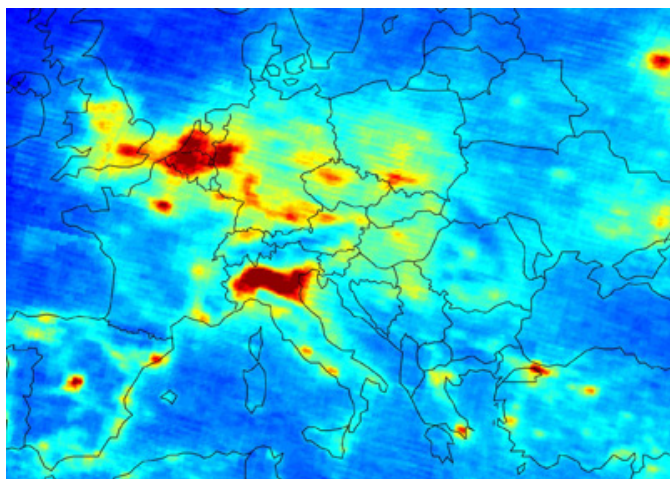


Air pollutant emission limits exceeded in twelve EU Member States

Twelve Member States exceeded one or more of the emission limits set by the EU National Emission Ceilings (NEC) Directive, according to recent official data for 2010 reported to the European Environment Agency (EEA). In some instances the limits were exceeded by significant amounts.



For the first time, preliminary data recently reported to the EEA by Member States allow a comparison with the legally binding emission limits for 2010 set in the [EU NEC Directive](#). The directive covers four main air pollutants: sulphur dioxide (SO

2

), nitrogen oxides (NO

x

), non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs) and ammonia (NH

3

). These pollutants can cause respiratory problems, contribute to the acidification of soil and surface water, and damage vegetation. The ceilings set in the NEC directive were designed to reduce such adverse impacts by an agreed amount.

"These pollutants contribute to health problems and can also lead to economic losses and environmental damage," EEA Executive Director Prof. Jacqueline McGlade said. "The EEA data shows that many EU Member States missed the 2010 limits, so these countries will need to make further efforts to help reduce air pollution in Europe."

The pollutant for which most exceedances were registered was NO_x. Preliminary analysis shows eleven Member States exceeding their respective NO_x ceilings (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden)

(see Table 1).

The road transport sector is one of the main contributory factors behind the large number of NO_x exceedances, contributing approximately 40 % of total EU-27 NO_x emissions. Reductions of NO_x from this sector over the last 2 decades have not been as large as originally anticipated. This is partly because the sector has grown more than expected and partly because vehicle emission standards have not always delivered the anticipated level of NO_x reductions.

Spain was the only Member State to have exceeded three of its four emission ceilings under the NECD; followed by Germany with two exceedances. Finland exceeded its ammonia ceiling.

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