

EU adopts stricter rules on industrial emissions

New EU legislation adopted today will bring down industrial emissions from large combustion plants across the EU, bringing several environmental and health benefits to Europe's citizens, like an expected reduction in premature deaths of 13,000 per year. The stricter legislation on industrial emissions was proposed by the European Commission in December 2007. The new rules will also lead to significant savings through the reduction of administrative burden and provide a more level playing field for industry.

EU Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik said: *"The vote by the Council to adopt the new Directive on industrial emissions is a milestone in industrial pollution control in the European Union. It will help ensure the level of protection from industrial pollution that EU citizens deserve. It will substantially strengthen the current legal framework further reducing air and other environmental pollution and become an important driver for eco-innovation."*

Application of Best Available Techniques strengthened

The Directive on industrial emissions updates and merges seven pieces of existing legislation.

At the core of the new Directive is the strengthening of the application of Best Available Techniques (BAT), making BAT Conclusions the reference point in the permitting process. The proposal revises the minimum emission limits that apply to large combustion plants across the EU to bring them in line with BAT.

These requirements should ensure that operators of industrial installations apply BAT in a more uniform manner and that consequently a more level playing field for industry is achieved.

The Commission believes that BAT Conclusions are essential in delivering implementation of BAT in a clear, enforceable and transparent manner across all Member States.

Stimulating eco-innovation and reducing unnecessary burden for operators

The strengthened role of BAT will give clear signals to industry to ensure strives to deliver the high environmental performance described in BAT Conclusions at the lowest costs. Furthermore, the Directive also requests Member States to actively promote emerging techniques, thereby fuelling a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement of EU industry's environmental performance.

Recognising that unnecessary administrative burden is harmful to European industry and its competitiveness in the global market the Directive reduces such administrative burden by €32 million per year at the EU level. The Commission will also continue to work with Member States to try and tackle unnecessary administrative burden at the national level in their implementation of the Directive over the coming years.

Reducing emissions from the largest combustion plants

Despite the significant emission reductions achieved over the past two decades, fossil fuel firing combustion plants used in the energy sector are still a major source of air pollutant emissions. The Directive sets stricter emission limits for the largest plants across the EU to ensure that they apply BAT. The resulting benefits of emission reductions run to €7-28 billion per year including the reduction of premature deaths by 13 000 per annum. This represents the savings in terms of reduced health impacts of pollutants from large combustion plants on EU citizens once the costs of implementation such as the fitting of abatement equipment have been taken into account for operators.

The Directive makes sure that these plants will substantially reduce their harmful emissions whilst providing sufficient flexibility guaranteeing the short and long term security of energy supply within the EU.

Improving the tools for checking and enforcing compliance

The new Directive includes a number of improved mechanisms for Member States to check and enforce compliance with the new legislation. Provisions related to emission monitoring and reporting and to environmental inspections have been strongly enhanced. Improvements have also been made regarding public access to information. The clearer implementation requirements for Member States will facilitate the Commission's task of ensuring the full application of the Directive.

Next steps

The Directive will enter into force 20 days after its publication in the Official Journal, which is expected before the end of 2010. Member States will then have 2 years to transpose the Directive into their legislation and to start implementing the new legislation. For further details, visit:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/air/pollutants/stationary/index.htm>