Ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe

2005/0183(COD) - 26/09/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Holger **Krahmer (ALDE, DE)** by 571 votes in favour, 43 against and 18 abstentions. It made several amendments to the Commission's proposal with regard to limit values for pollutants, and the time allowed for compliance with the directive. It also called for more flexibility in achieving these targets, to allow Member States which have problems meeting the criteria more time to adjust.

The main points were as follows:

- Member States shall ensure that the values for sulphur dioxide, PM1, lead and carbon monoxide in the air do not exceed the limit values stated in the legislation anywhere in their territory.

- Parliament wants to reduce maximum concentration levels of the largest particles (PM10) to 33 µg/m3 on average per year from 2010, as compared to the Commission's proposal to keep the limit at 40µg /m3. This figure applies unless this cannot be achieved because of site-specific dispersion characteristics, adverse meteorological or geographical conditions or significant transboundary contributions. Member States must lay down the exact number of days the limit value can be exceeded, up to a maximum of 55 days (rather than 35), and forthwith communicate to the Commission the text of that provision.

- For fine particles (PM2.5), which do the most damage to human lungs, Parliament stated that, as the available data for PM2,5 are not yet sufficient in order to introduce a limit value, a target value should initially apply until such time as a concentration cap can enter into force.. However, it is lower than that proposed by the Commission (20µg/m3 from 2010 instead of 25µg/m3).

- Parliament also wants greater flexibility over the goal of reducing the population's exposure to this type of pollution by 20% by 2020, by setting differing percentage reductions depending on the recorded concentration levels.

- The resolution called for more flexibility over allowing extensions to the deadline in areas or cities which fail to meet the criteria. Accordingly, where, in a given zone or agglomeration, conformity with the limit values for nitrogen dioxide, benzene,PM10 or the target value for PM2,5 cannot be achieved by the deadlines specified, a Member State may postpone those deadlines by a maximum of four years from the entry into force of the Directive for that particular zone or agglomeration. The Member State must show that all appropriate measures have been taken at national, regional and local level to meet the deadlines referred to above. A plan or a programme must be drawn up for the zone demonstrating what measures will be taken in order to meet the limit or target values by the new deadline.

- Member States may postpone the deadlines for the limit values for PM10and the target value for PM2,5 by an additional period of a maximum of two years for a particular zone or agglomeration, when the plan demonstrates that the limit or target values cannot be met. Again Member State must show that all appropriate measures have been taken at national, regional and local level to meet the deadlines.

- A definition was added for "emissions from natural sources", which will mean any substance present in the air which has not been directly or indirectly created by human activity. In particular, they shall include emissions caused by natural events such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, geothermal activity, unintentional outdoor fires, sea salt or atmospheric resuspension or by atmospheric transport of natural particles from arid regions.

- If the necessary Community measures to reduce emissions at the source, as referred to in the directive, have not entered into force by 1 January 2010, a Member State shall be granted a derogation period for PM 2.5and PM10of two years from 1 January 2010 onwards, if it is taking the necessary steps to reduce air pollution. The total derogation period shall not exceed the periods specified above.

- Parliament added new articles mentioning the measures to be taken by the Member States to reduce atmospheric pollution, notably the inclusion of 20 to 50 megawatt combustion plants in IPPC Directive 96 /61/EC, heavy goods vehicles (Euro VI norms), the installation of domestic heating systems and measures to be co-ordinated at the European level to encourage ship-owners to reduce their pollution.

- The necessity for compliance with the targets for nitrogen dioxide will be extended from 2010 to 2014 without conditions.