



ESMO Feedback - Proposal for Revising and Merging the EU Ambient Air Quality Directives

The [European Society for Medical Oncology \(ESMO\)](#) - representing more than 28,000 oncology professionals from over 160 countries - welcomes the European Commission's ambition to achieve zero air pollution by 2050 by revising and merging the Ambient Air Quality Directives.

We are pleased that the legislative proposal begins by noting that “clean air is essential to human health” and share its concerns that “a significant number of non-communicable diseases such as...lung cancer, are still attributed to air pollution (and especially to particulate matter...)”.¹

Likewise, and as a Non-State Actor (NSA) in official relations with the World Health Organisation (WHO), ESMO welcomes its intent to align “EU air quality standards more closely with the recommendations of the WHO”² and recognition that the main benefits of such action will be health related - e.g., reduced mortality & morbidity with an attendant reduction in healthcare expenditure.

Exposure to air pollution is increasingly being linked³ to lung cancer incidence and mortality, with more than 300,000 lung cancer deaths globally being related to exposure to ambient (outdoor) air pollution in 2019.⁴ What is more, emerging evidence - first presented at the ESMO Congress held in Paris in 2022 - is demonstrating the molecular mechanism underlying the link between air pollution and lung cancer in non-smokers.⁵

Against the above, we believe the proposal to reduce the annual limit value for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) from 25 µg/m³ to 10 µg/m³ by 2030 is much needed. Nevertheless, in light of the cancer burden and premature deaths caused by air pollution, **we believe that the annual limit value for PM_{2.5} in the EU should be reduced further to 5 µg/m³ by 2030**, in line with the current WHO recommendations.

It is our conviction that such action will axiomatically contribute to a significant reduction in both the incidence - 318,000 cases (11.9% of all cancers) - and mortality - 257,000 deaths (20.4% of all cancer

¹ [Proposal for a Directive on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe](#)

² [WHO global air quality guidelines: particulate matter \(PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀\), ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide](#)

³ [Air pollution affects lung cancer survival - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

⁴ [Lung Cancer Death Attributable to Long-Term Ambient Particulate Matter \(PM_{2.5}\) Exposure in East Asian Countries During 1990-2019 - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

⁵ [A new pathway from air pollution to lung cancer in non-smokers \(esmo.org\)](#)



deaths) - of lung cancer in the EU.⁶ In addition, and as air pollution self-evidently does not respect borders, such a move would further cement the EU's position in the vanguard of global public health and encourage neighboring legislators to adopt similarly progressive measures, with an attendant benefit for the health of all Europeans.

Ahead of the triilogue negotiations, we thank you for considering our views and confirm our availability to elucidate further, in person, or by continued correspondence.

For further information, please contact: publicpolicy@esmo.org

⁶ [European Cancer Information System \(ECIS\)](#)