

EU met air pollution limits for four key pollutants, including ammonia, in 2018

The news for 2018 is more positive than previous years, according to the yearly EEA briefing '[National Emission reduction Commitments Directive reporting status 2020](#)'. The EU as a whole (28 Member States, including then member the United Kingdom) met the 2010 emission ceilings of the four main air pollutants; nitrogen oxides (NO_x), non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs), sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and ammonia (NH₃).

While total EU emissions of ammonia emissions plateaued, five Member States (Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Ireland and Spain) exceeded their 2010 national emission ceilings for ammonia and one (Czechia) also exceeded its ceiling for NMVOCs. Ammonia emissions lead to increased acid depositions and excessive levels of nutrients in soil, rivers or lakes, damaging aquatic ecosystems as well as forests, crops and other vegetation. NMVOCs are emitted into the atmosphere from a large number of sources, including combustion activities, solvent use and industrial production. These compounds contribute to ground level ozone, with certain NMVOCs posing risks to human health.

Since 2016, all Member States have been in compliance with their national emission ceilings for nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxide.

The EEA briefing also assesses the reduction against 2018 emission levels required for Member States to meet their individual reduction commitments set under the EU's National Emissions reduction Commitments (NEC) Directive for 2020 and 2030.

The majority of Member States must make additional efforts to reduce emission levels to meet their 2020 reduction commitments and in particular, ammonia emissions which remain a problem. The slowdown in economic activity across Europe in 2020 associated with the COVID-19 lockdowns is expected to lower emissions of several pollutants and may result in more countries meeting their 2020 commitments. However, without additional efforts, such COVID-19 related reductions might be reversed as the economy starts to recover.

All EU Member States will need to reduce their NO_x emissions on 2018 levels to achieve the 2030 reduction commitments. Moreover, half of the Member States will need to reduce fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) emissions by more than 30 % to meet future commitments. Moreover, ammonia (NH₃) will still remain a challenge with 25 Member States required to further lower their emissions.

Efforts required by Member States to reduce their emission levels was confirmed by [the NEC Implementation report recently published by the European Commission](#) where the risk of not compliance for many Member States (based on their National Air Pollution Control Programmes and their projections) was

assessed.

Background

The [briefing](#) presents progress made by the EU and its Member States in meeting emissions ceilings applicable since 2010 and set out in the NEC Directive (2016/2284/EU). The EU legislation sets emission reduction commitments for four key air pollutants from 2010 onward, including NO_x, NMVOCs, SO₂, and NH₃, and for PM_{2.5} from 2020 onwards. The analysis is based on the latest air pollutant emission inventory data for the period 2010-2018, as reported by EU Member States in February. The briefing also provides an assessment regarding the percentage reductions on 2018 emission levels needed for the Member States and the United Kingdom to reach their emission reduction commitments for 2020 and 2030.