

Ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe.

Recast

2022/0347(COD) - 05/07/2023 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the report by Javi LÓPEZ (S&D, ES) on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe (recast).

The committee responsible recommended that the European Parliament's position adopted at first reading in the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the proposal as follows:

Objectives

The report calls for full alignment of EU limit values with the **World Health Organization** (WHO) 2021 air quality guidelines by 2030.

The Directive will set limit values, target values, average exposure reduction obligations, average exposure concentration targets and critical levels, which must be achieved as soon as possible and by 2030 at the latest, then reviewed regularly thereafter. It will also set long-term objectives, information thresholds and alert thresholds, which are part of air quality standards.

The Directive should define: (i) ambient air quality monitoring measures, long-term trends and the effects of Union and national measures, as well as measures established in cooperation with **third countries**, on ambient air quality; (ii) measures to ensure that information on ambient air quality is harmonised throughout the Union and made available to the public; (iii) measures to promote greater cooperation between Member States, regional and local authorities, at national and cross-border level, and with third countries bordering the Union.

Definitions

Members introduced the definition of 'air quality standards' as well as the definition of '**air pollution hotspots**' including ports or airports.

'Limit value' is defined as a level which is established on the basis of scientific knowledge, with the aim of avoiding, preventing or reducing harmful effects on human health and/or the environment, and which is to be attained within a given period and not to be exceeded once attained.

Members consider it necessary to **clearly distinguish** between plans that must be adopted before the deadline for compliance and those that must be adopted after, and this is why a definition of the 'air quality roadmap' is proposed.

Assessment of Ambient Air Quality

With regard to the assessment of ambient air quality for pollutants, it is specified that Member States should monitor the levels of **ultrafine particulate matter, black carbon, ammonia and mercury**.

Sampling points

The location of sampling points should be representative of the exposure of at-risk populations and the exposure of one or more sensitive populations and vulnerable groups.

Monitoring supersites

Each Member State should establish at least one monitoring supersite per **2 million inhabitants** (instead of 10 million) at an urban background location. Member States that have fewer than 2 million inhabitants shall establish at least one monitoring supersite at an urban background location.

Measurements at all monitoring supersites at urban background locations and rural background locations should include fixed measurements of particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), sulphur dioxide (SO₂), carbon monoxide (CO), ozone (O₃), black carbon (BC), ammonia (NH₃) and ultrafine particles (UFP).

Requirements when levels are below limit values, ozone target and average exposure concentration objectives

Members suggested defining a smaller geographical area for the calculation of the average exposure indicator (AEI) and the obligation to reduce the average exposure. They propose this calculation at **NUTS 2** rather than NUTS 1.

Member States should endeavour to achieve and maintain the best ambient air quality and a high level of protection of the environment and human health, in accordance with the most recent WHO air quality guidelines and reviews published by the WHO Regional Office for Europe and below the assessment thresholds set out in Annex II, paying particular attention to the protection of sensitive populations and vulnerable groups.

Exceeding alert or information thresholds

Where any alert threshold laid down in Section 4, Point A, of Annex I is exceeded, Member States should implement without undue delay the emergency measures indicated in the short-term action plans.

Where any alert threshold is exceeded, Member States should take the necessary steps to inform the public within a few hours at the latest, in a **coherent and easily understandable manner**, providing detailed information about the severity of the exceedance and the associated health impacts, as well as suggestions for the protection of the population, with a **special focus on sensitive population and vulnerable groups**.

Air quality roadmap

Where from three months after the date of entry into force of this Directive, in a zone or NUTS 2 territorial unit, the levels of any pollutant recorded for the preceding calendar year are above any limit or target value to be attained by 1 January 2030, Member State concerned should establish an air quality roadmap for that pollutant as soon as possible and no later than 2 years after the calendar year during which the exceedance of the pollutant was recorded in order to attain the respective limit values or ozone target value by the expiration of the attainment deadline.

Air quality plans

Member States should ensure that before the time period for receiving comments from the public starts, the draft air quality plan or draft air quality roadmap containing the minimum information required under

Points A and B of Annex VIII is **made available to the public on the internet, free of charge and without restricting access to registered users**, and, where appropriate, through other non-digital communication channels.

To inform citizens about poor air quality and its effects, the competent authorities should require the **permanent display of easily understandable information** on the symptoms associated with air pollution peaks and on behaviour to reduce exposure to air pollution in the vicinity of sensitive population communities and vulnerable groups.

Public information

Member States should establish an **air quality index** covering sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) and ozone, based on an EU-wide framework containing data that will ensure harmonised information across the EU and make it available in a coherent and easily understandable manner through a public source providing an **hourly update**. The air quality index must be comparable in all Member States, follow the latest WHO recommendations and be based on the European-wide air quality indices provided by the European Environment Agency. The air quality index should be accompanied by information on the health risks associated with each pollutant, including information tailored to sensitive populations and vulnerable groups.