

Ambient air quality: common strategy for assessment and management

1994/0106(SYN) - 27/09/1996 - Final act

OBJECTIVE: This Directive, which was provided for in the fifth Community environmental action programme, sets out the basic principles of a common strategy for establishing ambient air quality objectives with a view to reducing or preventing harmful effects on the environment and health.

COMMUNITY MEASURE: Council Directive 96/62/EC on ambient air quality assessment and management.

SUBSTANCE: The Directive's general aim is to define basic principles with a view to: - defining and establishing objectives for ambient air quality in the Community designed to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole; - assessing the ambient air quality in Member States on the basis of common methods and criteria; - obtaining adequate information on ambient air quality and ensuring that it is made available to the public, inter alia by means of alert thresholds; - maintaining ambient air quality where it is good, and improving it in other cases. The Directive lays down a timetable for submission by the Commission of proposals for the setting of limit values and alert thresholds in respect of ambient air quality. The Commission must submit proposals: - no later than 31 December 1996 in respect of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, fine particulate matter such as soot, suspended particulate matter and lead; - no later than 31 December 1997 in respect of benzene and poly-aromatic hydrocarbons; - as soon as possible and no later than 31 December 1999 in respect of carbon monoxide, cadmium, arsenic, nickel and mercury. The proposals regarding ozone must be made before 1 March 1998, pursuant to Directive 92/72/EEC, and should take account of the specific formation mechanisms of this pollutant; to this end, provision may be made for target and/or limit values. The text contains provisions regarding the assessment of ambient air quality and stipulates that such assessments must be made throughout the territory of the Member States once limit values and alert thresholds have been set. The Member States are required to draw up action plans indicating the measures to be taken in the short term where there is a risk of the limit values being exceeded, in order to reduce that risk and to limit the duration of such an occurrence. Such plans may, depending on the individual circumstances, provide for measures to control and, where necessary, suspend activities, including motor vehicle traffic, which contribute to the limit values being exceeded. The Member States must also take measures in the zones in which the levels of one or more pollutants are higher than the limit value and, in zones and agglomerations in which pollutant levels are below the limit values, they must maintain those levels below the limit values and endeavour to preserve the best ambient air quality compatible with sustainable development. **ENTRY INTO FORCE:** 21/11/1996 **DEADLINE FOR TRANSPOSITION:** 21/05/1998