



PRESS RELEASE

European Environmental Bureau (aisbl)

European Parliament gives air polluters breathing space

(Brussels, 9 October, 2007) - The European Parliament's Environment Committee today adopted a report on air quality which, if approved by Council, would postpone the existing deadlines by which Member States must meet the current air quality standards which protect our health.

EEB, Europe's largest federation of environmental citizens' organisations, has expressed its concern at Parliament's latest move. "We're dismayed that air polluters have been given five extra years, until 2013, to clean up their act", said Dragomira Raeva, EEB's Air Policy Officer. "Environment ministers have previously said they only needed three more years to achieve the approved pollution cuts. The Environment Committee's decision sends the wrong signal to national authorities, which need urgently to improve air quality in our cities."

Parliament today also endorsed changes which would in practice allow a wide range of sites to be let off applying air quality standards. For example, Parliament has recommended that air quality standards need not be observed in places where there is no permanent population, in workplaces, and in areas with no air quality monitors.

EEB believes another amendment approved by the Environment Committee would also undermine key laws which tackle industrial emissions. As a result, EEB fears pollution at source would not be sufficiently reduced. "We deplore the Environment Committee's failure to close this loophole," said Doreen Fedrigo, EEB's EU Policy Unit Coordinator. "It's unfair and counterproductive to let some big industries off the hook, because cities and regions can't do the job on their own. We all have to help clean up the air."

The Committee also voted to introduce somewhat lower limit values for particulate matter (PM). For fine particles (PM_{2.5}), the limit value has been brought a bit closer to the concentration levels prescribed by the World Health Organization. On PM₁₀, the Committee aligned the stringency of its annual limit value with the stringency of its daily limit.¹ But EEB believes this apparent reinforcement will not result in any real reduction in pollution as the improvements are too weak.

Notes for editors:-

¹ There are two limit values for PM₁₀: one daily limit value (50 µg/m³ daily average, not to be exceeded more than 35 times per year) and an annual limit value (40 µg/m³ annual average)

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