AIR QUALITY

Poor air quality adversely affects human health, the environment, and the climate. In Europe, emissions of many air pollutants have decreased substantially over the past decades, resulting in improved air quality across the region. However, air pollutant concentrations are still too high, and air quality problems persist. A significant proportion of Europe’s population live in areas, especially cities, where exceedances of air quality standards occur: ozone, nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter (PM) pollution pose serious health risks.

The main policy instruments on air pollution within the EU include the Ambient Air Quality Directive (adopted as 2008/50/EC) which, together with the fourth daughter Directive (2004/107/EC) provides the current framework for the control of ambient concentrations of air pollution in the EU. National Emission Ceilings (NEC) Directive establishes national emission reduction commitments for 2020 and 2030 for five air pollutants. In addition, there is source-specific legislation addressing industrial emissions, road and off-road vehicle emissions, fuel quality standards etc. Emissions are also addressed internationally under the 1979 Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution.

European legislation on air quality is built on certain principles. The first of these is that the Member States divide their territory into a number of zones and agglomerations. In these zones and agglomerations, the Member States should undertake assessments of air pollution levels using measurements, modelling and other empirical techniques – and report air quality data to the European Commission accordingly. Where levels are elevated above limit or target values, Member States should prepare an air quality plan or programme to address the sources responsible and so ensure compliance with the limit value. In addition, information on air quality should be disseminated to the public.

In Serbia, in 2018¹ electricity and heat production are responsible for 91% of sulphur dioxide (SO2) emissions. Most of the emissions of particulate matter PM10 (57%) and PM2.5 (75%) originated from heating plant of less than 50 MW and households. The largest emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx) come from thermal power plants, the mineral and chemical industries.

Air sector legislation is largely aligned with EU requirements. Nevertheless, additional actions are needed, and full transposition will be achieved by 2021.

Air Quality (AQ) monitoring is in place. State funded national AQ monitoring network consists of Automatic AQ system, operated by SEPA and sub network of urban stations in towns of Serbia on 36 measurement sites, where measurements of different pollutants are operated by 17 Public Health Institutes and Institute for Mining and Metallurgy Bor. The local network of measurement stations and/or sites consist of additional measurement stations and/or sites for air quality monitoring at the level of autonomous province and local self-government units and it is funded from the budget of the autonomous province or the local self-government units.

¹ Presented data for 2018 in Serbia are from Serbian Environmental Protection Agency’s Annual report on air quality. The report includes relevant data from national and local air quality monitoring networks.
Air pollution knows no borders and we need to tackle the challenge of improving air quality together. Implementation of the EU air protection requirements provide a basis for common action. This is the most efficient way to ensure healthy environment for people of Serbia and other countries.