

Revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives:

Factual summary report of the Open Public Consultation

23 September - 16 December 2021

1.1 Introduction

As part of the process of '[Air quality: revision of EU rules](#)', the European Commission is consulting a wide range of stakeholders through various workshops and online consultations. An open public consultation was launched on 23 September 2021 and was open for 12 weeks. The aim of the open public consultation was to confirm the issues identified for the impact assessment and gather initial views on the ambition level and potential impacts of certain options for the revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives.

This document aims to summarise the (preliminary) main results of this open public consultation and should not be considered as an exhaustive final presentation of the results. This document should be regarded solely as a summary of the contributions made by stakeholders who responded to the open public consultation conducted in the context of the revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives. It cannot in any circumstances be regarded as the official position of the Commission or its services. Responses to the consultation activities cannot be considered as a representative sample of the views of the EU population.

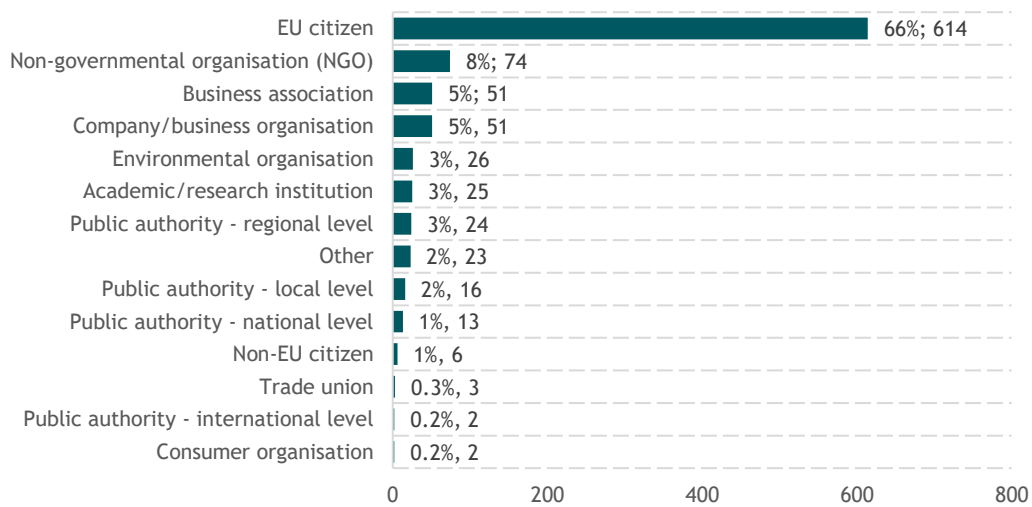
1.2 Information about the respondents

A total of **934 stakeholders**¹ submitted responses to this open public consultation. The majority of respondents identified themselves as **EU citizens** (n=614; 66%), followed by non-governmental organisations (n=74; 8%). The distribution of stakeholder types is presented in Figure 1. Notably, a total of 55 respondents (6%) identified themselves as public authorities, with regional-level public authorities being the highest represented public authority grouping (n=24; 3%). Neither campaigns (i.e., more than 10 identical questionnaire submissions)², nor any duplicate submissions from the same individual were identified.

¹ Please note that 4 additional responses were received outside of the official consultation channels and have not been considered for this summary. These additional responses will nevertheless be considered at a later stage.

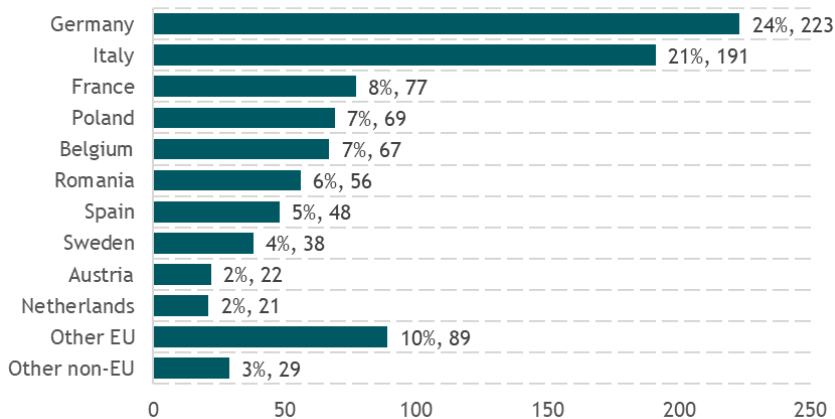
² Better Regulation Toolbox 2021 - Chapter 7. Available [here](#).

Figure 1 Stakeholder type (n=930)



Almost a quarter of respondents came from **Germany** (n=223; 24%), while **Italy** was the second most-represented country (n=191; 21%). Figure 2 shows the number of respondents from the 10 most represented countries, as well as the total number of respondents from other EU countries and from non-EU countries. In total, **99% of respondents came from EU countries** (n=917), and 23 out of 27 EU countries were represented³.

Figure 2 Country of origin (n=930)



Sectors of activity directly related to air pollution control or research were most represented and included **air quality monitoring** (r=212; 13% of responses received), **air quality management** (r=167; 11% of responses) and **scientific research** (r=148; 10% of responses) (as visible in Figure 3, jointly counting towards a third of responses). Sectors of activity that affect or are affected by air quality were also well represented, for instance biodiversity and/or environment, public health, energy and transport.

³ No respondents listed Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia or Malta as their country of origin.

Figure 3 Sector of activity [between 1 and 3 choices possible] (n=930; 1579 responses)

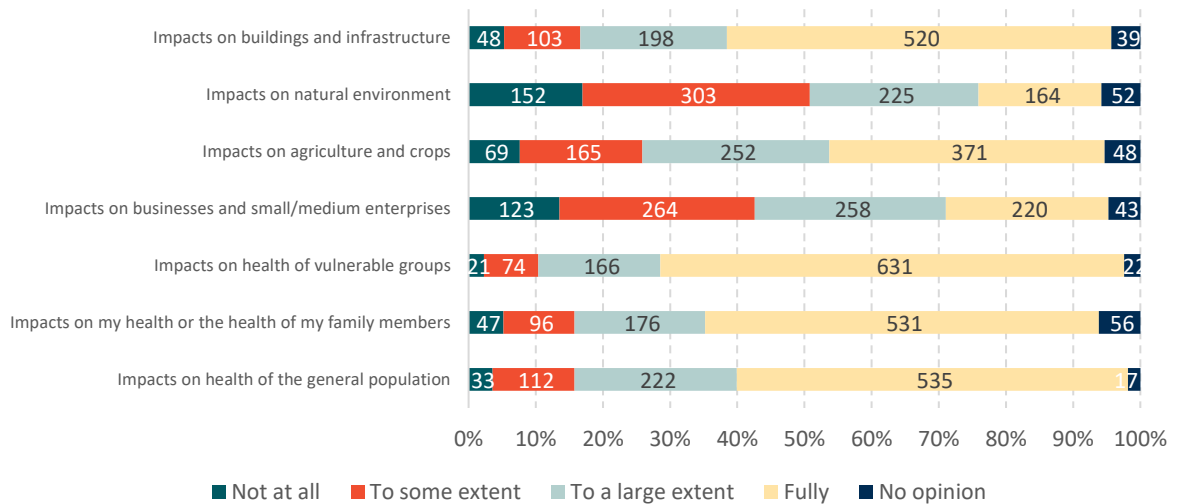


1.3 Views on air quality issues

89% of respondents stated that good air quality is very important for them (n=824 out of 924), and 9% (n=84 out of 924) judged it important. Less than 2% of respondents (n=12 out of 927) stated that air quality was of minor importance to them or not important at all. At the same time, **83% of respondents were concerned or very concerned about the levels of air pollution to which they are usually exposed** (n=764 out of 922). Conversely, 15% (n=139 out of 922) were slightly concerned or not concerned at all. The extent of this concern varied across stakeholder types, e.g. 84% respondents identified as non-governmental organisations were highly concerned (n=62 out of 74), while that share was 20% among respondents identified as business organisations (n=9 out of 46).

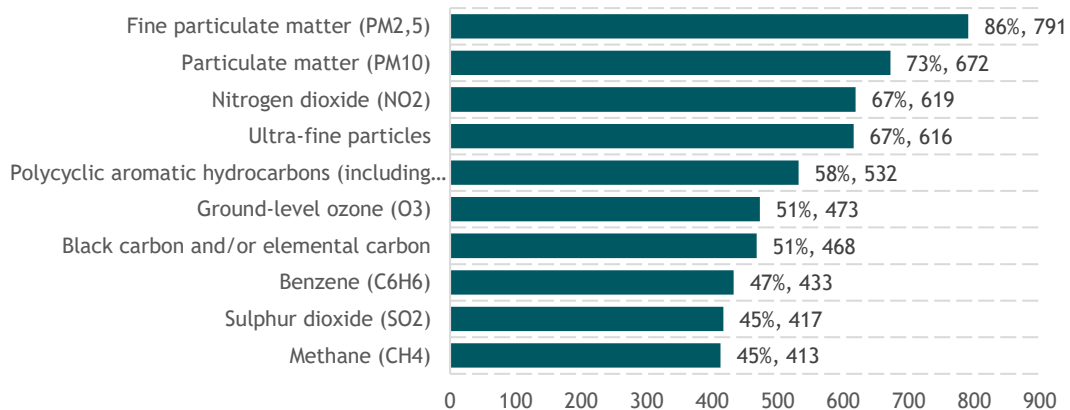
As it follows from Figure 4, **69% of the respondents to these questions were fully concerned about the impacts of air pollution on vulnerable populations** (n=631 out of 914), **59% about their personal health or the health of their family members** (n=531 out of 906), **58% about the impacts on health of the general population** (n=535 out of 919), and **57% about impacts on buildings and infrastructure** (n=520 out of 908).

Figure 4 “Are you concerned about the following impacts that air pollution may have in your local area?”



When it comes to air pollutants, 10 of them were chosen by the respondents as air pollutants that concern them the most. As visible in Figure 5, respondents expressed concern about fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) (n=791 out of 921; 86%), particulate matter (PM₁₀) (n=672 out of 921; 73%), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) (n=619 out of 921; 67%) and ultra-fine particles (n=616 out of 921; 67%).

Figure 5 “Which air pollutants are you concerned about?” (n=921; 9466 responses) [only 10 most chosen pollutants displayed]



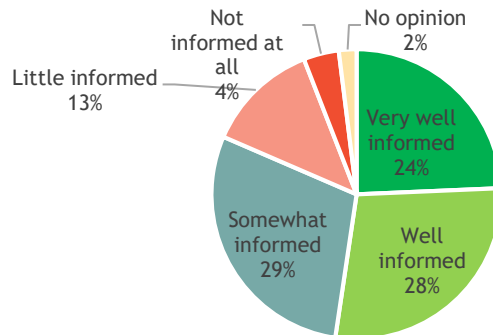
In terms of addressing air pollution, 88% of the respondents stated that they would like to see a moderate or a significant increase in action and ambition to tackle air pollution (n=809 out of 918). 6% believed that current action and ambition is sufficient (n=59 out of 918). The majority of respondents in all but two stakeholder groups (business associations⁴ and trade unions⁵) supported this moderate or a strong increase. 73% of the respondents thought that the EU air quality standards should be made more stringent and fully aligned with the latest WHO recommendations (n=672 out of 922). 15% of respondents replied that the alignment with WHO recommendations should be partial (n=144 out of 922). Conversely, 10% of respondents believed that the current EU air quality standards are sufficient (n=90 out of 922).

⁴ n=18 out of 49; 37% of business associations supported a medium or a strong increase in action and ambition level to tackle air pollution

⁵ n=1 out of 3; 33% of trade unions supported a medium or a strong increase in action and ambition level to tackle air pollution

52% of the respondents felt well or very well informed about air quality in their country, city and/or region (n=478 out of 913). 29% felt somewhat informed (n=266 out of 913), while the remainder believed to be little or not at all informed (Figure 6). 48% of the respondents identifying as EU citizens (n=294 out of 610;) and 42% of those identifying as NGOs (n=29 out of 69) felt well or very well informed.

Figure 6 “How well informed do you feel about air quality in your country / region / city?” (n=913)



When it comes to access to various types of air quality information, 69% of respondents expressed a desire to have easier access to (real-time) air quality data / up-to-date average concentrations (n=623 out of 897). 65% of respondents would like easier access to information about the air quality plans and measures that the authorities are taking to improve air quality (n=585 out of 897).

With regards to strengthening the assessment of air quality, 54% of the respondents believed that there is a need for additional monitoring everywhere, whether high pollution or low pollution levels (n=495 out of 921), whereas 9% stated that there is sufficient data on air quality (n=85 out of 921). 90% of respondents supported improving air quality plans, and 10% of respondents responded that these should stay as they are (n=93 out of 914). Amongst the options for changes, the following received highest support: increased clarity on the specific sources and origin of air pollution (n=668 out of 914; 73%), assigning responsibilities (i.e. who needs to act) (n=576 out of 914; 63%) and regular assessment of the implementation of air quality plans (n=568 out of 914; 62%).

1.4 Views on specific air quality measures and their impacts

To evaluate different policy options under each of the three Policy areas, specialised respondents were asked about the importance of each option to improve the effectiveness of the Ambient Air Quality Directives, and the feasibility of each option in terms of its implementation (i.e. technically, politically, from a cost perspective, etc.).

1.4.1 Policy area 1 - Closer alignment of the EU air quality standards with scientific knowledge including the latest recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO).

The questions on Policy area 1 featured the following policy options:

- Ensure achievement of existing EU air quality standards
- Align EU air quality standards with World Health Organization recommendations
- Mandate that all air quality standards are met in general (i.e. based on the average exposure of the general population)

- d) Mandate that all air quality standards are met everywhere (i.e. including at ‘pollution hotspots’ such as roadside or downwind from industry)
- e) Establish legally enforceable limit values for all air pollutants
- f) Set aspirational long-term objectives to meet all World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations (i.e. as per updated WHO Air Quality Guidelines)

Option a) was deemed highly important by 82% of the respondents (n=474 out of 575) for improving the effectiveness of the Ambient Air Quality Directives. All other options were deemed to be highly important by 58 to 67% of the respondents to these questions. **Policy option e) was judged highly feasible by 52 % of respondents** (n=272 out of 525). Policy option a) was ranked with either a high or a medium feasibility by 84% of respondents (444 out of 527).

1.4.2 Policy area 2 - improving the current air quality legislative framework (including aspects such as penalties and public information).

The questions on Policy area 2 featured the following policy options:

- a) Make it easier to adjust EU air quality standards to the evolving technical and scientific progress
- b) Further define the different types of air quality standards and the actions their exceedances would trigger
- c) Expand requirements for action by national / regional / local authorities in case of exceedances
- d) Establish additional provisions for air quality plans, including on who to involve in their preparation
- e) Expand the provision on penalties related to air pollution
- f) Add provisions for access to justice and for compensation for health damage from air pollution
- g) Expand the requirements on the provision of information (e.g. on health impacts)

Option c) was deemed as highly important by 65 % of respondents (n=350 out of 540) for improving the effectiveness of the Ambient Air Quality Directives. All other options were deemed highly important by 55 to 62% of the respondents to these questions. **Option g) was thought to be highly feasible to implement by 58% of respondents** (n=298 out of 514). Policy option c) was ranked with either a high or a medium feasibility by 76% of respondents (393 out of 516).

1.4.3 Policy area 3 - strengthening of air quality monitoring, modelling and plans.

The questions on Policy area 3 featured the following policy options:

- a) Establish more detailed rules on the location of sampling points
- b) Expand monitoring requirements to a broader set of harmful air pollutants
- c) Enable enhanced use of modelling for air quality assessment
- d) Further specify minimum elements required of air quality plans (e.g. cost-benefit analysis, projections, etc.)

Policy options a) and b) were judged to be highly important by 60% of respondents each (n=321 out of 538 and n=323 out of 535, respectively) for improving the effectiveness of the Ambient Air Quality Directives. Policy option a) was thought to be highly feasible by 62% of respondents (n=321 out of 520) whereas policy option b) was thought to be highly feasible by 49% of respondents (n=291 out of 513).

1.5 Additional remarks and feedback

A total of 152 respondents provided suggestions for publicly available materials and/or publications that should be considered further in relation to the impact assessment. Moreover, 98 respondents submitted position papers as a part of their response to this open public consultation.