

# Ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe

2005/0183(COD) - 21/05/2008 - Final act

**PURPOSE:** to streamline existing EU legislation on ambient air quality by merging five separate legal instruments into a single Directive and to introduce new provisions on PM<sub>2.5</sub>.

**LEGISLATIVE ACT:** Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe.

**CONTENT:** the Council adopted a directive aimed at improving ambient air quality across Europe, approving all amendments voted by the European Parliament in second reading.

The directive is part of the EU's strategy on air pollution which is aimed at reducing the number of premature deaths from air pollution-related diseases by 40% by 2020 from the 2000 level, as well as reducing damage to forests and ecosystems from airborne pollutants.

The directive stresses the importance of combating emissions of pollutants at source and identifying and implementing emission reduction measures at local, national and Community level.

More specifically, the directive lays down measures aimed at:

- establishing objectives for ambient air quality designed to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and on the environment;
- assessing the ambient air quality in the EU on the basis of common methods and criteria;
- obtaining information on ambient air quality in order to monitor long-term trends and improvements, and ensuring that such information is made available to the public;
- maintaining air quality where it is good, and improving it in other cases;
- promoting increased cooperation between EU countries in reducing air pollution.

The new measures have been designed to combat emissions of harmful air pollutants, taking into account latest health and scientific developments and experience gained, as well as relevant World Health Organisation standards, guidelines and programmes.

While covering all major air pollutants, the directive pays special attention to particulates and ground-level ozone pollution because of their danger for human health. The new provisions seek to achieve a general reduction of concentrations of fine particulates, known as PM<sub>2.5</sub>, in the urban environment in order to ensure that large sections of the population benefit from improved air quality.

The new directive is also intended to provide greater clarity, simplicity and efficiency by replacing five existing legal instruments:

- the directive on ambient air quality assessment and management (96/62/EC);
- the directive on limit values for sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter and lead (1999/30/EC);
- the directive on limit values for benzene and carbon monoxide (2000/69/EC);
- the directive on ozone (2002/3/EC);
- the decision on exchange of information from stations measuring ambient air pollution (97/101/EC).

As regards information and reporting, Member States shall make available to the public **annual reports for all pollutants** covered by this Directive. Those reports shall summarise the levels exceeding limit

values, target values, long-term objectives, information thresholds and alert thresholds, for the relevant averaging periods

In 2013 the Commission shall review the provisions related to PM<sub>2.5</sub> and, as appropriate, other pollutants, and shall present a proposal to the European Parliament and the Council.

As regards PM<sub>2.5</sub>, the review shall be undertaken with a view to establishing a legally binding national exposure reduction obligation in order to replace the national exposure reduction target and to review the exposure concentration obligation, taking into account, *inter alia*, the following elements: i) latest scientific information from WHO and other relevant organisations; ii) air quality situations and reduction potentials in the Member States; iii) the revision of Directive 2001/81/EC; iv) progress made in implementing Community reduction measures for air pollutants.

The Commission shall take into account the feasibility of adopting a more ambitious limit value for PM<sub>2.5</sub>, shall review the indicative limit value of the second stage for PM<sub>2.5</sub> and consider confirming or altering that value.

As part of the review, the Commission shall also prepare a report on the experience and on the necessity of monitoring of PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>, taking into account technical progress in automatic measuring techniques. If appropriate, new reference methods for the measurement of PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> shall be proposed.

TRANSPOSITION: before 11/06/2010.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 11/06/2008.