

【欧州】 【自動車】

Road/Railway - New legal instruments on environment for vehicles: European Parliament and Council agree on restricting air pollutants from road transport: The Euro 7 regulation and stricter air pollution rules

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【概要 : Summary】

The EU's air quality standards and emission reduction goals are set for main air pollutants also in the transport sector. Currently, there exist two ambient air quality directives, but also other legal acts contribute to improving air quality, like the Euro emission standards in road transport.

Considering the impact of the transport sector on the air quality, road transport alone is responsible for about 12% of all EU CO₂ emissions. However, road transport is also responsible for other emissions of air pollutants, like particulate matter, including PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀ and black carbon (BC), NH₃, NO₂, non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOC), Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂), and CO (Carbon monoxide), among others. In 2021, road transport was responsible for about 40.56% of all NO_x emissions in the EU, 10.45% of PM_{2.5} emissions, 32.09% of black carbon emissions, 9.77% of PM₁₀ and 24.22% of carbon monoxide emissions.

Therefore, in addition to setting CO₂ emission standards for vehicles, the EU is working on rules, which will further lower air pollutants like PM, BC, and CO from road transport.

On 18 December 2023, the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on the new Euro 7 regulation, which will not only set more adequate rules for vehicle emissions for exhaust emissions, but it will also set rules for PMs, emitted by brakes or tires. Furthermore, it covers also electric vehicles and lifetime requirements, regarding their emissions of particulate matters as well as battery durability. For the first time, Euro 7 will cover all vehicles, passenger cars, vans, and heavy-duty vehicles, in one single legal act under the Euro 7 regulation.

Furthermore, proposal COM(2022) 542 final/2 on the recast of the EU air quality standards under the Ambient Air Quality Directive sets standards to be achieved by 2030 to put the EU on a trajectory closer to its zero-pollution vision for air by 2050, and better aligns EU air quality standards with World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines. Ultimately, these new standards also help to further regulate and reduce the air pollution also in road transport leading inevitably to the sole utilisation of zero emission vehicles.

【記事 : Article】

1. Background of the revision of air pollution rules in the EU

Since the European Commission decided to introduce the European Green Deal (COM/2019/640 final) to reach climate neutrality by 2050 and to reduce GHG emissions of the transport sector by 90% by 2050, the main focus was on reducing the GHG emissions. Accordingly, the European Commission presented the “Fit for 55” package on 14 July 2021 with legislative proposals to set the framework to reach a stricter GHG emission reduction of at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels under the European Climate Law (Regulation (EU) 2021/1119). According to the Council of the EU (2024a), road transport is responsible for about 12% of all EU CO₂ emissions (Council of the EU 2024a). Consequently, the Regulation (EU) 2023/851 set new rules to further reduce CO₂ emissions from new passenger cars and vans to achieve an average CO₂ emission reduction of 55% for new passenger cars and 50% for vans in the period 2030–2034 and then a 100% reduction by 2035, based on 2021 targets (Council of the EU 2024a, Regulation (EU) 2023/851). This will require a transformation towards the utilisation of exclusively zero emission vehicles in future as from 2035, all new cars and vans will have to be zero-emission. Regarding new rules on CO₂ emission standards for trucks and busses in COM (2023) 88 final, the Council and the European Parliament’s negotiators reached a provisional political agreement in January 2024. Pending the formal adoption by both co-legislators, the new rules aim to further reduce CO₂ by raising the GHG emissions reduction targets for 2030 (-45%) and introducing new targets for 2035 (-65%) and 2040 (-90%) (Council of the EU 2024a). The rules are also expected to expand the scope of the regulation to cover almost all new heavy-duty vehicles with certified CO₂ emissions -

including smaller trucks, urban buses, coaches and trailers (Council of the EU 2024a, see also Antolini 2023).

Besides the efforts to reduce GHG emissions from transport, also air pollutants like particulate matter, including PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀ and black carbon (BC), NH₃, NO₂, non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOC), Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂), and CO (Carbon monoxide) emissions from major sources like transport, industry, and power generation need to be further reduced (EEA 2023a). The reduction of other air pollution from road vehicles other than CO₂ in road transport like PM, NH₃, NO₂, and others is covered by the new Euro 7 regulation as successor of the Euro 1–6 regulations (Council of the EU 2023a). While industry is preparing for a ban of new passenger cars and vans with combustion engines unless fueled by e-fuels, other internal combustion vehicles like trucks, buses, and other heavy-duty vehicles will continue to be produced after that date (Council of the EU 2023a).

In 2021, road transport was responsible for 40.56% of NO_x, 10.45% of PM 2.5, 9.77% of PM 10, 32.09% of Black Carbon (BC), and 24.22% of CO, among others (EEA 2023a). The primary source of particulate matter, including PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀ and black carbon (BC), is energy consumption in the residential, commercial, and institutional sector, but also road transport, due to emissions of internal combustion engines and from tire and brake wear in vehicles (EEA 2023a).

Regarding PM₁₀, PM_{2.5}, ammonia, sulphur oxides, non-methane volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides, the emissions of these pollutants decreased significantly, from a total of almost 65 million tonnes in 1990 to around 20 million tonnes in 2021 (Eurostat 2023, Council of the EU 2024b).

Sulphur oxides emissions decreased the most, by over 93% between 1990 to 2021 (Eurostat 2023). Ammonia emissions decreased the least, by only 32% (Council of the EU 2024b, Eurostat 2023).

The residential, commercial and institutional sector was the main source of CO emissions responsible for 48%, followed by the road transport sector with 24.22% (EEA 2023). For lead, the second-largest source of emissions was road transport, at 19% (EEA 2023).

In 2021, the European Commission announced a zero pollution ambition for the EU, namely for air, water and soil pollution, which must be reduced to levels, which are not harmful to people and the environment by 2050, as part of the European Green Deal initiative (Council of the EU 2024b). According to latest European Environment Agency (EEA) briefing on the assessment of Member State performance regarding the five main air pollutants regulated under the National Emission reduction Commitments Directive, with the exception of Belgium and Finland, all Member States still need to reduce their air pollutant emissions for at least one pollutant to fulfil their 2030 commitments (EEA 2023a).

2. The Euro 7 regulation on emissions limits for road vehicles

In addition to setting CO₂ emission standards for vehicles, the EU is working on stricter rules to further reduce air pollutants like particulate matter, including PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀ and black carbon (BC), CO (Carbon monoxide) from road transport.

These air pollutants have been declining, but they need to be further reduced also in the transport sector, as the still high concentrations of air pollution have significant impacts on health in the EU (EEA 2023a). Based on the objective to reduce harmful air pollution and also following the release of the WHO's latest air quality guidelines in 2021, the European Commission has proposed revising the EU's current air quality rules (Council of the EU 2024b). With its "proposal for a regulation on type-approval of motor vehicles and engines and of systems, components and separate technical units intended for such vehicles, with

respect to their emissions and battery durability (Euro 7) and repealing Regulations (EC) No 715/2007 and (EC) No 595/2009" (COM(2022) 586 final), the Euro 7 Regulation covers the air pollutants from road vehicles, including pollution from tyre abrasion, brakes and limits of battery durability for the first time (Council of the EU 2023a, Council of the EU 2024a).

On 18 December 2023, the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on the Euro 7 regulation (Council of the EU 2023a).

The new Euro 7 regulation sets more adequate rules for vehicle emissions and aims to further lower air pollutant emissions from road transport. The new Euro 7 legislation replaces the previously separate emissions rules for cars and vans (Euro 6) and lorries and buses (Euro VI) and for the first time, Euro 7 covers cars, vans, and heavy-duty vehicles in one single regulation (Council of the EU 2023a). The provisional agreement of European Parliament and the Council maintains the existing Euro 6 exhaust emission limits for cars and vans, but the agreement limits the emission of PM with a diameter starting from 10 nm (PN10), instead of 23 nm as in Euro 6 and also reduces the limits for buses and lorries (Council of the EU 2023a). The exhaust particle number emissions of solid particles larger than 23 nanometres (PN23) have been controlled since 2011 for light-duty vehicles (Euro 5b) and since 2013 for heavy-duty vehicles (Euro VI) (General Secretariat of the Council 2023). Considering that existing technologies and UN Global Technical Regulation 15 allow the measurement of PM emissions down to ten nanometres, it is appropriate to apply a particle limit to PN10 for all vehicles in this Euro 7 Regulation (General Secretariat of the Council 2023). In the case of heavy-duty buses and trucks, the provisional agreement establishes more stringent limits for various pollutants, including for pollutants that were

not regulated in Euro VI, such as nitrous oxide (N₂O) (Council of the EU 2023a).

Furthermore, the Euro 7 regulation aims to reduce road vehicle emissions, not only from exhaust, but also from particles emitted by brakes or tyres, thereby addressing also particles emitted by brakes of electric vehicles and lifetime requirements (Council of the EU 2023a).

Therefore, the Euro 7 rules will continue to apply to new zero-emission cars and vans after 2035 regarding pollution from tyre abrasion, brakes and batteries life (Council of the EU 2023a). Regarding the batteries' life, new requirements of minimum performance requirements for battery durability were introduced for hybrid and electric cars, keeping 80% for vehicles up to five years or 100,000 km driven, and a value of 72% for vehicles up to eight years or 160,000 km driven (General Secretariat of the Council 2023). For vans, 75% is kept for vehicles up to five years or 100,000 km driven, and 67% for vehicles up to eight years or 160,000 km driven (General Secretariat of the Council 2023). The co-legislators also introduced stricter lifetime requirements for all vehicles in terms of both mileage and lifetimes; that now goes up to 200,000 km or 10 years for passenger cars and vans (Council of the EU 2023a).

Some of the revision of regulations and directives in connection to the transport sector's GHG emission reduction and air pollution reduction will be of relevance also for the successful implementation of the recast of the Ambient Air Quality Directive COM(2022) 542 final/2.

3. The recast of the Ambient Air Quality Directives COM (2022) 542 final/2

Despite major improvements in air quality in the EU over the past three decades, air pollution continues to cause premature deaths and it also causes damages to the environment, ecosystems and biodiversity. To address air pollution, the

EU has two existing ambient air quality directives 2004/107/EC and 2008/50/EC (Council of the EU 2023b). These Ambient Air Quality Directives are part of a comprehensive clean air policy framework built on three main pillars, including legislation for setting emissions standards for key sources of air pollution, such as road transport vehicles, among others (COM(2022) 542 final/2).

Although between 1990 and 2021, PM₁₀, PM_{2.5}, ammonia, sulphur oxides, non-methane volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides emissions decreased significantly, following the announcement of a zero pollution ambition for the EU, namely for air, water and soil pollution to be reduced to levels which are not harmful to people and the environment by 2050 and to align EU standards closer to the WHO's latest air quality guidelines of 2021, the European Commission has proposed a revision of the EU's current air quality rules (Council of the EU 2024c). The current EU standards are outdated, which is underlined by the fact that according to EU standards, less than 1% of the EU's urban population is exposed to harmful levels of PM_{2.5} (Council of the EU 2024c). However, when considering the latest WHO guidelines, this percentage rises to 97% (Council of the EU 2024b). In fact, according to the latest data from the European Environment Agency (EEA), in 2021, 97% of the EU's urban population was exposed to concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) above the latest guidelines of the WHO and air pollution caused about 238,000 premature deaths in the EU in 2020 (EEA 2024, Council of the EU 2024b, 2024c). Besides health issues, air pollution can considerably impact Europe's economy due to increased healthcare costs, and lost working days across sectors, among others (EEA 2024). It also damages vegetation and ecosystems, water and soil quality, and local ecosystems. Central-eastern Europe and Italy reported the highest concentrations of

particulate matter and all countries reported levels of ozone and NO₂ above the WHO's health-based guideline levels. The highest ozone levels were seen in the Mediterranean region and central Europe (EEA 2023b).

In a response to this situation, and against the backdrop of the European Green Deal (COM (2019) 640 final, which envisages to aligning EU air quality standards more closely with the recommendations of the WHO, on 26 October 2022, the European Commission presented a proposal to update and merge the existing ambient air quality directives (2004/107/EC and 2008/50/EC) and to revise the EU air quality standards (Council of the EU 2023b, 2024b).

The revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives merges the two Directives into one, while aligning EU air quality standards more closely with WHO recommendations. It also should further improve the legislative framework in relation to penalties, and public information and to better support local authorities in achieving cleaner air through strengthening air quality monitoring, modelling and plans (COM(2022) 542 final/2).

The new air quality standards based on the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe (recast) (COM(2022) 542 final/2) are expected to align the EU's standards more closely to the WHO recommendations and to set stricter air quality standards for 2030, as an intermediate step to achieving a zero pollution objective and to contributing to a toxic-free environment in the EU by 2050 (Council of the EU 2024b).

The Council agreed its negotiating position on the proposal in November 2023, after the European Parliament had adopted its position in September 2023 (Council of the EU 2024b).

On 20 February 2024, the European Parliament and Council's negotiators reached a provisional political agreement on the new measures to ensure

a higher level of air quality in the EU with the aim to eliminate air pollution by 2050, and to bring EU air quality standards in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations (European Parliament 2024a, Council of the EU 2024c). The new law mainly aims at introducing stricter 2030 limits for several air pollutants, to set air quality indices to be comparable across all Member States (European Parliament 2024a). The revision of the ambient air quality directives covers a host of air-polluting substances, including fine particles and particulate matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀), NO₂, SO₂, benzo(a)pyrene, arsenic, lead, and nickel, among others. The new law sets stricter 2030 limits and target values, compared to current rules, for several pollutants including particulate matter (PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀), NO₂ and SO₂ (European Parliament 2024).

For the two pollutants with the highest documented impact on human health, PM_{2.5} and NO₂, the annual limit values are to be more than halved from 25 µg/m³ to 10 µg/m³ and from 40 µg/m³ to 20 µg/m³, respectively, bringing them closer to the WHO guideline values of 5 µg/m³ for PM_{2.5} and 10 µg/m³ for NO₂ (European Parliament 2024, Council of the EU 2024b, 2024c). The new directive would require Member States to establish air quality roadmaps and plans for areas where the levels of pollutants exceed the limit and target values, and to take appropriate measures. In addition, all Member States will have to create air quality roadmaps by 31 December 2028 that set out short- and long-term measures to comply with the new 2030 limit values (European Parliament 2024a).

The Commission is required to regularly review scientific evidence to verify whether the revised air quality standards are proving effective in protecting human health (Council of the EU 2024b). To reduce the immediate risk to human health in areas where the alert thresholds will be exceeded, Member States

should prepare short-term action plans setting out emergency measures like restricting the circulation of vehicles, among others to reduce the immediate risk to human health (Council of the EU 2023b, 2024c). The proposed new directive would also oblige EU Member States to establish at least one monitoring supersite on their territory, which would combine multiple sampling points to gather long-term data on air pollutants covered by the directive, as well as on air pollutants of emerging concern (Council of the EU 2023b). In cities, more air quality sampling points will have to be established.

It will be possible for Member States to request that the 2030 deadline by 31 January 2029, to attain the air quality limit values be postponed by a maximum of 10 years until no later than 1 January 2040 under certain conditions, including when the necessary reductions can only be achieved by replacing a considerable part of the existing domestic heating systems causing the pollution exceedances (Council of the EU 2023b, European Parliament 2024a).

The air quality limit values can be postponed until no later than 1 January 2035 with possibility to extend it by two more years. To get these postponements granted, Member States will have to include air quality projections in their air quality roadmaps by 2028 demonstrating that the exceedance will be kept as short as possible and that the limit value will be met by the end of the postponement period at the latest (Council of the EU 2024c). Furthermore, a provision was added to allow Member States to notify the Commission of exceedances of air quality limits that can be ascribed to sources outside the influence of the Member State affected (Council of the EU 2024b). Some actions with particular relevance for air quality include more stringent air pollutant emissions standards for combustion engine vehicles, based on the forthcoming Euro 7 regulation (COM(2022) 542 final/2). ANNEX VIII of the proposal COM

(2022) 542 final/2 contains measures relevant for air quality plans regarding road transport. The proposal recommends to consider in air quality plans the use of economic incentives to accelerate the take-up of vehicles with zero emissions powertrains and emission control equipment (COM (2022) 542 final/2). Information on all air pollution abatement measures that have been considered at local, regional or national level for implementation in connection with the attainment of air quality objectives, including the reduction of emissions shall be included (COM(2022) 542 final/2).

The new Air Quality Directive will also trigger increased action in urban areas to introduce lower emission mobility, the introduction of low-emission zones, as well as the increased uptake of public transport and active mobility (COM(2022) 542 final/2). Furthermore, measures shall be considered to limit transport emissions through traffic planning and management, including congestion pricing, differentiated parking fees or other economic incentives; and establishing urban vehicles access restrictions schemes, including low emission zones (COM(2022) 542 final/2).

Finally, measures to encourage a shift towards less polluting forms of transport and measures to encourage a shift towards zero emissions vehicles and non-road machinery for both private and commercial applications shall be considered (COM(2022) 542 final/2). By 31 December 2028 and every 5 years thereafter, the European Commission will evaluate the need to revise the directive to ensure alignment with WHO guidelines (European Parliament 2024b).

After the adoption of the political agreement by both co-legislators, the new law will enter into force 20 days after being published in the EU's Official Journal. The EU Member States will then have two years to apply the new rules (European Parliament 2024a).

4. Conclusion

To address air pollution, the EU has revised two ambient air quality directives, dating from 2004 and 2008. Regarding air pollution in road transport, the new regulation Euro 7 sets more adequate rules for pollution emissions of all vehicle and aims to further lower air pollutant emissions from road transport.

The revision of the ambient air quality directives is an integral part of the EU's zero pollution action plan in the framework of the European Green Deal. The agreement between the Council and the European Parliament on the recast of the ambient air quality directives and based on the political agreement on the proposal COM (2022) 542 final/2 of 20 February 2024, the co-legislators are setting the basis for cleaner air and a healthier environment in the EU, with improved standards and more effective action to tackle air pollution.

The proposal COM (2022) 586 final on the Euro 7 regulation aims to reduce air pollutants emissions from all types of road vehicles, including emissions not only from exhaust, but also from particles emitted by brakes or tyres, including those particles emitted by electric vehicles, and including new requirements of minimum performance requirements for battery durability, among others.

Since road transport has a relevant impact on air quality with its pollutant emissions, this new Euro 7 regulation and other revisions of directives related to the transport sector's GHG emission reduction and air pollution are of relevance for the success of the implementation of the recast of the Ambient Air Quality Directive COM(2022) 542 final/2.

To achieve this higher level of air quality in the EU, and in particular in the cities with often exceeding levels of air pollution like PM and other emissions, the aim is to reach higher air quality standards in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations.

The new rules are expected to drastically improve the quality of the air and will tackle air pollution, with the aim to bring EU air quality standards in line with the WHO recommendations. However, this will not be fully achieved even under the new legislation. The annual limit values for PM_{2.5} and NO₂, would be reduced to 10 µg/m³ and to 20 µg/m³ respectively, but the WHO guideline values are even lower at 5 µg/m³ for PM_{2.5} and 10 µg/m³ for NO₂. This underlines that the EU is only slowly achieving the WHO recommendation levels, also because the EU Member States will have considerable transition periods until 2040 with certain conditions.

The new Air Quality Directive will trigger increased action in urban areas to introduce lower emission mobility, the introduction of low-emission zones, as well as the increased uptake of public transport and active mobility. The Euro 7 regulation with its new air pollution reduction limits for all types of road vehicles will support the achievement of higher level of air quality in the EU under COM(2022) 542 final/2.

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