

**Progress report on the development of plans or programmes for attaining air quality limit values, in accordance with Directive 96/62/EC, Article 11(1)(a)(iii)**

Date  
Our reference  
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Dear Commissioner Dimas,

The Netherlands' Permanent Representation will shortly present our national report on air quality to the European Commission. In view of the Netherlands' specific circumstances and the ongoing negotiations about the new air quality directive, I am sending you the latest report on Dutch air quality (*Luchtkwaliteitsperspectief*) personally.

This progress report follows on a previous report sent in March this year. Air quality in the Netherlands has improved substantially over the last few years. The future outlook is better than initially believed, thanks in large part to the 1.1 billion euro investment in air quality measures. In addition, the report explains the new insights on particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) based on the new measurement data over the years 2004 and 2005. To some extent these new insights soften the unfavourable particulate matter air quality in the Netherlands.

Different scenarios have been drawn up to give us a better idea of the likely improvement in future air quality. The scenarios are based on current policy and on additional national and European policy that is consistent with the aims of the Thematic Strategy on Air Pollution under the Clean Air for Europe programme. The scenarios reveal that the limit values for PM<sub>10</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub> can be attained timely almost everywhere in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, there will still be exceedances in some places in 2010 (PM<sub>10</sub>) and in 2015 (NO<sub>2</sub>). Levels will approach the limit values, but a limited number of persistent hotspots will remain.

Therefore, the changes that will occur when the new European directive comes into effect will strongly determine the Dutch perspective. Clarity and flexibility will be necessary in applying and implementing the new directive, in particular as regards the directive's scope and the method for assessment of exceedance of the limit values.



Applying the standards only in those places where people are meaningfully exposed to pollution would enable a more focused abatement policy. It is essential that there are no unclarities about the measurement and calculation methods to be used in assessing the air quality.

The proposal to allow derogations for PM<sub>10</sub> until 2012 and for NO<sub>2</sub> until 2015 would offer more realistic deadlines to resolve residual local air quality exceedances. Nevertheless, we expect that a number of NO<sub>2</sub> persistent hotspots will remain in 2015, which means that the currently proposed five-year derogation is probably insufficient. Similarly, some hotspots will also remain for particulate matter. But since air quality will continue to improve after 2015, the solution could be a longer extension than currently provided for under the new directive, only for the few remaining hotspots and for a very limited period. I expressly ask for the European Commission's understanding on this matter.

This air quality perspective relies heavily on the actual implementation of the European Commission's Thematic Strategy on Air Pollution. It is crucial that the European Commission supports the efforts of the Member States through strict Community policy. In this vein, the Dutch government is concerned about the proposed Euro 5 and Euro 6 emission requirements for cars, which are either less ambitious or will come into effect at a later date than originally proposed in the Thematic Strategy. As a result, it will take longer to resolve NO<sub>2</sub> problems. The Netherlands therefore urges the European Commission to do everything in its power to assure the directive enters into force in the short term and to maintain a conciliatory attitude towards the Netherlands to enable us to resolve our last few exceedance locations.

I hope this letter has given you a good idea of the Dutch situation and that you will keep the foregoing in mind in the further development of new air pollution policy. Naturally, I would be more than willing to explain the Dutch situation and position in person.

Yours sincerely,

Pieter van Geel  
State Secretary for the Environment