

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

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The committee adopted unopposed with two abstentions a report on a Commission proposal for a Council Directive on limit values for sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter and lead in ambient air. The rapporteur is Mrs Anita POLLACK (PES, UK). This is the first daughter directive following the adoption of the Air Quality Framework Directive (Council Directive 96/62/EC). The legal base consists of Articles 130r (Environment), 129 (public health) and 3(o) (health protection). The proposed directive includes proposals to establish limit values, alert thresholds, margins of tolerance and target dates (for the attainment of the limit values) for the four pollutants in question. It also establishes uniform measuring criteria. Member States must transpose it by the end of 1999. Amendments adopted included providing the public and interested organizations with clear information. Information on ambient concentrations of sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen and particulate matter must be updated hourly and, in the case of lead, every three months. Alert thresholds are introduced for nitrogen oxide and particulates. The committee also toughened some of the requirements for sulphur dioxide. Sampling points should be sited to include data on smaller islands. Exceptionally, Member States may designate areas within which the limits for lead cannot be met by 1 January 2005 owing to concentrations of lead resulting from industrial processes. Those limits must be met, however, by 1 January 2010. Another amendment calls for research. The Commission is required to review the directive by September 2003.