

Ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe

2005/0183(COD) - 21/06/2006

The committee adopted the report by Holger KRAHMER (ALDE, DE) amending the proposed directive on the quality of ambient air under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure. Although a large number of amendments were originally tabled, the main political groups agreed a compromise package at the committee meeting, introducing more flexibility over the time allowed to reach the proposed targets but with more safeguards to ensure that Member States take the measures needed to reduce pollution. The main amendments were as follows:

- whereas the Commission was proposing to keep the annual limit value in force under existing legislation for PM₁₀ (the largest particles) at 40µg/m³, the committee wanted the levels to be reduced to 30µg/m³ on average per year from 2010;
- for PM_{2.5} (fine particles, which do the most damage to human lungs), MEPs believed that it was too soon to set limit values, given the current state of scientific knowledge. Instead they suggested initially setting a target value, which would be less binding - and lower - than that proposed by the Commission (20µg/m³ from 2010 rather than 25µg/m³), then awaiting the revision of the directive scheduled for 2015 in order to set 20µg/m³ as the limit value;
- in order to introduce more flexibility, the committee stipulated that the proposed 20% exposure reduction target for PM_{2.5} should be the average level obtained for the EU and that the exposure reduction target should be differentiated among Member States in relation to their concentration levels;
- under certain conditions an additional five-year extension to the deadline for achieving the values for PM₁₀ or PM_{2.5} should be allowed in particular zones or agglomerations, over and above the five-year extension originally proposed by the Commission;
- even where there are no daily limit values, measurements of pollutants should be carried out daily at the sampling points. MEPs also wanted to ensure a uniform system of locations for sampling points so that results are properly comparable throughout the Member States;
- lastly, MEPs wanted the directive to specify certain measures which should be taken at source to enable Member States to attain air quality limit values within the set time limits, namely: the inclusion of 20 to 50 MW combustion plants in the IPPC directive; EURO VI for heavy vehicles; new standards for domestic heating installations; and new standards for emissions from ships' engines, to be negotiated under the auspices of the IMO.