



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 25 March 2011

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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council
Subject: Air Quality: ensuring the forthcoming European air quality legislation takes full account of transport issues
– Presentation by the United Kingdom delegation

Delegations will find annexed an information note on the above mentioned subject, which will be dealt with under "Any Other Business" at the meeting of the Council (**Transport, Telecommunications and Energy**) on 31 March 2011.

Air Quality: ensuring the forthcoming European air quality legislation takes full account of transport issues

United Kingdom and Italy

Poor air quality harms health and the natural environment. A number of European Union Directives¹ seek to reduce the harmful impacts of air pollution by limiting both overall pollutant emissions and maximum concentrations of pollutants in ambient air. Transport is a major source of air pollution in urban and roadside locations.

In 2013 the European Commission is planning to review air quality legislation, with preliminary work for this review beginning this year, as detailed in EC Staff Working Paper 7805/11.

Concerted action by Member States and the Commission has resulted in significant reductions in pollutant emissions in Europe in recent years, including from transport sources, and these improvements are set to continue. We are committed to improving air quality and recognise the important contribution that transport will make in achieving this.

However, recent evidence suggests that there will be locations in many Member States where achieving compliance with all of the limit values in European legislation, within the necessary timescales, will be challenging. In particular, we are disappointed by data which shows that new European vehicle emissions standards have not been effective at controlling diesel NO_x emissions in urban driving conditions. This significantly curtails the range of options available to Member States to deliver compliance with air quality legislation. Against this background, Member States will need to assess what further cost-effective measures may be available at national level to improve air quality, and the impact these might make.

¹ For example Directive 2008/50/EC of 21 May 2008 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe and Directive 2001/81/EC of 23 October 2001 on national emission ceilings for certain atmospheric pollutants.

The review should aim at delivering the right outcomes for both the environment and public health, and must also be mindful of the need for sustainable economic growth. It must be evidence-based, take account of wider challenges for Member States and be coherent with other policy objectives, such as those on transport and climate change. We are concerned that the current situation may increasingly constrain Member States' ability to deliver significant and much-needed future transport infrastructure developments if suitable mitigation options cannot be identified. We need to ensure that our resources are properly focussed on action that targets both air pollution and other environmental objectives, such as carbon reduction. We call on Member States and the Commission to ensure that this review is comprehensive and fully considers issues relating to transport.
