

Ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe

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The Council held a policy debate on a thematic strategy on air pollution as well as the proposal for a directive on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe, both proposed by the Commission.

The debate covered, in particular, the following issues:

- the objectives up to 2020 reflected in the thematic strategy;
- the flexibility provided for in the proposed Directive for implementation by Member States with the aim of improving public health in a cost-effective manner (for example through the regulation of fine particles).

The Council's debate is intended to provide guidance for further work on air quality.

At the end of the debate, the President summarized as follows:

- most of the delegations think that the long term aims of the strategy can be considered in advance of legislative measures;
- however, it is necessary to examine the legislation under consideration by the Commission, in detail, using balanced impact assessment;
- the delegations broadly welcome the proposal for a new directive which is a good example of better regulation;
- it will be necessary in further negotiations on the directive to recognise the value of increased flexibility for member states to meet their obligations;
- it will also be important that public health considerations are maintained in the negotiations and that the aim of reducing people's exposure to air pollution, in particular fine particles, is remembered.

The level of ambition chosen for the strategy has been estimated to deliver at least EUR 42 billion per annum in health benefits. Attainment of these targets is estimated to cost approximately EUR 7.1 billion per annum (representing about 0.05% of EU-25 GDP in 2020).