

Ambient air quality: common strategy for assessment and management

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The Commission has presented a report on the state of implementation of the ambient air quality Directives 80/779/EEC, 82/884/EEC and 85/203/EEC in the period 1997-1999. By April 2002 all 15 Member States had sent a report to the Commission on exceedances of limit values under the "old" air quality directives in the period 1997-1999. Not all reports received were fully consistent with the formal requirements of the directives. Four Member States reported exceedances of 80/779/EEC limit values, most of which concerned suspended particulates. Five Member States reported exceedance of the NO₂ limit value in 1997, three Member States in 1998 and four in 1999. None of the Member States reported exceedance of the limit value for lead. The importance of reporting under the old air quality directives has diminished considerably in recent years. This is the result of major improvement to EU legislation and reporting infrastructure on air quality, which is replacing the framework defined by the old directives. The implementation problems, which have already been described in a previous report, will be more effectively addressed under the new air quality directives. However, until the years in which the new air quality thresholds for the protection of human health have to be met, 2005 and 2010 respectively, the old directives will continue to set the legal limit values for concentrations in the air at EU level. Annual limit values for SO₂ for the protection of ecosystems and for NO_x for the protection of vegetation came in force already in 2001.