

First-line response to the release of Ambient Air Quality Directive proposal by the European Commission on October 26, 2022:

A call for a more ambitious pathway towards clean air

The European Respiratory Society and the International Society of Environmental Epidemiology welcome the proposal for a revised EU Ambient Air Quality Directive (AAQD). In particular, we acknowledge that the proposed new annual limit values of $10 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ and $20 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for NO_2 across the EU by 2030 will provide important benefits to public health. The proposal, however, fails to include a clear path to reducing annual mean concentrations to below $5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ and $10 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for NO_2 , in line with the latest WHO health-based Air Quality Guidelines.

An obligation for a continued improvement in air quality down to, or below, the WHO's air quality guidelines would maximize health benefits to European citizens. Air pollution remains one of the most important causes of disease and death. The burden of disease caused by air pollution remains unacceptably high in Europe. Air pollution causes not only premature deaths but also debilitating diseases. This poses a huge financial burden and strains on the healthcare systems across the EU. Commenting on the proposal Prof Zorana J. Andersen, Chair of the Environment and Health Committee of ERS, said "There is no safe level of air pollution, and every person will benefit from cleaner air. Babies, children, pregnant women, elderly and people with cardiovascular and respiratory diseases are among the most vulnerable."

Hence, we need an ambitious AAQD that drives and supports actions at all levels - EU, national, local - and across all sectors, such as transport, energy, industry, agriculture, and residential heating. The proposal released today includes important steps to achieve cleaner air, but more ambition is needed to maximize health benefits for all. Moreover, a strong AAQD proposal will help mitigate climate change crises and related health effects.

If you would like to read more on ERS and ISEE position on the launch of the WHO 2021 Air Quality Guidelines, please click [here](#).