Zero pollution: New rules for healthy air

Every year, as many as 300,000 Europeans die prematurely due to air pollution.

Air pollution is the greatest environmental threat to health and a leading cause of stroke, cancer and diabetes, costing public authorities €231-853 billion per year.

Most Europeans live in cities, where science shows air is too polluted to be healthy.

Dirty air damages crops, buildings, forests and ecosystems, and makes groundwater acidic and overgrown with algae.

Air pollution affects the vulnerable most: children, elderly, ill, socio-economically disadvantaged people.

The Conference on the Future of Europe and recent surveys show Europeans are seriously concerned about air pollution. They want stronger action from the EU, the industry and employers.

How has existing EU legislation improved air quality until now?

- Since 2008, EU clean air policy reduced share of air quality zones with particulate matter (PM) exceedances by 50%.
- Between 2000 and 2020, emissions of the main air pollutants have decreased by between 13% and 84%, depending on the pollutant.
- Today, 70% fewer early deaths are attributable to air pollution, compared to the 1990s.
Why are existing EU rules not enough?

- Scientific evidence of health impacts of dirty air is now stronger, which prompted the World Health Organization to call for stricter limits.

- Better air quality monitoring and modelling is needed to improve air quality management and enforcement of rules.

- Preventive air quality plans would enable authorities to take faster action to improve air quality.

Key measures

- **Stricter thresholds for pollution**, more closely aligned with new limits set by the World Health Organization.

- **Enhancing the right to clean air**, improved access to justice.

- **Current law does not include provisions for citizens to claim compensation for health damage due to air pollution.** The new rules will bring more effective penalties and compensation possibilities for violating air quality rules.

- **Strengthened rules for air quality monitoring to support preventive action** and targeted measures.

- **Requirements to improve air quality modelling, especially if and where air quality is poor.**

- **Better public information.**

The **new standards** will cost less than 0.1% of GDP, at least 7 times lower than benefits to economy and society.