Air pollution: ozone in ambient air, emission ceilings

1999/0068(COD) - 12/02/2002 - Final act

AIM: To guarantee effective protection against the harmful effects on human health of exposure to ozone. COMMUNITY MEASURE: European Parliament and Council Directive 2002/3/EC on ozone in ambient air. CONTENT: Together with the directives on national emission ceilings for certain atmospheric pollutants and on the limitation of emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants into the air from large combustion plants, both of which were adopted on 27 September 2001, this directive completes a package of measures designed to improve air quality in accordance with the aims of framework directive 96/62 /EC. The mechanism established by Directive 2002/3/EC relates to concentrations of ozone in ambient air and the provision of adequate public information on these concentrations. It establishes an information threshold, an alert threshold (higher than the information threshold), target values and long-term aims with a view to preventing or reducing the harmful effects of ozone on human health and the environment. When the mean ozone concentration rises above the information threshold of 180 grams per cubic metre (g /m3), measured over the course of one hour, which means that it could pose a risk to the health of particularly vulnerable sections of the population, the Member States will have to provide the public with updated information on current ozone concentrations. When the alert threshold, i.e. a mean concentration of 240 g/m3 over a one-hour period (this threshold has hitherto been set at 360 g/m3), is exceeded or is liable to be exceeded, the Member States must advise the public of the situation and, where appropriate, take short-term measures to control and, if necessary, reduce or suspend certain activities that produce emissions. To this end, the Member States are to draw up action plans indicating the specific measures to be taken in the short term for particularly sensitive areas. By 2010, the Member States must achieve the target values laid down in the directive for concentrations of ozone in ambient air, save where the values are not achievable through proportionate measures. The ultimate goal is to stop exceeding these values so as to avoid harmful effects on human health and the environment in the long term. The target value for the protection of human health is 120 g/m3 (this has yet to be introduced as a prescribed target), which must not be exceeded on more than 25 days in any year. The target value for the protection of vegetation has been fixed at 18 000 g/m3. The Directive also provides for long-term objectives, below which, according to current scientific knowledge, direct adverse effects on human health and the environment are unlikely. These objectives are 120 g/m3 for the protection of human health and 6 000 g/m3 for vegetation. The Member States will have to measure ozone concentrations regularly and communicate the results of these measurements to the Commission. In order to take these measurements, each Member State is required to designate sampling points distributed throughout its territory. ENTRY INTO FORCE: 9 March 2002. IMPLEMENTATION: 9 September 2003.