



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION

**on the state of implementation of the ambient air quality Directives 80/779/EEC,
82/884/EEC and 85/203/EEC in the period 1997-1999**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the information on air quality in the period 1997-1999 that Member States have sent to the Commission under the following air quality directives:

- Council Directive 80/779/EEC¹ on air quality limit values and guide values for sulphur dioxide and suspended particulates, amended by Directive 89/427/EEC²,
- Council Directive 82/884/EEC³ on a limit value for lead in the air,
- Council Directive 85/203/EEC⁴ on air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide.

The Commission is required to publish reports on the state of implementation of these “old” air quality directives.⁵ The new Framework Directive 96/62/EC⁶ and Daughter Directive 1999/30/EC⁷ will replace the requirements of these directives in stages. In particular, they will replace the air quality thresholds with new ones. However, as the date by which the new air quality thresholds for the protection of human health have to be met is several years after 1999/30/EC enters into force, the old thresholds continue to exist until then and so do reporting requirements under the old directives.

Apart from the reporting requirements specified in the old directives, there were, in the period addressed in this report, other mechanisms by which Member States and the Commission exchange information on air quality. Council Decision 97/101/EC⁸

¹ Council Directive 80/779/EEC of 15 July 1980 on air quality limit values and guide values for sulphur dioxide and suspended particulates, OJ L 229 of 30/08/1980, p. 30-48.

² Council Directive 89/427/EEC of 21 June 1989 amending Directive 80/779/EEC on air quality limit values and guide values for sulphur dioxide and suspended particulates, OJ L 201 of 14/07/1989, p. 53-55.

³ Council Directive 82/884/EEC of 3 December 1982 on a limit value for lead in the air, OJ L 378 of 31/12/1982, p. 15-18.

⁴ Council Directive 85/203/EEC of 7 March 1985 on air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide, OJ L 87 of 27/03/1985, p. 1-7.

⁵ Earlier reports on the state of implementation of the directives that are publicly available:

- *First annual report from the Commission to the Council on the implementation of the Council Directive on air quality limit values and guide values for sulphur dioxide and suspended particulates (80/779/EEC)*, Commission of the European Communities, Environment and Quality of Life, 1986 EUR 10393.

- *Second annual report from the Commission on the implementation of the Council Directive on air quality limit values and guide values for sulphur dioxide and suspended particulates (80/779/EEC)*, 24 March 1988, COM(88) 142 final.

- Communication from the Commission: *First annual report on the implementation of the Council Directive on a limit value for lead in the air (82/884/EEC)*, 10 January 1990, SEC (90) 1842.

- *Report from the Commission on the state of implementation of ambient air quality directives*, 26.07.1995, COM(95) 372 final.

⁶ Council Directive 96/62/EC of 27 September 1996 on ambient air quality assessment and management, OJ L 296 of 21/11/1996, p. 55 - 63

⁷ Council Directive 99/30/EC of 22 April 1999 relating to limit values for sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter and lead in ambient air, OJ L 163 of 29/06/1999, p. 41-60.

⁸ Council Decision 97/101/EC of 27 January 1997 establishing a reciprocal exchange of information and data from networks and individual stations measuring ambient air pollution within the Member States, OJ L 35 of 05/02/1997, p. 14-22.

on exchange of information, and its predecessors 75/441/EEC⁹ and 82/459/EEC¹⁰, provided a framework for extensive exchange of air quality data and information on the national monitoring networks. Following the establishment of the European Environmental Agency and the European Environmental Information and Observation Network (EIONET) in 1990, the European Topic Centre on Air Quality (the predecessor of the current European Topic Centre on Air and Climate Change - ETC/ACC) gradually became the main EU centre for collecting, processing and reporting air quality information for Member States. On the basis of collaboration in EIONET and the legal framework set by Decision 97/101/EC on exchange of information, a systematic exchange has developed, resulting in detailed annual reports¹¹ on air quality, including trend analysis and overviews on monitoring networks. In addition to these reports, the ETC/ACC now has the Airbase Information System, which is publicly accessible via the Internet through the AirView facility (<http://etc-acc.eionet.eu.int/databases>). This system allows the user to define any overviews of air quality in Europe, with several presentation modes to choose from. It also provides the user with detailed information on the monitoring stations.

This report will not duplicate the wealth of information that is now publicly available, and hence it is substantially smaller than the previous report on implementation of the directives (COM (95) 372)¹². In this report only the exceedances reported by the Member States will be summarised. For analyses of air pollution levels and trends the reader is referred to the overviews given by the European Environmental Agency, including the annual reports¹¹ on the results of the exchange of information under Council Decision 97/101/EC, which are based on a much broader and more complete set of data than the reports submitted by the Member States under the old air quality directives.

2. REQUIREMENTS OF THE DIRECTIVES

The directives set limit values, which were not to be exceeded, primarily intended to protect human health and to contribute to the protection of the environment. Directives 80/779/EEC and 85/203/EEC also set guide values to aid Member States in policy making issues. These were intended to improve the protection of human health and the long-term protection of the environment and to act as reference points for the establishment of specific schemes within zones determined by the Member States. A common feature in the directives is the establishment of reference measurement methods for the pollutants and guidance on monitoring.

The directives required Member States to designate certain areas where they believed that pollution levels were sufficiently high to result in frequent breach of the limit

⁹ Council Decision 75/441/EEC of 24 June 1975 establishing a common procedure for the exchange of information between the surveillance and monitoring networks based on data relating to atmospheric pollution caused by certain compounds and suspended particulates, OJ L 194 of 25/07/1975, p. 40-46.

¹⁰ Council Decision 82/459/EEC of 24 June 1982 establishing a reciprocal exchange of information and data from networks and individual stations measuring air pollution within the Member States, OJ L 210 of 19/07/1982, p. 1-7.

¹¹ *European Air Quality in 1997 and 1998*, European Topic Centre on Air Quality

¹² COM(95)372 final - Report from the Commission on the State of implementation of ambient air quality directives.

values. The geographical area and population to be covered by these zones were not specified in the directives, Member States were left to decide these issues themselves. These zones could be designated under Article 3 of each of the directives and are commonly known as “Article 3”. In designating these zones Member States were required to develop and implement improvement plans in order to bring concentrations to below or at the limit value as soon as possible and at the latest by a fixed date as follows:

80/779/EEC 1 April 1993

82/884/EEC 9 December 1989

85/203/EEC 1 January 1994

It can be seen from the above that concentrations in excess of limit values in zones designated under Article 3 during the reporting period are considered as an infringement of the directives. Member States are required to inform the Commission about values in excess of the limit value whether they occur inside or outside areas designated under Article 3. Fixed procedures are listed in the directives (80/779/EEC Article 7, 82/884/EEC Article 5 and 85/203/EEC Article 7) for reporting this information to the Commission. A delay is allowed to enable Member States to validate and evaluate the data collected before it is officially transmitted to the Commission. For values in excess of limit values in zones not designated under Article 3 of each of the directives, Member States are also required to provide reasons for these (not required under 82/884/EEC) and the measures being taken to avoid recurrence.

It is important to note that in none of these directives is it required for Member States to transmit data when limit values are not exceeded. In the absence of comments from Member States, the Commission assumes that limit values have been complied with although this may not be the case. This absence also makes it difficult to assess changes in pollution levels not only in zones where values in excess of limit values have been reported but also in relation to efforts being made to reduce pollution levels towards guide values where these have been set.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DIRECTIVES

An overview of the directives was given in Section 1.1 and Chapter 2 of the previous report (COM (95) 372 final). The report also discussed how the directives had been implemented. By that time the directives had been transposed in all the Member States, whereas previous reports had had to include “Article 3 zones”. These were specially designated areas where concentrations could not yet be brought below the limit values. By 1997, the periods for which these zones were allowed had already ended for all three directives.

Several problems concerning implementation of the old directives were noted in the previous report mentioned above (Chapter 3), which essentially still applied in the period covered by the current report. There were substantial differences in the way Member States measured their air quality and reported the results to the Commission. This makes it difficult to compare the situation in different Member States and to follow progress with the measures and procedures being implemented to improve air

quality. This situation is expected to improve considerably under the new directives, not only because they give more detailed provisions, but also because of more intense exchange of information between Member States and the guidance given by international working groups and the ETC/ACC.

4. OVERVIEW OF EXCEEDANCES REPORTED BY MEMBER STATES

Table 1 summarises the cases reported by the 15 EU Member States where limit values have been exceeded (exceedances), expressed as the number of stations where exceedances were observed. Table 2 specifies, for cases of exceedance of a Directive 80/779/EEC limit value, which limit value this was. Table 2 also summarises the additional information that the Member States had to submit on exceedances: the main contributing source category and the measures planned or taken. Several Member States sent additional information, e.g. a national air quality report, along with the required information.

Eight Member States reported that no exceedance of any of the limit values had been observed.

In each of the three years considered, four Member States reported exceedance of one or more of the Directive 80/779/EEC limit values. This occurred at a total of 14 stations in 1997 and again in 1998, and at 13 stations in 1999. Most of the 80/779/EEC exceedances concerned suspended particulates, measured either as Total Suspended Particulates¹³ (TSP) or black smoke (BS). Few cases related to SO₂ (and only in Spain).

There were exceedances of the limit value for NO₂ in five Member States in 1997, in three Member States in 1998 and in four in 1999. The number of stations where exceedance was observed was 13 in 1997, 9 in 1998 and 10 in 1999.

None of the Member States reported exceedance of the limit value for lead.

¹³ Measurement of Total Suspended Particulates is based on the gravimetric method described in Annex IV of Directive 80/779/EEC

Table 1 Number of stations with exceedance of limit values ^{*)}

Member State	1997 period			1998 period			1999 period		
	SO ₂ /BS/TSP ^{**)}	NO ₂	Pb	SO ₂ /BS/TSP	NO ₂	Pb	SO ₂ /BS/TSP	NO ₂	Pb
Austria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Belgium	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Denmark	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Finland	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
France	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Germany	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Greece	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Italy	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	5	0
Luxembourg	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Netherlands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Portugal	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Spain	11	7	0	11	3	0	10	2	0
Sweden	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
United Kingdom	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

^{*)} For SO₂/BS/TSP, the year refers to the annual reference period from 1 April to 31 March of the following year. However, the table also includes figures from Member States that report by calendar year only.

^{**)} SO₂/Black Smoke/Total Suspended Particulates

Table 2 Details on the exceedances reported

Member State	For 80/779/EC: limit value(s) exceeded ^{*)}	Main cause of exceedances reported	Information on measures reported
Finland	The exceedances pertain to the 95 percentile of TSP.	Traffic nearby	Description of local emission reduction measures
France	<i>(No exceedance)</i>	Traffic nearby	No information
Germany	<i>(No exceedance)</i>	Traffic nearby	Description of local emission reduction measures
Greece	The exceedances pertain to the annual limit value of BS.	Traffic (both for BS and NO ₂ exceedances)	General information on emission reduction programmes
Ireland	<i>(No exceedance)</i>	Traffic nearby	Description of recent measures to tackle vehicle emissions
Italy	<i>(No exceedance)</i>	No information	No information
Portugal	The exceedances pertain to the limit values for TSP (95 percentile in 1997 and 1999; annual mean in 1998).	Thermal power plant	No information
Spain	Most exceedances pertain to the limit value of TSP, fewer to limit values of BS and SO ₂ .	For some exceedances an estimate of source contributions was given	For some exceedances: information on measures

^{*)} 82/884/EEC and 85/203/EEC specify only one limit value.

5. CONCLUSIONS

By April 2002 all 15 Member States had sent a report to the Commission on exceedances of limit values under the “old” air quality directives in the period 1997-1999. Not all reports received were fully consistent with the formal requirements of the directives.

Four Member States reported exceedances of 80/779/EEC limit values, most of which concerned suspended particulates. Five Member States reported exceedance of the NO₂ limit value in 1997, three Member States in 1998 and four in 1999. None of the Member States reported exceedance of the limit value for lead.

The importance of reporting under the old air quality directives has diminished considerably in recent years. This is the result of major improvement to EU legislation and reporting infrastructure on air quality, which is replacing the framework defined by the old directives. The implementation problems, which have already been described in a previous report, will be more effectively addressed under the new air quality directives. However, until the years in which the new air quality thresholds for the protection of human health have to be met, 2005 and 2010 respectively, the old directives will continue to set the legal limit values for concentrations in the air at EU level. Annual limit values for SO₂ for the protection of ecosystems and for NO_x for the protection of vegetation came in force already in 2001.