



The publication of WHO's updated Global Air Quality Guidelines is an opportunity for the EU to improve its air quality standard for a better protection of public health.

The WHO published yesterday its updated Global Air Quality Guidelines. They provide clear evidence of the health harm of air pollution, at even lower concentrations than previously thought, and recommend new limits for key air pollutants. They constitute a key tool in the fight against both air pollution and climate change. AIM welcomes the updated guidelines and calls on the EU to use them in order to develop stricter and evidence-based regulation.

AIM calls on the European Union and Member States to support the implementation of the new WHO guidelines at the coming COP26.

The UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in November will be vital in contributing to the effective and prompt implementation of the recently published evidence. Ahead of that conference, AIM calls on both the EU and Member States to commit to more ambitious climate action. Acting on air quality through the alignment with WHO standards will contribute to climate change mitigation. The COP26 will be the opportunity to foster political will.

AIM calls for the alignment of EU air quality standards with WHO guidelines and the latest research findings by 2030.

EU air quality standards have a clear potential to reducing and preventing air pollution. The recently published Zero-Pollution Action Plan of the European Commission unfortunately fails to commit to the full alignment of EU air quality standards to those of the WHO. The EU Ambient Air Quality Directives (AAQD) should set high standards for air quality, with the ultimate goal of protecting people's health. AIM recommends strengthening the EU air quality standards in those directives and their alignment, by 2030, with the updated WHO guidelines. This should include the latest scientific evidence on the health and environment impacts of air pollution.

AIM calls for the inclusion of additional air pollutants within the scope of the EU Ambient Air Quality Directives (AAQD).

The EU legally binding limits for air pollutants should use and be as strict as the WHO guidelines. "WHO's new guidelines recommend air quality levels for six pollutants, where evidence has advanced the most on health effects from exposure. (...) [They] also highlight good practices for the management of certain types of particulate matter (for example, black carbon/elemental carbon, ultrafine particles, particles originating from sand and dust storms) for which there is currently insufficient quantitative evidence to set air quality guideline levels."¹

The guidelines indeed also reflect the growing evidence on the negative impact of some air pollutants that are currently not included in the AAQDs on both air quality and health. Mercury, black carbon, ultra-fine particles or ammonia are some examples. AIM joins HEAL's and other health NGOs in their call for air quality standards and monitoring requirements for those pollutants too.²

¹ <https://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/sections/press-releases/2021/new-who-global-air-quality-guidelines-aim-to-save-millions-of-lives-from-air-pollution>

² https://www.env-health.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Lopez-report_plenary_MEPs.pdf