Commission starts Clean Air Dialogue with Ireland to promote action for cleaner air for its citizens

On 1 and 2 March 2017 the Commission held its first Clean Air Dialogue with Ireland, to promote actions to improve air quality and contribute to Ireland's implementation of EU clean air legislation. The dialogue focused on the main challenges faced by Ireland, including emissions from agriculture, transport and residential solid fuel combustion – as reflected in the recently started public consultation process to inform development of a National Clean Air Strategy for Ireland.

The productive dialogue is summarised in shared conclusions that will also feed into the consultation process for Ireland's National Clean Air Strategy.

Ireland has made significant progress in reducing air pollution and improving air quality. For 2015 there were no reported exceedances above the EU air quality standards. Emissions of key air pollutants are currently below the relevant national ceilings under the National Emissions Ceiling Directive.

Nevertheless, air pollution still has a significant health impact in Ireland, and projected economic trends could increase emissions and push Ireland closer to prescribed limits. For 2013, the European Environment Agency estimated that up to 1 600 premature deaths were attributable to fine particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide and ozone. In addition, estimates show that air pollution had health-related cost of above EUR 2 billion per year, including the loss of 382 000 workdays per year.

The main conclusions of the dialogue:

1. With the anticipated agricultural growth in Ireland ammonia emissions will need to be closely monitored. The first national air pollution control programme to be finalised in 2019 under the revised NEC Directive, will be an opportunity for Ireland to demonstrate its capability to combine agricultural development with reduction of the ammonia emissions.
2. Traffic related NO\textsubscript{2} emissions are high in Dublin. There is a possible risk of exceedances of the limit value in Dublin in the near future, which will need to be kept under review. The Irish authorities should be prepared to take short and medium-term measures to reduce NO\textsubscript{x} emissions from the current and future road vehicle fleets. Ireland is already considering a broad range of possible measures to promote low carbon transport, sustainable urban development and congestion-reduction objectives that are also relevant for improving air quality.

3. Expanding the ban on smoky coal nationwide will reduce health costs from residential solid fuel combustion in Ireland, but it is important to ensure that coal is replaced by cleaner, more efficient low carbon alternatives. Ireland already has extensive programmes to renovate residential buildings to deliver the interlinked aims of energy efficiency, eradication of energy poverty, cleaner air as well as the promotion of green jobs. A further expansion of these programmes would be relevant to promote Ireland’s transition to cleaner, low carbon alternatives.

**Background**

Recent reports show that despite improvements in air quality, Member States have not succeeded in reducing significantly the high number of premature deaths from air pollution in the EU (more than 450 000 in 2013). The [Environmental Implementation Review](#) also showed that air quality is a challenging policy area for many Member States. Therefore the Commission has started pilot Clean Air Dialogues with some Member States, with the aim of facilitating improved implementation of clean air policies, and sharing knowledge and lessons learned from the experiences of other Member States.

The upcoming **peer-to-peer tool** will allow frontrunners to provide tailored support to other Member States and encourage mutual learning and exchange of best practices through expert missions, study visits and workshops supported by the Commission.

**More information:**

[Conclusions on the Clean Air Dialogue with Ireland](#)

EIR – [Ireland country sheet](#)