

To: Ursula von der Leyen, President of the Commission, Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President of the Commission for the Green Deal, Virginijus Sinkevičius Commissioner for the Environment, Stella Kyriakides Commissioner for health

Brussels 24.10.2022

Dear President, Executive Vice-President and Commissioners,

We are writing to you concerning the imminent revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives. We are very concerned that you are about to set standards that are by far exceeding the WHO guidelines on health-based recommendations for maximum concentrations of the major air pollutants published in September last year¹.

Air pollution is Europe's largest environmental risk to health, leading to an estimated² 364,200 premature deaths in 2019. It is also the second leading cause of death from non communicable diseases (NCDs) after tobacco smoking, according to WHO. Ninety-seven percent of the urban population in the EU currently lives in areas with poor air quality.

The revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives is a chance to avoid unnecessary deaths and harm to human health in Europe. Had the new WHO air quality guideline for PM_{2.5} of 5 µg/m³ been attained across the EU-27 in 2019, then this would have delivered a reduction in premature deaths of at least 72% compared with 2005 levels. While with the current standards in place, premature death was only reduced by 33%.

We urge you not to miss this crucial chance and to protect Europeans and their health. We urge you to follow the scientific advice of the WHO and to introduce binding EU clean air standards that fully meet WHO air quality recommendations by 2030 at the latest.

Sincerely the undersigned,

Michael Bloss, Greens/EFA
Javier López, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
Martin Hojsík, Renew Europe
Anja Hazekamp, GUE/NGL

¹ World Health Organization. (2021). WHO global air quality guidelines: particulate matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀), ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide. World Health Organization. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/345329>

² European Environmental Agency: Health impacts of air pollution in Europe, 2021, <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/air-quality-in-europe-2021/health-impacts-of-air-pollution>