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WHO recommends tighter limits on air pollutants - EU must catch up

The World Health Organisation's guidelines for improving air quality were presented today. The WHO's new guidelines are stricter than the previous ones and recommend further lowering the existing maximum levels. The recommendations also go beyond the European air quality limits set by the EU Commission. In

March, the European Parliament called on the EU Commission to improve the Ambient Air Quality Directives and to align the limit values for nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter, sulphur dioxide, ozone and other pollutants with the new scientific guidelines issued by the WHO today at the time. Nitrogen dioxide from road traffic and particulate matter are linked to nearly 400,000 premature deaths annually in the European Union alone.

Sven Giegold, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur for the report on the implementation of the Ambient Air Quality Directives, comments:

"The World Health Organisation's guidelines send a clear signal for clean air and our health. The recommendations are a call for the European Commission to do more for air quality in the EU. People in the EU have a right to clean air. The Commission must follow the scientific recommendations of the World Health Organisation and present its proposal for a new law for more air quality in the EU strictly along these recommendations."

Multiple Member States, including Germany, repeatedly breach EU rules for better air quality and millions of diesel cars using illegal defeat devices are still on Europe's streets. The limits for diesel engines. Much greater efforts across Europe are needed to improve air quality. The EU needs to look at introducing measures such as the mandatory retrofitting of diesel engines at the expense of the manufacturers."

Background:

In its ruling on the implementation of the EU Air Quality Directive on 3 June, the European Court of Justice found that Germany had systematically and persistently exceeded the limit values for nitrogen dioxide emissions for years and had violated EU law.

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