

Ambient air quality: limit values for sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter and lead

1997/0266(SYN) - 24/09/1998 - Council position

The Council's common position has taken over in full or in part 21 amendments adopted by the European Parliament at first reading, of which three were originally rejected by the Commission. The latter amendments regard the deletion of the public information indicators, as well as the provisions for time-limited derogations in respect of lead in certain areas to take account of specific circumstances. The main amendments included by the Council deal with the following points: - preamble: additional 'whereas' clauses were inserted to stress that those of the Directive are minimum requirements. It is also specified that adaptations via the Committee's procedure cannot have the effect of weakening the limit values or alert threshold; - special circumstances: in special, non-controllable, circumstances (e.g. natural events or specific climatic/geographic conditions) which could lead to limit values being exceeded, Member States would be under the obligation to intervene only in respect of exceedances not due to those special circumstances, provided that they make available to the Commission the necessary justification; - information to the public: the Council has made clearer and more consistent the provisions to inform the public; the obligation to send to the Commission the list of organisations notified has been cancelled; - review: the Council has strengthened the review clause by indicating the main points which should be covered (limit values for all types of particulates and for nitrogen dioxide). The review should take into account the latest scientific research; - alert threshold for sulphur dioxide (Annex I): the Council has agreed a 500 g/m³ (the Commission proposed 350 g/m³); - possible exceedances of the hourly limit value for NO₂ (Annex II): the Council has raised the number of possible exceedances to 18 per year, given in particular the difficulties to meet the limit values associated with specific climatic conditions; - limit values for particulate matter (Annex III): the common position provides as follows: . to render less severe the limit values for PM₁₀ to be met by 2005 (35 instead of 25 exceedances for the daily value; 40 g/m³ instead of 30 for the annual limit value); . to set only indicative limit values for PM₁₀ as regards the second stage to be implemented by 2010; - not to include at this stage provisions relating to PM_{2.5} on the understanding that the review scheduled for 2003 would specifically address these points; - reference methods (Annex IX): in the absence of internationally agreed standards, the Council agreed on a reference method to be used for sampling and measurement of PM₁₀, and on a provisional reference method for PM_{2.5}, on the understanding that the Commission will carry out intercomparison exercises in order to provide information for a review of those two methods; - date of implementation: the Council agreed on a period of two years after entry into force.