

Air quality: Council adopts conclusions



Environment ministers want air quality objectives to be part of the European Green Deal

The Council today adopted conclusions on air quality which give political guidance for further work on **combatting air pollution**. The EU's existing clean air policy, according to findings of the fitness check of ambient air quality directives, has significantly contributed to improving air quality, but more needs to be done to reduce the negative impact of air pollution on health and the environment.

Although the number of people exposed to air pollution has decreased markedly since 2008, air pollution remains the most significant environmental cause of health problems in the EU. It is estimated to cause more than **400.000 premature deaths each year**, with people in urban areas particularly exposed, and to have harmful effects on ecosystems.

The Council considers that established air quality standards, in particular limit values, have been effective and remain essential to **protect the health of citizens**. However, there is room for improvements to the legislative framework to ensure good air quality across the EU. It welcomes the aim of the Commission, as set out in its Communication on the **European Green Deal**, to further tackle pollution through **preventive and remedial actions**, including by revising air quality standards.

It stresses the need for coherence between clean air policy and other relevant policy areas. This means that air quality objectives should be fully reflected in EU emission source legislation and in the design of new initiatives under the European Green Deal, including smart mobility, smart sector integration, renewable energy, renovation of buildings, residential heating, agriculture and industry.

The Council also welcomes the Commission's intention to take further action towards **zero-emission mobility** and to propose **more stringent emissions standards for petrol and diesel vehicles**, taking into account also pollutants that are not yet regulated, as well as to reduce emission from **maritime transport** and to improve air quality in **ports** and near **airports**.

The Council underlines the importance of prioritisation and take-up of available **funding** for air quality improvements, suggesting to use joint benefits of climate goals and air quality as leverage for **private investments**.

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