

EU Parliament backs ambitious toxic emissions caps

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News

The European Parliament has voted in favour of strict rules to combat air pollution.



The European Parliament has backed Commission plans to cap emissions on six pollutants, including methane and ammonia. The proposal is intended to help the EU save both money - up to €40bn by 2030 - and lives, as air pollution is to blame for nearly 400,000 premature deaths each year.

Rapporteur Julie Girling added that, "the report pushes the Commission to ensure that the real driving emissions procedure is agreed as soon as possible. We all agree that nitrogen oxides must be dealt with urgently. The public are demanding action in this area following the recent revelations on the car industry."

She viewed the vote as, "a good result - Parliament is showing some common sense."

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S&D group shadow rapporteur Seb Dance was proud that the European Parliament had, "done the right thing and backed measures that combine comprehensive ambition with the necessary tools to act. We have rightly backed ambitious and binding limits on toxic emissions that will force governments across Europe to act."

"The agriculture sector should play its part, just as the car industry should following the emissions test scandal. Thousands of deaths are attributable to ammonia from farms, and the setting of limits on agricultural emissions is both necessary and fair."

ALDE group shadow rapporteur, Catherine Bearder, noted that, "these ambitious pollution limits will ensure that every sector, from industry to agriculture, plays its part in cleaning up Europe's air."

"The long-term benefits of improving air quality will far outweigh the short-term costs," she added.

However, GUE/NGL group deputy Estefanía Torres Martínez, cautioned, "it's not enough to simply adopt this report. We need to ensure that it is properly enforced. We must call on the European Commission to ensure that it is properly enforced and that it does not act as it did in the Volkswagen case."

We must ensure that responsibility is taken."

It emerged earlier this week that the Commission was aware of Volkswagen's misleading emissions test results as early as 2013.

Greens/EFA group shadow rapporteur Bas Eickhout was of the same opinion, stressing that the new proposal, "must be implemented by EU governments and enforced by the Commission. We would now urge EU governments to proactively engage with the Parliament to agree ambitious revised legislation."

He was also pleased that MEPs had, "faced down the farm lobby and voted not to exempt important agricultural pollutants like methane and ammonia. Research shows that agricultural pollutants are the number one cause of air pollution, even in urban areas, and it crucial this sector is not let off the hook."

Meanwhile, Anna Lisa Boni, Secretary General of EUROCIITIES, the network of major European cities, said, "binding 2025 targets for major pollutants including ammonia is good news for cities, but we would like these to be stricter. Air pollution is the most important environmental health problem in Europe, and while it is concentrated in our cities, many sources are beyond our control. Stricter national limits can go a long way to improving air quality for the three quarters of our population that lives in urban areas."

About the author

Julie Levy-Abegnoli is a journalist for the Parliament Magazine

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