Press release | 23.11.2016

Air pollution

Revised legislation won't tackle public health crisis

The European Parliament has today voted in favour of a long-overdue revision of EU air quality legislation, setting out national limits on a range of air pollutants. The Greens/EFA group has condemned the final agreement, which is substantially weaker than the European Commission's original proposal.

Air pollution is understood to contribute to the premature deaths of over 400,000 people per year in the EU (1).

Commenting on the vote, Green environment and health spokesperson **Bas Eickhout** said:

"This is a missed opportunity to finally get serious about the crisis in public health caused by poor air quality. We are left with final legislation that is substantially weaker than the Commission's original proposal and is behind the position voted for by the European Parliament on timelines of binding limits and curbing farming related air pollutants.

"For many of our citizens, poor air quality is a serious health risk. But major loopholes remain which will allow Member States to shirk their responsibilities. 'Flexibilities' in the law will allow Member States to cook their books and adjust their national emissions inventories if there are worse than expected results of policy actions, like on diesel emissions.

"As the Dieselgate scandal has already demonstrated, many EU governments show a troubling unwillingness to address the problem of air pollution, preferring to take a narrow national approach in spite of the clearly cross-border nature of the problem."

(1) See the European Environment Agency's Air quality in Europe — 2015 report: http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/air-quality-in-europe-2015

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Responsible MEPs

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