

The European Parliament's stance on the Industrial Emissions Directive has failed to meet the expectations of environmental organisations, though some also pointed to a few silver linings.

The European Parliament on Tuesday (11 July) supported the Commission's proposal to extend the directive to mines and battery manufacturing plants, making them responsible for reducing air, water and soil pollution.

Lawmakers also voted to increase transparency and public participation in the licensing, operation and control of regulated installations.

"Innovation is key to achieving zero pollution and for this, we need a more competitive European industrial sector," said Radan Kanev (EPP), a Bulgarian MEP who was the Parliament's speaker on the proposal.

"Our position provides breathing space for businesses by giving them reasonable transition periods to prepare for the new requirements, fast-track procedures for permits and flexibility to develop emerging techniques," the centre-right MEP said.

But environmental NGOs were quick to criticise the unambitious result.

They pointed out that the vote has missed the opportunity to revolutionise industries, and instead "favours the polluters' interests".

"The situation with EU lawmaking right now is genuinely alarming. We have two prerogatives right now: protect people and protect the planet they live on. Somehow, politics has become about neither," said **Bellinda Bartolucci**, a lawyer with the green NGO ClientEarth.

The voted-upon Industrial Emissions Directive, she argued, is not strong enough to offer any effective protection from illegal pollution.

For instance, the right to compensation, a provision widely supported by environment and health advocacy groups, was "gutted" in the vote, Bartolucci pointed out, saying the Parliament removed the polluter's responsibility to prove that violating the law did not cause health damage.

The Parliament acknowledged the health risks associated with living close to industry facilities, and established an avenue for redress.

But the adopted compensation provision is an "empty shell" of itself that lacks consideration for public health, the European Environmental Bureau said in a statement.

"This law is all headlines and no content. On behalf of everyone who needs protection from illegal pollution, and their rights upheld, we're bitterly disappointed," Bartolucci said.

MEPs also rejected the Commission's proposal to restrict factory farms and extend the directive's rules to cattle farms, in a move that NGOs claim will allow for more pollution.

"Once again, decision-makers missed the opportunity to protect people and the environment but also levelling the playing field for frontrunner industries," said Christian Schaible, from the European Environmental Bureau (EEB).

Silver linings

However, the Parliament also took some steps in the right direction, NGOs noted. New rules now require waste incinerators to prevent and monitor the emission of persistent pollutants at all times of operation, as well as publish raw data for improved transparency on air pollution.

"The requirement to publish raw data rather than calculator averages will ensure higher levels of accountability and transparency from waste incineration and co-incineration plant operators," said **Janek Vahk from Zero Waste Europe**.

"By making this information readily available to the public, operators are held to stricter environmental standards," he said.

Under the directive, **all per-and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)** are now listed as a group and are subject to permit limits and monitoring.

Lastly, the Parliament will transform the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register into the Industrial Emissions Portal, where citizens will be able to access and extract data on polluting activities.

With its position adopted, the Parliament can now begin negotiations with EU member states in the Council to agree on the final shape of the legislation.

Source: euractiv