**AIR POLLUTION**

Air pollution is causing damage to human health and ecosystems. Large parts of the population do not live in a healthy environment, according to current standards. To get on to a sustainable path, Europe will have to be ambitious and go beyond current legislation.

[Particulate matter](http://glossary.eea.europa.eu/terminology/concept_html?term=particulate%20matter), [nitrogen dioxide](http://glossary.eea.europa.eu/terminology/concept_html?term=nitrogen%20dioxide) and [ground-level ozone](http://glossary.eea.europa.eu/terminology/concept_html?term=ground-level%20ozone), are now generally recognised as the three pollutants that most significantly affect human health. Long-term and peak exposures to these pollutants range in severity of impact, from impairing the respiratory system to premature death. Around 90 % of city dwellers in Europe are exposed to pollutants at concentrations higher than the air quality levels deemed harmful to health.

**Sources of air pollution**

There are various sources of air pollution, both anthropogenic and of natural origin:

* burning of fossil fuels in electricity generation, transport, industry and households;
* industrial processes and solvent use, for example in chemical and mineral industries;
* agriculture;
* waste treatment;
* volcanic eruptions, windblown dust, sea-salt spray and emissions of volatile organic compounds from plants are examples of natural emission sources.

**ARE THERE ANY IMPROVEMENTS ?**

The EEA's ['Air quality in Europe — 2017 report](https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/air-quality-in-europe-2017)' presents an updated analysis of air quality and its impacts. The European Commission is committed to tackling this and help Member States make sure that the quality of their citizens' air is of the highest standard,” added Karmenu Vella, EU Commissioner for environment, maritime affairs and fisheries.

This year's report also puts special focus on agriculture, which is an important emitter of air pollutants and greenhouse gases. A wide range of actions, including technically and economically viable measures, are available to reduce emissions from agriculture but have yet to be adopted at the scale and intensity needed, the report notes.

Sources

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/improving-air-quality-in-european>