

European Mayors' statement on air pollution

Our cities have to breathe!

We, European Mayors, call on the European Commission to keep its "zero pollution" strategy on course as major European decisions on air quality are about to be taken.

We can no longer afford the consequences of pollution on our health.

Air pollution is responsible for serious health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer which is widely demonstrated. It causes premature births and affects neurological development. Each year it is responsible for more than 300,000 deaths. The problem is practically acute in urban areas where more than 70% of the population of the European Union lives, due to the high concentration of polluting activities such as transport and heating.

We, Mayors of Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Lisbon, Paris and Rome, are taking responsibility and doing our part. We are acting to improve air quality locally by encouraging and facilitating alternatives to private cars and energy efficiency retrofits.

Yet our efforts are clearly insufficient. We need European action to meet the three challenges of our time.

Firstly, protection for the most vulnerable. Pollution affects low-income communities more strongly, even though they are less likely to use their cars. Children are particularly at risk, especially during their first 1000 days. Emissions must be reduced quickly to bring the European Union's air quality standards in line with those of the WHO, with an emphasis on ultrafine particles.

Secondly, the energy transition. Our cities should adapt to a future without oil. We welcome the timeline for the end of internal combustion engines, and we are now moving forward together on this common European track. We absolutely must hold the course. The Euro 7 standard will be an important milestone, and is necessary for our low-emission zones to be successful and to reduce our emissions. We are now expecting methane emissions to be identified as a local air pollutant at last. Euro 7 will have to reflect real driving conditions in urban areas, a prerequisite for the success of our actions.

Finally, road traffic in urban areas. While the problem of exhaust emissions is well known, attention must be paid to non-exhaust emissions such as brake and tire abrasion, which are significant traffic pollutants. The Euro emission standards for vehicles set limits for fine particle emissions from exhausts only. It is time to lay the groundwork for a new regulation. Here's the good news: technologies are being developed and are already effective.

We really have to get car manufacturers to embrace these new technologies faster. That's why we expect the European Commission to introduce these new standards as soon as they are available: to support low-emission zones, to meet our climate targets and to set new limits for methane, ultra-fine particles and braking particles.

We call on the European Parliament and the Member States to quickly pass these new standards as to be effective no later than 2025.

As mayors, we will continue to fight for clean air on our streets. Together, with ambitious European incentives, we can reduce air pollution and protect our planet and the health of our fellow citizens.