



The central graphic is a circular collage on a blue background with white swirls. It features various icons representing clean energy (wind turbines), urban development (apartment buildings, a bus), agriculture (a tractor, a cow, a farmer), and nature (trees, a sun). A winding road with a dashed white line runs through the center of the collage. The text 'EU CLEAN AIR FORUM' is prominently displayed in the middle of the circle.

EU CLEAN AIR FORUM

18-19 NOVEMBER 2021

MADRID-SPAIN

#CleanAirEU

Summary Report



Over the past few years, estimates point to up to 400.000 **premature deaths** due to air pollution annually across the EU. According to the [latest findings](#) of the European Environment Agency, in 2019 particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) alone was responsible for 307.000 premature death.

This marks a steady decrease since the year 2005, and shows that **clean air policies deliver** successes. Nevertheless, more than half of these deaths could have been avoided if EU Member States had reached the [WHO's new air quality guideline](#) level of 5 µg/m³.

Tackling air pollution is a **complex and systemic challenge** that requires concerted action across various economic sectors, including energy and industrial activities, agricultural production systems, transport, as well as household heating and consumption.

The European Commission organised the third [EU Clean Air Forum](#) in close collaboration with the Spanish government on 18 and 19 November 2021 in Madrid, to discuss how to achieve further improvements in air quality and reduce air pollution across the EU. Previous editions took place in 2017 in Paris and in 2019 in Bratislava.

This third Forum focused on **six themes**. High-level interventions and panel discussions reflected specifically on the zero pollution challenge; on engagement cities and citizens; on linking clean air and economic recovery; on air pollution and climate change; on access to justice and the right to clean air; and on the revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives.

The Forum was attended by over 200 participants over the one day and a half of duration, as well as by more than 500 participants online. During the week of the Forum, from 15 to 22 November, the hashtag #CleanAirEU reached close to 27 million Twitter and Instagram accounts globally.

Day 1

Opening and keynote speech

The third EU Clean Air Forum was opened by Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, and Teresa Ribera, third Vice-President and Minister for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge of Spain.

Executive Vice-President Timmermans pointed out the urgent need to tackle air pollution and underlined the linkage to climate change and how actions and measures in both policy areas deliver on a win-win situation. In particular phasing out coal and the reduction of methane emissions have co-benefits in decreasing air pollution and mitigating climate change. He stressed that air quality is also an issue of social justice, as it leaves at highest risk those among us, who cannot simply move away when pollution in their neighbourhood spikes. The Zero Pollution Action Plan was emphasised as an important milestone that brings together all relevant EU policies under one strand putting Europe on a path towards a greener Europe.



Vice-President Ribera highlighted in her opening remarks the importance of clean air for our health and well-being and addressed the need for necessary air quality actions and measures, and how those can set impulses for urban innovations. She highlighted the action taken at national level to reduce air pollution and recalled the importance of EU legislation to guide other levels of governance, and also that to be taken at local level.





Session 1

Zero Pollution: Air Quality and Health

The Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus introduced the session with keynote remarks on the health impacts of air pollution and raised awareness of the social inequality when it comes to the exposure of poor air quality. He recalled the links between environment and health and highlighted the recent publication of the WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines that recommend new air quality levels to protect the health of populations, by reducing levels of key air pollutants, some of which also contribute to climate change.

The panellist discussion that followed focused on the link between air pollution and health impacts. The panellists emphasised the need to tackle air pollution at source and called for increased policy coherence across all governmental levels to implement effective measures. Notably when it comes to domestic use of biomass burning for heating purposes, which has a strong impact on indoor air pollution and health implications.

Better education on impacts from air pollution is also needed to further raise awareness about the personal health risks of polluted air. Speakers also debated on the link between air pollution and climate change and how measures and actions have health co-benefits in both policy areas.



KEYNOTE REMARKS

Dr Tedros ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS, Director-General, World Health Organization

SPEAKERS

Carolina DARIAS, Minister of Health, Spain

Dr. Maria NEIRA, Director, Environment, Climate Change and Health, World Health Organization

Zorana ANDERSEN, Chair Environment and Health Committee, European Respiratory Society

John F. RYAN, Director for Public Health, European Commission

Dr Francesco FORASTIERE, National Research Council (CNR-IRIB), Italy

Clean Air and modern society

An on-stage interview with award-winning novelist Antonio Muñoz Molina highlighted how cultural engagement with the topic of air pollution, and its depiction of it in literature, influences our perceptions and the challenges we face. This can help make a bridge between the issue's societal dimension and personal decisions. He noted that the power of imagination to build a more sustainable future is a key step towards taking further actions.



SPEAKERS

Antonio MUÑOZ MOLINA, Award-winning novelist, Spain

European Air Quality Index

The Director-General for the Environment of the European Commission, Florika Fink-Hooijer highlighted in her introductory comments the need for further public awareness raising of air quality problems and introduced the idea of developing a smartphone application that displays near real time information of air quality in a more accessible way. The Executive Director of the European Environment Agency (EEA) Hans Bruyninckx gave an overview of trends and health impacts of air quality in Europe and launched the European Environment Agency's new Air Quality Index mobile application that informs when air pollution rises above safe levels and may impact health.



SPEAKERS

Florika FINK-HOOIJER, Director General Environment, European Commission

Hans BRUYNINCKX, Executive Director, European Environment Agency



Session 2 Engagement with cities and citizens

The session was introduced by keynote remarks from Michael R. Bloomberg, Founder of Bloomberg LP and Bloomberg Philanthropies, who highlighted that tackling air pollution is one of our greatest opportunities for a healthier and longer life.

The panel focused on the challenges that local and regional authorities face when developing and implementing air quality measures. The panellists emphasised the importance of raising awareness of air quality problems and a stronger integration of the public in urban planning developments.

They also underlined the importance of citizen science as an instrument to create understanding of the local situation and to set an impulse for individual actions. Collaboration and best practice examples can accelerate the transition to a systemic change of transportation modules in the urban areas. Speakers also offered their perspective on solutions to improve air quality via an increased interconnectivity with other horizontal or vertical governmental levels.



KEYNOTE REMARKS

Michael R. BLOOMBERG, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Climate Ambition and Solutions, Founder of Bloomberg LP and Bloomberg Philanthropies

SPEAKERS

Hans BRUYNINCKX, Executive Director, European Environment Agency

Axel JOSEFSON, Mayor of Gothenburg, Sweden

Janet SANZ CID, Deputy Mayor of Barcelona, Spain

Vasco ALVES CORDEIRO, First Vice President, European Committee of the Regions

Session 3 Linking clean air, climate and recovery

This session reflected on addressing the linkage between clean air and climate change, in particular the interplay of actions that were put forward by Member States in the national Recovery and Resilience Plans. The aim of those plans is to strengthen European societies and economies by funding reforms and investments that accelerate the green and digital transition. The speakers emphasised that measures are designed to mitigate climate change impacts while having major co-benefits for environmental policies. Specific measures of national Recovery and Resilience Plans were discussed and key benefits across different policy areas identified.



SPEAKERS

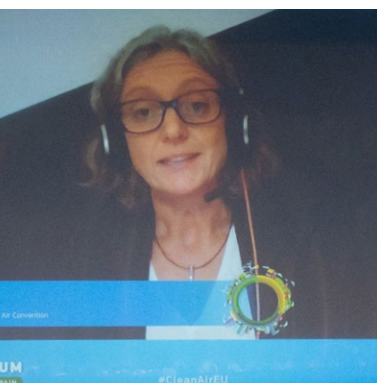
Céline GAUER, Head of the Recovery and Resilience Task Force, European Commission

Manuel DE LA ROCHA VÁZQUEZ, Secretary General of Economic Affairs and G20, Spain



Session 4

Air pollution, climate change and biodiversity



The session was introduced via a [video](#) from the World Meteorological Organisation on the connections between air quality and climate by explaining the dynamics of the atmosphere and the dynamics and effects of air pollutants both on climate and air.

Panellists debated on the effects of ozone and methane emissions on health and biodiversity and called for actions regarding these pollutants at international level. The session showcased action taken by regional authorities, the engagement from the farmers and farmers' associations to combat climate change and reduce air pollution, as well as how satellite data coming from Copernicus can help on providing data, understanding the challenge, and guide authorities for the action to be taken. A call for integrated analysis frameworks, coordinated policies and win-win solutions both for climate and air was made.



SPEAKERS

Piotr SZYMANSKI, Director for Climate, Transport and Energy, Joint Research Center, European Commission

Anna ENGLERYD, Chair of the Executive Body of the UNECE Air Convention

Vincent-Henri PEUCH, Head of the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service

Mireia MOLLÁ, Councillor from the Region of Valencia

Ramón ARMENGOL, President, Cogeca

Anne LASSMAN-TRAPPIER, France Nature Environment, France

Day 2

Opening and keynote speech

The second day of third EU Clean Air Forum was opened by Virginijus Sinkevičius, European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, and José Luis Martínez-Almeida, Mayor of the city of Madrid.

Commissioner Sinkevičius explained the progress made during the last years to improve air quality which demands that we continue working. Under the European Green Deal, and more specifically, under the umbrella of the zero pollution ambition for a non-toxic environment, the European Commission will draw on the lessons from the fitness check of the Ambient Air Quality Directives, and revise their provisions. A new policy proposal is planned for the second half of 2022. In the meantime the Commissioner outlined others tools at hand to achieve clean air such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the Fit for 55 package and the introduction of stricter requirements to tackle air pollution at source, among others.



Mayor Martínez-Almeida, opened stating the commitment from the city of Madrid to comply with the EU air quality standards as soon as possible following years of in compliance and acknowledging the important role that cities play in the fight against climate change and air pollution. For the achievement of this he explained the actions taken by the city hall since they entered into office by the adoption of the *Roadmap towards climate neutrality for the city of Madrid and the Madrid 360 Environmental Sustainability Strategy*.



Session 5

Access to justice and a right to clean air?



Panellists reflected on the implementation and enforceability of clean air policies by explaining the current EU case law and the effects it has had for measures to be taken, the action taken by the European Commission to enforce its legislation and how civil society can act for ensuring implementation of the legislation.

The session also discussed the role of consumers for making choices that reduce air pollution, as well as a forward look to the revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives to strengthen enforcement through penalties and compensation mechanisms, and the necessary air quality plans for concrete action to be taken.



SPEAKERS

Daniel CALLEJA CRESPO, Director General Legal Service, European Commission

Alain MARON, Minister for climate transition, environment and participative democracy, Brussels-Capital Region, Belgium

Monique GOYENS, Director General, The European Consumer Organisation

Luc LAVRYSEN, President of the European Union Forum of Judges for the Environment

Anna DWORAKOWSKA, Programme Director, Polish Smog Alert

Session 6

Air quality: revision of EU Rules

This discussion focused on the existing European legislative framework of ambient air quality and the potential gaps that need to be addressed in the ongoing revision of the EU air quality rules to deliver overall improvements of ambient air. Panellists debated on the level of ambition needed and showed strong support for tightening and extending the scope

of the Ambient Air Quality Directives, and for enhancing links with the toolboxes of other EU policies. Speakers also offered their views from a different angle of stakeholder perspectives emphasising the need for closer collaboration at all relevant levels and coherence of other EU policies for a joint effort to reduce air pollution.

SPEAKERS

Florika FINK-HOOIJER, Director General Environment, European Commission

Javi LÓPEZ, Member of the European Parliament

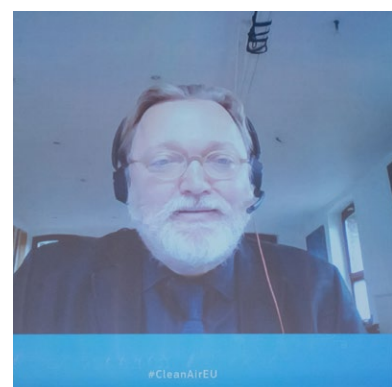
Oana-Alexandra CAMBERA, Deputy, Chamber of Deputies, Romania

Rafał TRZASKOWSKI, Mayor of Warsaw, Poland

John COOPER, Director General, Concawe

Patrick TEN BRINK, Director for EU Policy

Peter DÍEZ, Director for International Affairs, the Netherlands



*Clean air is essential for healthy living.
The EU is working to ensure that every citizen can
breathe without risking their well-being.*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

EU laws and clean air policies have a direct benefit on our health,
the economy and the environment.

EU air policy:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/air/>



EUEnvironment



EU ENV

#CleanAirEU

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