

Health, environment and climate groups have welcomed the decision today by EU Member States of new air pollution standards which will force the coal industry to reduce their toxic fumes and save more than 20,000 lives every year.

The new LCP BREF standards will require member states to tighten the limits of toxic pollutants like nitrogen oxides (NO_x), sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and particulate matter for all the coal-fired power plants as well as other power plants in the European Union. Air pollution limits for mercury have also been introduced for the first time. The new standards will have to be complied with by 2021.

The 280 coal-fired power plants in the EU produce one-quarter of all the electricity generated in the EU but are responsible for more than 70% of the EU's sulphur dioxide emissions and more than 40% of nitrogen oxide emissions from the industry sector.

"With this agreement, national governments will be creating large benefits for the health of many Europeans", commented Julia Gogolewska of the Health and Environment Alliance.

"The adoption of the LCP BREF is crucial for achieving clean air everywhere in Europe and needs to be applied by all governments and authorities to reduce existing inequalities related to air quality".

"EU coal power plants will now either have to reduce their pollution or close down," said Darek Urbaniak, Senior energy policy officer at WWF European Policy Office. "We call on EU leaders to continually tighten these air pollution standards over time in order to protect our health and our environment. It is about time Europe quits its dirty coal addiction for good and invest in energy efficiency and renewables instead."

"We welcome the fact that EU Governments have finally taken responsibility and agreed to set new pollution limits to protect their citizens and environment. This is an imperative first step while the ultimate goal of the energy transition the EU committed to in the Paris Agreement, should be to phase out coal and switch to clean renewable energy and energy efficiency," commented Joanna Flisowska, Coal Policy Coordinator at Climate Action Network on the outcome of the vote.

More than 126,000 citizens recently called on European Health and Environment Ministers to "clean up Europe's toxic air" in a Europe-wide petition organised by Climate Action Network Europe, the European Environmental Bureau, the Health and Environment Alliance, WWF, and WeMove.EU. The 126 000 signatures were publicly presented today in an action staged in front of the European Commission and the Council of the EU in Brussels.

Source: caneurope