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## Air pollution: Deal with Council to improve air quality

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- Stricter 2030 limits for several air pollutants
  - Air quality indices to be comparable across all member states
  - Access to justice and right to compensation for citizens
  - Air pollution leads to around 300 000 premature deaths per year in the EU
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### **The new law aims to reduce air pollution in the EU to achieve a clean and healthy environment for citizens as well as zero air pollution by 2050.**

On Tuesday, negotiators from the Parliament and Council reached a provisional political agreement on new measures to ensure air quality in the EU is not harmful to human health, natural ecosystems and biodiversity with the aim to eliminate air pollution by 2050.

### **Stricter air quality standards and targets**

The new rules set stricter 2030 limits and target values, compared to current rules, for several pollutants including particulate matter (PM2.5, PM10), NO<sub>2</sub> (nitrogen dioxide) and SO<sub>2</sub> (sulphur dioxide). For the two pollutants with the highest documented impact on human health, PM2.5 and NO<sub>2</sub>, the annual limit values are to be more than halved from 25 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> and from 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 20 µg/m<sup>3</sup> respectively. There will also be more air quality sampling points in cities. The air quality standards shall be reviewed by 31 December 2030 and at least every five year thereafter and more often if clear from new scientific findings, such as revised [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Air Quality Guidelines](#).

It will be possible for member states to request that the 2030 deadline to attain the air quality limit values be postponed by up to ten years, if specific conditions are met, including when the

necessary reductions can only be achieved by replacing a considerable part of the existing domestic heating systems causing the pollution exceedances.

### **Better protection of citizens and access to justice**

Co-legislators agreed to make currently-fragmented air quality indices across the EU comparable, clear and publicly available. These indices will also provide information about symptoms associated with air pollution peaks and the associated health risks for each pollutant, including information tailored to vulnerable groups as requested by Parliament.

It was also agreed that affected citizens and environmental NGOs, should be granted access to justice to challenge the implementation of this Directive in member states, and that citizens should be entitled to compensation when their health has been damaged due to the new national rules being violated.

### **Air quality plans and roadmaps**

In addition to air quality plans, required for those EU countries exceeding limits, all member states will have to create air quality roadmaps by 31 December 2028 that set out short- and long-term measures to comply with the new 2030 limit values as proposed by Parliament.

### **Quote**

After the deal was reached, rapporteur [Javi López](#) (S&D, ES) said: “Today’s agreement is a major step in our ongoing efforts to ensure a cleaner and healthier future for all Europeans. Parliament has played a crucial role in revising the outdated EU air quality standards, some of which were 15 to 20 years old, focusing on improved air quality monitoring near major pollution sources, protecting sensitive and vulnerable populations more robustly, and ensuring local authorities have the support they need to enforce the new standards effectively.”

### **Next steps**

The deal still has to be adopted by Parliament and Council, after which the new law will be published in the EU Official Journal and enter into force 20 days later. EU countries will then have two years to apply the new rules.

### **Background**

Air pollution continues to be the number one environmental cause of early death in the EU, with around 300 000 premature deaths per year ([check here to see how clean the air is in European cities](#)). In October 2022, the Commission proposed a [revision of the EU air quality rules](#) with more ambitious targets for 2030 to achieve the zero pollution objective by 2050 in line with [the Zero Pollution Action Plan](#).

## Further information

[Procedure file](#)

[Infoclip: Ambient air quality](#)

[How clean is the air in my city? \(European Environmental Agency\)](#)

[Legislative train](#)

[EP Think Tank: Towards cleaner air for Europe \(06.09.2023\)](#)

[EP Think Tank: Revision of EU air quality legislation: Setting a zero pollution objective for air](#)

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