



Press Release

Luxembourg, 10 February 2017

EU Auditors to investigate measures against air pollution

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) is to undertake an audit of EU-wide measures against air pollution, the first details of which were announced today. Air pollution is the single biggest environmental health risk in Europe. It causes an estimated 450,000¹ premature deaths every year through respiratory and other diseases. It also has considerable economic and environmental impacts, from increased medical costs and reduced productivity to damaged vegetation and ecosystems. The European Union is spending more than €2 billion to combat air pollution.

The EU National Emission Ceilings Directive sets emissions ceilings for each Member State and for the EU as a whole. Member States are required to manage and monitor their air quality and make the relevant information public. However, data shows that many European cities still struggle with polluted air.

Speaking in Warsaw, ECA President Klaus-Heiner Lehne said, *“Our role is to examine spending in areas which touch on the everyday lives of EU citizens, their problems and needs. That is why we want to examine air quality and environmental health measures.”*

Mr Lehne and Janusz Wojciechowski, the ECA Member responsible for the audit, were in Warsaw for a meeting with the NIK, the Polish national audit authority. Mr Wojciechowski said, *“We will be checking on the effectiveness of EU and national measures to reduce air pollution. We will also look at the European legal framework addressing the issue and assess whether EU funds are being spent wisely.”*

In addition, the EU auditors will work together with fifteen audit institutions from countries in Europe and beyond on a joint report aimed at providing a reliable and accurate picture of the situation in different countries as well as an overview of good practices and effective solutions.

Detailed figures on EU funding provided to reduce air pollution are not yet available, but so far, the auditors have identified over €2 billion of expenditure under the general heading of “air quality”. This does not take into account additional support provided through sectors such as transport and industry.

¹ <http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/air>

ECA Press

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Notes to Editors

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) is the EU's independent external auditor, based in Luxembourg. It contributes to improving EU financial management, promotes accountability and transparency, and acts as the independent guardian of the financial interests of EU citizens. The ECA checks whether the EU budget has been implemented correctly and verifies that EU funds have been raised and spent legally and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management.

The European Commission's first Environmental Implementation Review, published on 6 February 2017, found that 23 of the 28 EU Member States were breaching air pollution quality standards.