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

1997/0266(SYN) - 08/10/1997 - Legislative proposal

OBJECTIVE: to strengthen the limit values for atmospheric pollutants - sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter and lead - with a view to improving air quality. CONTENT: the proposal for a directive is targeted at sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter and lead in ambient air. The proposed limit values, along with a timetable and cost/benefit analysis, are based on the 1996 WHO's guidelines on air quality. This text will be the first daughter directive of the Air Quality Framework Directive (Directive 96/62/EC). The key elements are: 1) Sulphur anhydride (SO2): the proposal establishes two limit values for health between now and 1 January 2005 and a limit value for ecosystems to be applied two years after the entry into force of the directive. It also provides for an alert threshold for sulphur anhydride. The public is to be informed if this threshold is exceeded. 2) Nitrogen oxides: the proposal lays down: - limit values for nitrogen dioxide (NO2), aimed at protecting human health: they must be met by 1 January 2010 at the latest; - limit values for combined nitrogen dioxide and nitric acid (NO) in order to protect ecosystems: they must be met within two years of the directive entering into force. 3) Particulate matter: limit values are established for 2005 and 2010. They require particulate matter to be measured as PM10 (particulate matter with a diameter of less than 10 microns). The Commission will submit a report to the Council and the European Parliament on 21 December 2003 at the latest on the most recent progress achieved in terms of identifying particulate matter and its effects. This report will possibly be accompanied by proposals to change the limit values. 4) Lead: the only limit value proposed for 2005 is above the current levels in the Union. The Commission will submit a report by 31 December 2003 at the latest on the viability of establishing deposit limit values for lead, in addition to or instead of the limit values for lead in air surrounding industrial installations. The proposal also stipulates that the Member States must ensure that the updated information on the levels of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter and lead can be easily accessed by the public.