



## Joint ECO/ERS call for cleaner air to prevent cancer Critical EU Vote on Air Quality Standards

12 September, Brussels:

Later today, the European Parliament will discuss the new EU Ambient Air Quality Directive (AAQD) and will vote tomorrow. The European Cancer Organisation (ECO) and the European Respiratory Society (ERS) strongly support the text as voted by Environment Committee (Lopez Report) in June 2023, and urge MEPs to vote in favour of the Lopez Report. This is a unique opportunity to prevent cancer in line with Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

Air pollution is the greatest environmental threat to health and every European citizen is unavoidably exposed to it, with disproportional effects for vulnerable social groups with pre-existing conditions. In 2020, exposure to air pollution throughout the EU caused more than 311,000 premature deaths.

Toxicological and epidemiological studies show that particulate matter causes inflammatory reactions in the lungs and elsewhere in the body, blood clotting, cardiac arrhythmia, increases atherosclerosis, and alters lipid metabolism. As a result, air pollution is linked with increased risk of several major chronic diseases, including asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), myocardial infarction stroke, respiratory infections and lung cancers. A Lancet Commission on pollution and health established that pollution causes up to [29% of all lung cancer deaths](#)<sup>1</sup>. International Agency on Research of Cancer (IARC) declared air pollution as carcinogenic to humans in 2013, and the latest research shows link with other than lung cancer, including breast, colon, liver, stomach, kidney among others.

The new EU directive helps people live a better quality of life and provides for compensation if health is damaged from air pollution, in violation of the new rules.

The proposal will bring more clarity on access to justice, effective penalties, and better public information on air quality. It will support local authorities by strengthening provisions on air quality monitoring, modelling, and improved air quality plans.

ECO and ERS, however, encourage the European Parliament to go even further, and:

- Calls for the directive to have 'full alignment' of EU air quality standards with the WHO Air Pollution Guidelines 2021;
- Goes beyond 'minimum requirements' in both EU and Member States and sets ambitious targets to meet EU air pollution objectives and even outperforms WHO guidelines;
- Orders additional studies and analysis to better understand the effects of the public's exposure to even lower levels of air pollution.

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_6278](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_6278)

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<https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/premature-deaths-due-to-air>

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