

'A lifeline for dirty cars': EU backs new air pollution limits, but not until 2035

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

- a. Which of these environmental issues is the biggest problem? Rank them from 1 (biggest problem) to 4 (smallest problem). Give reasons for your choices.

_____ dirty water

_____ dirty air

_____ deforestation

_____ plastic

2 Key words

- a. Write the correct words from the wordpool to match the definitions below. Then, find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

breathe

improve

pollution

quality

technology

1. move air into and out of your body _____
2. damage to water, air, or land because of harmful things _____
3. how good or bad something is _____
4. scientific knowledge used in helpful ways _____
5. get better or help someone/something get better _____

ashamed

blood pressure

cost

economy

healthcare

6. feeling guilty or embarrassed about something you did _____
7. the relationship between things made, things sold, and how much money there is

8. the business of giving medical care _____
9. cause you to lose something valuable _____
10. a measure of how strongly blood moves in the body _____

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b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences.

1. How much does that medicine _____?
2. _____ slowly to help calm yourself down.
3. Those shoes are handmade and very good _____.
4. Private _____ is very expensive in the US.
5. Do you think the country's _____ is strong right now?
6. The nurse used a machine to check the patient's _____.

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- 1 The European Parliament agreed to meet the World Health Organization's (WHO) safety levels for clean air, which will save lives and money. But after centre-right politicians complained, it pushed back the date to meet them by five years.
- 2 "This is great news for all European citizens," said Zorana Jovanovic Andersen, an epidemiologist at the University of Copenhagen and member of the European Respiratory Society. Even with the date changed from 2030 to 2035, the vote "is an important step in the right direction toward clean air for all," she said.
- 3 Almost everyone in Europe's cities breathes air which does not meet the WHO's yearly level of 5 µg/m³. PM2.5 are tiny things in the air that can pass into the blood. Then they travel through the body and cause harm. Scientists and doctors estimate that outdoor air pollution kills 300,000 people in Europe each year.
- 4 The update to the air quality law was passed by 363 votes in favour to 226 votes against. The centre-right European People's Party (EPP) voted against it.
- 5 Peter Liese, a German MEP and the EPP's environmental spokesperson, said he believes this could bring driving bans, close construction projects and close factories. He thinks that we should use technology to improve air quality.
- 6 Margherita Tolotto, with the European Environment Bureau, said that many politicians are against the law, but they are ashamed to say so. How can they tell people that they're fighting for polluted air?
- 7 As well as harming human health, dirty air holds back economies. Governments have to spend more on healthcare, and workers take more sick days. The European Commission found that meeting the WHO limits for PM2.5 by 2030 would help the economy more than weaker rules.
- 8 If PM2.5 levels were 15 µg/m³, the yearly benefit would be 90 billion Euro. If they were 5 µg/m³, it would be 123 billion euros.
- 9 Zachary Azdad, with the non-profit Transport & Environment, said the law was a positive step but that the 2035 date will cost lives because people will breathe more polluted air.
- 10 Air pollution was the fourth biggest reason for early death globally in 2019. The top three are blood pressure, smoking and diet. "The other three you have control over," said Barbara Hoffman, an environmental epidemiologist at the University of Düsseldorf, "but you cannot control the air you breathe."

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What did the European Parliament agree to do?
2. What will this do?
3. When will this change happen?
4. How does Zorana Jovanovic Andersen feel about the news?
5. What is the WHO's yearly level for the tiny things known as PM2.5?
6. Why is PM2.5 harmful?
7. How many people are killed yearly by air pollution in Europe?
8. How many people voted for and against the air quality law?
9. How does Peter Liese think we should improve air quality?
10. How does dirty air hold back economies?
11. According to the article, what are the four biggest reasons for early death globally?

4 Key language

a. Match each phrasal verb to its definition. All the phrasal verbs used are in the article.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. push back | a. stop someone or something from moving forward |
| 2. fight for | b. not support a person or law |
| 3. vote against | c. work hard to make something happen or change |
| 4. hold back | d. delay |

b. Complete the sentences using the correct phrasal verb from task a.

1. Let's _____ the meeting until 11:30 am.
2. Most of the members _____ the new law, so it won't pass.
3. We must _____ clean air and water.
4. The film was so sad. I was _____ tears!

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "Dirty air is bad for everyone."
- "It is dangerous to wait until 2035 to clean the air."
- "Everyone should have clear air and water."

6 In your own words

a. Do some research about air pollution.

- Why does it happen?
- How is the government fixing the problem? Is it working? Why (not)?
- What are some of the ideas to make air cleaner?
- Which idea(s) do you think are the best?

b. Report your findings to the class. Share the facts you learned, the public's and your opinion. You can express your ideas using some of the expressions below.

According to the data/research, ...

This has happened as a result of / due to ...

The government proposed/passed...

The facts/data showed ...

The proposal/law/guidelines state ...

Public opinion is ...

The most popular viewpoint is ...

The majority / A minority of people think ...

They agree to / They disagree on ...

People are (not) certain that ...