

10 Principles for Clean Air

1. Citizens are entitled to clean air – just like clean water and safe food.
2. Outdoor air pollution is one of the biggest environmental health threats in Europe today leading to significant reductions of life expectancy and productivity.
3. Fine particles and ozone are the most serious pollutants. There is an urgent need to reduce their concentrations significantly.
4. Roadside pollution poses serious health threats that cannot be adequately addressed by regulating fine particle mass or ozone. Other metrics such as ultrafine particles and black carbon need to be considered in future research and so inform further regulation.
5. Non-tailpipe emissions (from brakes, tyres, road surfaces etc.) pose a health threat for road users and subjects living close to busy roads.
6. Real-world emissions of nitrogen dioxide from modern diesel engines are much higher than anticipated. This may expose many road users, and subjects living on busy roads, to short-term peak concentrations during rush hours and periods of stagnating weather which may impact on health although to what extent requires further research.
7. Global warming will lead to more heat waves during which air pollution concentrations are also elevated and during which hot temperatures and air pollutants act in synergy to produce more serious health effects than expected from heat or pollution alone.
8. Combustion of biomass fuel produces toxic pollutants. This is true for controlled fires – such as in fireplaces, woodstoves, agricultural burning – as well as for uncontrolled wildfires. There is a need to assess the real health impacts of air pollution from these sources in many areas in Europe to inform on the need for better control.
9. Compliance with current limit values for major air pollutants in Europe confers no protection for public health. In fact, very serious health effects occur at concentrations well below current limit values, especially those for fine particles.
10. EU policies to reduce air pollution are needed that ultimately lead to air that is clean and no longer associated with significant adverse effects on the health of the European citizens. The benefits of such policies outweigh the costs by a large amount.