

Consultation strategy	
Title:	Revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives
Background:	<p>The Ambient Air Quality (AAQ) Directives aim to have air pollution reduced to levels which limit harmful effects on human health, paying particular attention to sensitive populations, and the environment as a whole; to improve the monitoring and assessment of air quality; and to provide information to the public.</p> <p>The Directives set common methods and criteria to assess air quality in all Member States in a comparable and reliable manner. Member States have to designate zones and agglomerations throughout their territory; to classify them according to prescribed assessment thresholds; and to provide air quality assessments underpinned by measurement, modelling and/or objective estimation, or a combination of these.</p> <p>The Directives define standards for ambient air quality for key air pollutants to be attained throughout Member States against certain timelines. In case these standards are not met, the Directives require Member States to prepare and implement air quality plans and measures (for a given pollutant). The Directives leave the choice of means to achieve these standards to the Member States, but do explicitly require that exceedance periods are kept as short as possible.</p> <p>Member States are required to regularly report ‘up to date’ air quality measurements, the annually results of air quality assessment, as well as information on the plans and programmes they establish in a harmonized manner – both to the Commission as well as to stakeholders and the general public.</p> <p>In November 2019, the Commission published the results of the Fitness Check of the Ambient Air Quality Directives 2004/107/EC and 2008/50/EC (SWD(2019) 427 final). It concluded that these Directives have been <i>partially effective</i> in improving air quality, but also acknowledges that they have not been <i>fully effective</i>, and not all their objectives have been met to date. It further concluded that the remaining gap to full adherence to air quality standards is too wide in certain cases. The Fitness Check outlined seven lessons learnt:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Air quality remains a major health and environmental concern; (2) Air quality standards are instrumental, and partially effective, in reducing pollution; (3) Current EU standards are less ambitious than scientific advice; (4) Limit values have been more effective than other types of air quality standards; (5) Legal enforcement action by European Commission, and civil society, is an effective tool;¹ (6) There is scope to further harmonise monitoring, information, and air quality plans; (7) Not all reported data is equally useful, e-reporting allows for further efficiency gains. <p>Subsequently, the European Green Deal (COM(2019) 640 final) announced that in the framework of its zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment, the Commission would draw on the lessons learnt from the Fitness Check and would propose to strengthen provisions on monitoring, modelling and air quality plans in order to help local authorities achieve cleaner air, as well as to revise EU air quality standards to align them more closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations.</p> <p>In line with the above mandate, the Commission plans to undertake an impact</p>

¹ Note that the effectiveness of legal enforcement action by civil society is linked to the functioning of access to justice at national level and the dynamism of NGOs.

	assessment to underpin the revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives. The revision is intended to improve ambient air quality by updating the EU air quality standards based on the latest scientific evidence for the protection of human health and the environment and by strengthening the basis for effective action for better air quality, including via better air quality monitoring, modelling and air quality plans.
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Consultation objective and scope	
Goal:	In order to provide input for the Commission's impact assessment for the revision of the AAQ Directives, Member States and stakeholders at large will be consulted to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> confirm the scope of the impact assessment and gather factual information, data and knowledge to underpin the assessment of impacts of different policy options; gather views of stakeholders on the different policy options and scenarios and the feasibility of their implementation.
Scope:	The consultation will focus on gathering stakeholders' responses on the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> extent and feasibility of a closer alignment of EU air quality standards with the latest recommendations of the World Health Organisation (WHO); ways to improve legislative provisions and their coherence, including in relation to penalties, public information and air quality assessments.; ways of strengthening of air quality monitoring, modelling and plans.

Identification of stakeholders	
Stakeholders:	For this initiative, we have identified four broad categories of stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public authorities, including those with responsibility in enforcing the provisions in the Member States, at different governance levels (national, regional, local), other national, regional and local institutions (e.g. Parliaments), EEA countries, environment agencies and other relevant public bodies, international organisations (such as WHO, UNEP, UNECE, OECD); Private economic sector operators and their trade organisation representatives (hereafter "business and trade organisations"), affected by the Directives, etc. Civil society representatives, research community, academia, medical professionals, and patient organisations Citizens
Mapping:	The chart in the Annex maps the stakeholders according to their (presumed) level of influence and level of interest.

Consultation methods and tools	
Methods and tools:	The consultation will aim to ensure that, for each Member State, at least the competent authorities responsible for EU air quality legislation, another sectoral public authority, a relevant NGO and a representative of business and trade organisations are consulted. In selecting the business and trade organisations stakeholders, care will be given to ensure that different economic interests are represented, and ensure a balanced representation of views. The consultation should also aim to cover different territorial levels, and pay special regard to areas that are facing ambient air quality problems.

Based on the objective and scope outlined above, the following complementary activities will form the core of the consultation strategy:

1. An open public consultation allowing the interested public and stakeholders to express their views

The open public consultation is foreseen for the 3rd quarter of 2021. It will comprise two separate sets of questions: one, more general, addressed to the general public, and another one, with more specialised questions, for authorities in the Member States, enforcement bodies, regional and local authorities, business and trade organisations' representatives and civil society organisations, academia, medical professionals, patient organisations, relevant international organisations, etc. The open public consultation will last for a minimum of 12 weeks.

2. Targeted stakeholder consultation, addressed at selected stakeholders in all Member States and at EU level. This will be carried out using interviews, targeted questionnaires and focus groups

For this part of the consultation process, a combination of interviews, targeted questionnaires and Focus Groups will be used to gather views from specific stakeholders on all aspects of the impact assessment. Interviews will consist of one-on-one conversations, or individual written contributions, based on a standard template, allowing in-depth responses and eventual inquiries to complement the answers with additional knowledge and views held by the representative interviewed. Such interviews and targeted questionnaires will be used where extensive understanding of inputs from the specific stakeholder is required. On the other hand, focus groups will be used on topics and areas where a discussion might be beneficial, and to reach related groups of stakeholders in one setting.

Such targeted stakeholder consultation will be relied on in particular for gathering information and views on the strengthening of air quality monitoring, modelling and plans. This will also make use of existing expert networks, such as the Ambient Air Quality Expert Group; the Network of national reference laboratories (AQUILA); the Forum for modelling of air quality in Europe (FAIRMODE) and the technical experts working with implementing provisions for reporting (IPR).

3. Stakeholder meetings in order to assist in identifying and confirming the issues for the impact assessment and to receive final feedback that would assist in its completion

As part of the impact assessment process, two main stakeholder meetings will be organised:

- A first stakeholder meeting prior to, or during the public consultation will assist in identifying and confirming the issues for the impact assessment (possibly as part of EU Green Week 2021).
- A second stakeholder meeting will take place before the finalisation of the impact assessment with the aim to receive feedback that would assist in its completion.

The meetings would gather participants representing all EU Member States and covering national, regional and local governments, environmental and other public bodies, representatives of the business and trade organisations, civil society and other organisations, such as international bodies (WHO), academia and the research community.

In addition, the Commission will explore opportunities to discuss with stakeholders on matters regarding this initiative during related events, such as the EU Clean Air

	Forum 2021 or under the DG SANTE Health Policy Platform.
Accessibility:	<p>The open public consultation will be open to everyone and give the respondents the opportunity to provide their views on the revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives. The open public consultation questions will be written in plain language and be translated into all EU languages. Replies to this online public consultation can be provided in any official EU language.</p> <p>All additional documentation will be provided in English. Written contributions in other EU official languages will be accepted and treated in the same manner as the ones written in English, and this will be clearly indicated on the consultation web page.</p> <p>Targeted questionnaires will be distributed as widely as possible to the interested groups of stakeholders. For the more targeted consultation of stakeholders, via interviews, targeted questionnaires and focus groups, various EU languages will be used as much as possible, depending on the interlocutors and their needs.</p> <p>Individual players will be consulted in parallel to their representative organisations (as organisations do not always fully reflect the views of their individual members).</p> <p>On the consultation web page, a call for interest will be published in advance to allow stakeholders to express their interest in being consulted through the targeted consultation.</p>

Consultation website	
	<p>The open public consultation will be accessible from the Have your say portal, including links to background documents and to specific and relevant websites hosted by the Commission (i.e. DG Environment).</p> <p>At the end of the consultation process, a synopsis report will be published, summarising all the consultation activities performed and the outcome of the consultation. The summary report of the consultation outcome will be available in all EU languages.</p>

Annex – Stakeholder mapping

Consultation strategy – logic and key methods

