



EU CLEAN AIR FORUM

23-24 NOVEMBER 2023

ROTTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS

#CleanAirEU

SUMMARY REPORT

SUMMARY REPORT

Air pollution remains the number one environmental health problem in the EU. According to estimates of the European Environment Agency, about 300 000 deaths are attributable to air pollution each year in the EU. This type of pollution is the cause of serious illnesses such as asthma, cardiovascular problems, respiratory diseases, lung cancer or strokes. Air pollution also adversely affects the environment and is costly for our economy.

The EU Clean Air Forum is organised every two years, to support implementation of EU legislation and policies related to improving air quality. [Previous editions](#) took place in Paris in 2017, in Bratislava in 2019, and in Madrid in 2021.

On 23 and 24 November 2023, the fourth [EU Clean Air Forum](#) brought together around 270 participants on-site on the historical cruise ship ss Rotterdam, in the port of Rotterdam, and more than 1 100 unique viewers online. Among the participants were clean air stakeholders from across the European Union, including competent authorities of the Member States at all relevant levels, the Commission, industry, civil society, and the scientific community.

On the occasion of the Clean Air Forum, the European Environment Agency [published an EEA briefing](#) on 'Harm to human health from air pollution in Europe: burden of disease 2023'. According to this, at least 253,000 deaths in the EU in 2021 were attributable to exposure to fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) pollution above the WHO recommended concentration of 5 µg/m³. Other air pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and ozone (O₃) further worsen the health impact. Furthermore, the EEA updated its [air quality index app](#), which now features Europe-wide modelling of air quality – allowing users to have access to air quality data even if they are not close to a monitoring station.

Furthermore, the Joint Research Centre published the latest edition of the [Urban PM_{2.5} Atlas](#), which pinpoints the main sources of fine particulate matter air pollution across 150 European cities thanks to updated datasets and methodology.



DAY ONE



Day one of this event was opened by Executive Vice-President **Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ**. In his [speech](#) he emphasised that air pollution worsens existing social inequalities. He also stressed that the European Commission has made a number of proposals under the European Green Deal and the Zero Pollution Action Plan to ensure we have the right framework to tackle air pollution in place.



A second opening keynote [speech](#) by **Vivianne HEIJNEN** (Minister of Environment of the Netherlands) echoed the importance of clean air policies, showcasing also latest developments in the Netherlands on source emissions and called for an ambitious revised Ambient Air Quality Directive.



First panel session: Linking clean air, climate and social inequality.



The session highlighted links between **clean air, climate and social inequality**. Speakers discussed the inequalities in the exposure to and health impacts of air pollution, how these can be addressed and the importance to create synergies with climate change mitigation. The session highlighted actions taken at local level in the city of Rotterdam to be able to meet EU air quality standards while involving the communities. Panellists discussed the role of science in decision making and the importance of providing citizens with good air quality data while also building a coherent narrative that would support the understanding of the impact of air pollution and the take up of measures.



The housing sector was highlighted as central in providing accessible, affordable, and quality homes that also contribute to cleaner air. Funding also has a key role to play in ensuring a just green transition. Other aspects to be considered are measures reducing emissions at source and city planning.



Leena YLÄ-MONONEN
Executive Director, European Environmental Agency

Chantal ZEEGERS
Alderman for Climate, Building and Housing Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Bent MADSEN
President, Housing Europe

Mark LAWRENCE
Scientific Director, Research Institute for Sustainability Helmholtz Potsdam

Second panel session: Maritime transport and air pollution



The session was introduced by a video produced by the European Maritime Safety Agency showcasing the monitoring of vessel emissions run by the agency in collaboration with Member State authorities.

This session exchanged on the challenges for port and ship operators towards cleaner and decarbonised transport. Panellist highlighted the importance of shipping for supply chains now and in the future (*"no shipping no shopping"*) with the underlying question: *should lifestyles change to allow for shorter supply chains or is it enough to make shipping more sustainable?* Panellists discussed the efforts made by the industry to reduce emissions from sulphur and nitrogen oxides, and the technologies available to meet the Net Zero objectives by 2050. They stressed that alternative fuels would need to be environmental and climate proofed and requires global safety regulations for their uptake.

Panellist also highlighted the importance of controls to ensure rules are enforced. Emission at sea accounts for 75% and in ports to 25%. Reducing the latter by enforcing EU regulations will help port cities in achieving cleaner air. High skilled labour and financing are also key to meet the set deadlines.

EU Environment
@EU_ENV

Maritime shipping has an important impact on #AirQuality

We should not trade off economic development and health against each other. "We are either going to be rich but ill, or less rich but healthy" - MEP @PetrosKokkalis at the #CleanAirEU Forum



Petros KOKKALIS
Member of European Parliament

Maja MARKOVIĆ KOSTELAC
Executive Director, European Maritime Safety Agency

Anita MÄKINEN
Alternate Permanent Representative of Finland to the International Maritime Organization

Philippou PHILIS
President, European Community Shipowners' Associations

Eric VAN DER SCHANS
Director Environmental Management, Port of Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Interview: Healthy lifestyles



Carlos MORENO (Scientific Director, Sorbonne University) explained the concept of a '15-minute-city', which is understood as a 'happy proximity' for accessing essential services within a short perimeter based on low carbon mobility options or public transport. He noted the concept builds on six basic functions: working, living, supplying, caring, learning and enjoying, which should all be available withing this level of proximity. By ensuring this availability, cities can also help to combat climate change, while improving air quality and social wellbeing. He stressed the need to move away from cities designed with separate specialized neighbourhoods and designed for cars, towards humanizing cities with a high-quality societal life.

Third panel session: Multimodal transport and spatial planning for clean air



Panellist reflected on **multimodal transport and spatial planning for clean air**. Positive examples of shifts in mobility include Baden-Württemberg, where improved mobility patterns made it possible to meet air quality standards previously considered unattainable. Panellists offered perspectives on successful solutions while also looking at the effects of spatial planning on mobility and scope for more sustainable commuting patterns.



The community aspect of the transition was highlighted as one of the most important parts to showcase how we can work together. The panellists also noted the challenges of connecting rural and suburban areas, where other forms of transport are needed such as on demand services, bike and ride, as well as the importance to improve and facilitate cross border connection transport modes. Aspects such as the importance of private partners in spatial planning, the external costs of car use and the need or not to subsidise public transport were also discussed.



Winfried HERMANN
Minister of Transport Baden-Württemberg, Germany
Artur PERCHEL
Deputy Director, International Association of Public Transport

Meredith GLASER
Executive Director of the Urban Cycling Institute, the Netherlands

Fourth panel session: Skills and jobs for clean air



A fourth panel explored the **skills and jobs needed for clean air**. Panellists stressed that skills needed for the green and digital transition often overlap and need to go hand-in-hand. They also noted that all skills (qualified as well as less qualified) needed to be considered and that there is often a need also to apply 'old', existing skills in a new context and with a new mindset.



Also needed are transversal green skills to manage the green transition, as well as teaching and awareness raising. A challenge is to reconvert professionals to applying new technologies and to address the skills gap across the economy, for instance through vocational training. 61 billion EUR are available in EU funding that can be used by Member States for skills and jobs, of which 10 billion are earmarked for green skills.



Stefan OLSSON
Deputy Director General DG Employment, European Commission
Kęstutis KUPŠYS
Member of European Economic and Social Committee

Jürgen SIEBEL
Executive Director, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
Julie KJESTRUP
President, European Alliance of Companies for Energy Efficiency in Buildings

EU Environment @EU.ENV
We have a skills gap across economy. We need to rethink education and involve workers in it.

And EU funding supports green skills - @EU_Social Stefan Olsson at the #CleanAirEU forum

Discover the #EuropeanYearOfSkills for a fair & just green transition: europe.eu/igxjrgt



AiR qualiTy



The day closed with an inspirational talk by **Anna Lea ALBRIGHT** (Environmental Fellow at the Harvard University) about research on how air pollution provided new creative impulses to painters Monet and Turner.

DAY TWO



Day two of this event was opened by European Commissioner for Environment, Ocean and Fisheries **Virginijus SINKEVIČIUS**. He emphasised that EU clean air policy works, but that we still have a considerable way to go to achieve better air quality in 2030 and zero pollution in 2050. To this effect, he recalled the Commission proposal for a revised Ambient Air Quality Directive, and the need for an agreement by the co-legislators on this before the end of the mandate. He also highlighted key source legislation and initiatives recently adopted such as new CO2 standards for new cars and vans, the proposal for Euro 7 road vehicle emission standards, a new package of measures for the freight industry or the European Declaration on Cycling.



In a second opening speech **Ahmed ABOUTALEB** (Mayor of Rotterdam) stressed the need for tougher legislation, financial support and new alliances for cleaner air. He also highlighted key measures that have brought air pollution down in the city of Rotterdam and future measures such as the installation of onshore electricity by 2024, or the construction of a bicycle highway connecting Rotterdam with Den Haag. In the past 20% of all pollution in the Netherlands came from the port of Rotterdam.



Fifth panel session: Revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives



Panellists exchanged on the benefits of aligning EU air quality standards more closely with the recommendations by the World Health Organization – including from an economic and business perspective. The session highlighted the importance of tackling air pollution given the negative health effects but also the impacts on the environment. The positions from the different actors and stakeholders were discussed, such as those of environmental and health NGOs as well as of industry, with both calling for keeping the ambition.

The importance of the National Emissions reduction Commitments Directive was highlighted as key for ensuring e.g. reducing ammonia emissions that contribute to the formation fine particulate matter (PM2.5). Industry noted the importance of monitoring data and modelling by local authorities.

EU Environment @EU.ENV
EU countries face challenges to implement #AirQuality targets, but we will keep supporting them with determination, investments & policies - @childp.child at #CleanAirEU Forum
The revised Ambient Air Quality legislation will help us align more with @WHOeuropea.eu/lbFhKpC



Patrick CHILD
Deputy Director General DG ENV, European Commission

Una POWER
Member of the Committee of the Regions & County Councillor, Ireland

Faustine BAS-DEFOSSEZ
Director for Nature, Health and Environment, European Environmental Bureau

Bruno HERVET
CEO SUEZ Consulting & Vice Executive President Smart Cities

Feature: Euronews video report on air quality in the EU



The subsequent panel was introduced by presenting the latest “[On the Road to Green](#)” episode which showcases clean air actions in Warsaw, Brussels and Copenhagen, the headquarters of the European Environment Agency. The viewing was followed by an interview with the journalists behind the episode **Cyril FOURNERIS** who shared insights of the video making.

Cyril FOURNERIS
EURONEWS - Spreading knowledge for cleaner air

Sixth panel session: Spreading knowledge for cleaner air



During this the session, panellists explored different air quality monitoring tools available at all scales, from remote sensing to citizen science projects, what is done with this data by the health community and how to engage citizens in taking clean air actions. Panellist highlighted key actions taken for building knowledge and improving clean air and how the mobilisation of key actors increased the outreach.



The role of doctors for spreading knowledge, building on the of their patients and other people, and in engaging medical students to improve their knowledge on environmental health was also highlighted. Sensors and modelling, even if they provide lower reliability and data quality, also play a role for complementing the knowledge recorded by the official monitoring sites.



Alain MARON
Minister of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region,
Belgium

Marieke SCHOUTEN
Member of the Committee of the Regions & Alderman of
Nieuwegein, the Netherlands

Ole Johan BAKKE
Vice President, Standing Committee of European Doctors

Alexander SIMIDCHIEV
Co-Founder and Chairman, Air for Health, Bulgaria

EU Environment @EU_ENV
#AirPollution knows no borders, and it is the n. 1 environmental threat to human health - Alexander Simidchiev from Air for Health at #CleanAirEU Forum

Learn more about the harm of air pollution to health & how you can check #AirQuality across the EU: europea.eu/IVCGfRn



Closing



The Fourth EU Clean Air Forum was closed by **Afke VAN RIJN** (DG for the Environment and International Affairs, Netherlands). She recalled the need for ambition and the urgency to act for improving air quality and the health of citizens. She highlighted the needed for high-quality data and for mobilising actors such as doctors for raising awareness. She also stressed the ambition level of the Commission's proposal, and the need to adopt strong legislation, while already taking action on the ground in the meantime.