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Better regulation requires strong air quality package

MEPs and cities today called for a robust air quality package. A more ambitious National Emissions Ceilings (NEC) Directive would encourage member states to address many of the major sources of pollution that cities are subjected to but cannot control. The directive sets maximum levels of specific pollutants that are harmful to our health and the environment in each EU member state. This helps lower the overall concentration of pollutants, and supports local efforts to avoid peak pollution occurrences. It also limits the transfer of air pollution between different EU countries.

Speaking at a EUROCITIES debate on the air package, Julie Girling, EP rapporteur on the NEC Directive said:

“An effective air package with a robust NEC Directive will help local and regional authorities clean up the air. Now that the Commission’s proposal is staying on the table, Parliament can push for the solid directive we need.”

A stronger NEC Directive would actually make better regulatory sense. An impact assessment commissioned by the Parliament estimates that implementing the 2030 climate goals agreed by EU leaders in October 2014 would make it €5.5bn cheaper per year to reach the proposed NEC targets.

Stringent targets would also reduce inconsistencies in EU air policy. While many cities work hard to improve local air quality, they often fail to comply with EU standards for local air quality due to sources beyond their control. A strong NEC directive would push member states to address factors such as long distance transport of goods and people as well as power generation, so national efforts can help support local measures for cleaner air.

Lot van Hooijdonk, deputy mayor of Utrecht for transport and mobility, energy and environment, and chair of the EUROCITIES Environment Forum, said:

“It’s high time that member states step up their air quality measures to support local actions. A stronger directive on national emissions ceilings is essential to make it happen, with stricter, binding targets in 2025 already.”

Cities reminded the Commission that better regulation should not stop here: Euro emissions standards for cars, trucks and buses have a crucial role to play for cleaner air.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- EUROCITIES statement on the revision of the NEC Directive: <http://bit.ly/1ihxqUG>
- European Parliament impact assessment on interactions between EU air quality policy & climate and energy policy: <http://bit.ly/1tDii8O>
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