal
- Air quality indices across Europe to be harmonised
- EU countries must prepare air quality roadmaps
- Around 300.000 premature deaths per year in the EU due to air pollution

Parliament's Environment Committee today adopted its position to improve air quality in the EU to create a cleaner and healthier environment.

The report, adopted with 46 votes in favour, 41 against and 1 abstention, sets stricter 2030 limit and target values for several pollutants including particulate matter (PM2.5, PM10), NO2 (nitrogen dioxide), SO2 (sulphur dioxide) and O3 (ozone) to ensure that air quality in the EU is not harmful to human health, natural ecosystems and biodiversity. MEPs also say that upcoming reviews of this directive shall ensure full and continuous alignment with the most recent [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Air Quality Guidelines](#).

More air quality sampling points

The Environment Committee underlines the need to increase the number of air quality sampling points. In locations where high ultrafine particles (UFP), black carbon, mercury and ammonia (NH3) concentrations are likely to occur there should be one sampling point per one million inhabitants, higher than the Commission's originally proposed one per five million and then only for UFP. In urban areas, there should be at least one monitoring supersite representative of the exposure of the general urban population per two million inhabitants compared to the one per 10 million proposed by the Commission.

Better information to citizens

MEPs want to harmonise currently-fragmented and unintuitive air quality indices covering sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) and ozone across the EU.

Indices must be clear, publically available and with hourly updates so citizens can protect themselves during high levels of air pollution (and before alert thresholds are reached). They shall be accompanied by information about symptoms associated with air pollution peaks and the associated health risks for each pollutant, including information tailored to vulnerable groups.

Air quality plans and roadmaps

MEPs propose that in addition to air quality plans, which are required when EU countries exceed limits, all member states would also have to create air quality roadmaps that set out short- and long-term measures in order to comply with the new limit values.

Quote

After the vote, rapporteur [Javi López](#) (S&D, ES) said: “Addressing air pollution in Europe demands immediate action. This slow-motion pandemic takes a devastating toll in our society, leading to premature deaths and a multitude of cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases. We must follow science and align our air quality standards with WHO guidelines and re-inforce some of the provisions in this directive. We need to be ambitious to safeguard the well-being of our citizens and create a cleaner, healthier environment.”

Next steps

Parliament is scheduled to adopt its mandate during the 10-13 July 2023 plenary session. Once Council has adopted its position, negotiations on the final shape of the law can start.

Background

Air pollution continues to be the number one environmental cause of early death in the EU with around 300.000 premature deaths per year with the most harmful being particulate matter, NO₂ and ozone (O₃), [according to the EEA](#). In October 2022, the Commission proposed a [revision of the EU air quality rules](#) with more ambitious targets for 2030 to achieve the zero pollution objective by 2050 in line with [the Zero Pollution Action Plan](#).

Further information

[Meeting documents, including amendments](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[How clean is the air in my city? \(European Environmental Agency\)](#)

[Legislative train](#)

[EP Think Tank: Revision of EU air quality legislation: Setting a zero pollution objective for air](#)

[EP Think Tank: EU policy on air quality: Implementation of selected EU legislation](#)

[EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, videos and audio material](#)

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