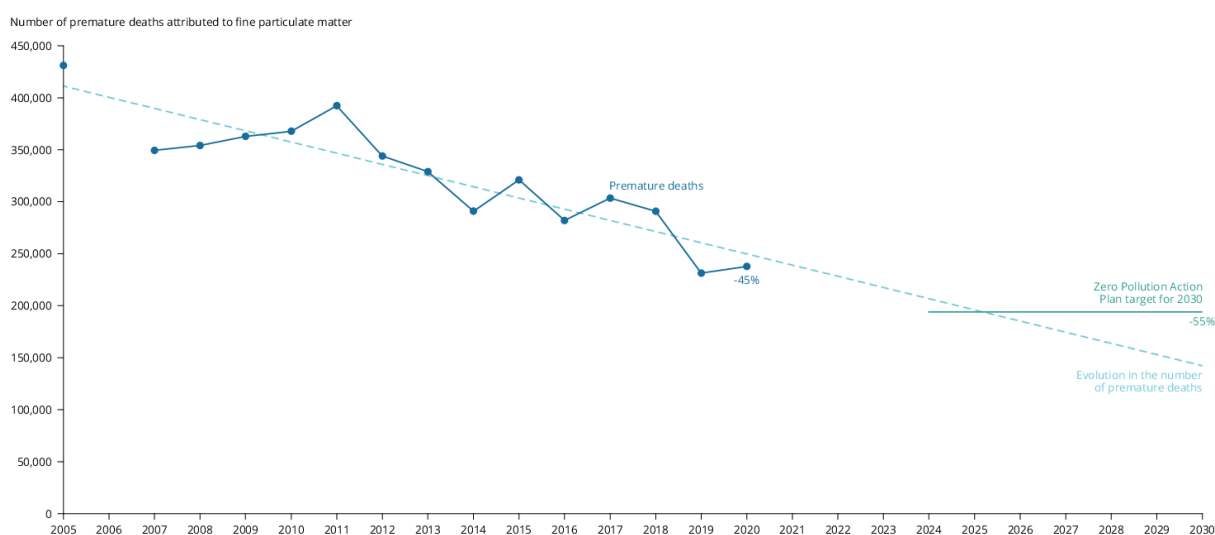


**Euroscola 25/05 - Afternoon workshop/ simulation exercise:
Topic: The EU’s zero pollution ambition**

Video: [Zero Pollution Action Plan](#)

1. Background information on the topic

Pollution has a detrimental impact on both our environment and health. It is the leading cause of premature deaths, particularly among children, the elderly, and those with specific medical conditions. A recent report by the European Environment Agency indicates that air pollution is responsible for 238,000 premature deaths in the EU in 2020¹.



Premature deaths in the EU-27 due to PM_{2.5} levels above the 2021 WHO guidelines and distance to the zero pollution target 2005-2020²

Harmful chemicals in the environment are adversely affecting people's health. Additionally, soil pollution is exacerbating the long-term harm being done to vital ecosystems that support biodiversity and provide nutrient-rich food. While light pollution is another area of concern, there are currently inadequate legislative controls to mitigate its effects on nocturnal species. Air pollution disproportionately impacts people in lower socio-economic groups, while noise pollution disproportionately affects those living in urban areas.

¹ [European Environment Agency - Premature deaths due to air pollution continue to fall in the EU, more efforts needed to deliver a toxic-free environment](#)

² [European Environment Agency - Premature deaths in the EU-27 due to PM_{2.5} levels above the 2021 WHO guidelines and distance to the zero pollution target, 2005-2020](#)

The EU zero pollution ambition

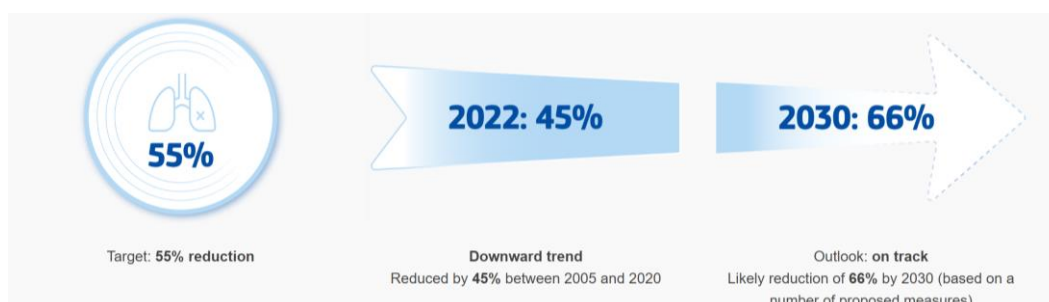
The EU's zero-pollution ambition aims to decrease air, water, and soil pollution to levels that are no longer harmful to health and natural ecosystems. This objective was introduced as part of the European Green Deal, which is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals agenda. The main objective is to protect citizens and ecosystems by enhancing monitoring, reporting, preventing, and remedying pollution.

In order to achieve the 2050 target, the plan establishes interim goals for 2030, which include reducing pollution at the source. To do this, the EU has set targets to improve air quality, water quality, soil quality, ecosystems, noise pollution, and waste pollution. Each member state is free to develop its own strategies to achieve these objectives.

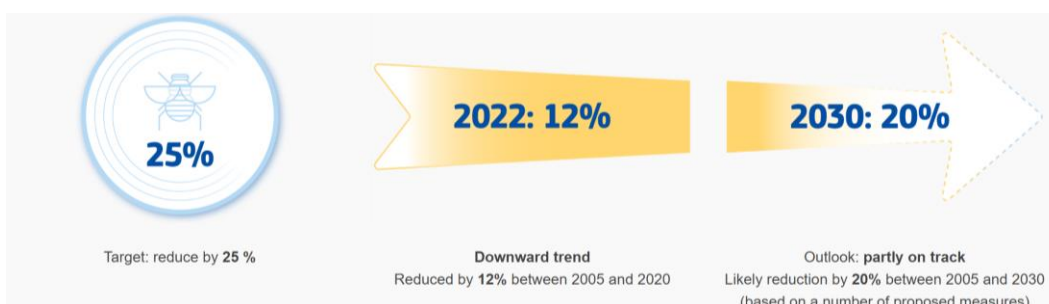
Despite making significant progress toward the 2050 goal, more work is necessary to eliminate all negative impacts caused by pollution. There are currently several new policy proposals under consideration that have the potential to accelerate progress toward this ambition.

Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook

The Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook offers a snapshot of the current state of the pollution in the EU, and answers questions on the pollution trends over the past years, and whether we are likely to achieve 2030 zero pollution targets:



Current state and outlook on the following target: to reduce by more than 55% the health impacts (premature deaths of air pollution)



Current state and outlook on the following target: to reduce by 25% the EU ecosystems where air pollution threatens biodiversity



Target: 50% reduction



Downward trend
Provisional trend analysis between 2016 and 2020 (assessment available in 2023)

Outlook: Not on track - 14% to 25% reduction
(quantitative assessment carried out for Mediterranean Sea only based on a number of measures)

Current state and outlook on the following target: to reduce plastic litter at sea by 50%³

2. Workshop and simulation exercise:

- You have been given a coloured wristband according to a position on the proposal
- You have been seated with others who have the same coloured wristband as you
- Take now the opportunity to speak and to exchange with your neighbours on your assigned position for 10 minutes after the Commissioner's speech
- It's now time to debate in the hemicycle and to exchange your views in order to convince the rest of the hemicycle to the relevance of your own position. You will simulate the work of Members of the European Parliament by debating and voting

Reminders:

- Please use formal language when speaking (e.g. in EN: Madam or Mister President, Madam or Mister commissioner, dear colleagues, honourable Member, etc.)
- Please stay in line with your assigned position and respect the time limit when speaking (60 seconds per slot)
- Please do not leave the Hemicycle during the session except in case of emergency

In favour

- A majority of EU Member States are currently undermining the EU's environmental regulations designed to protect citizens and the environment.
- Air quality is a severe threat to both, and it is crucial for Member States to work together to address this crisis.
- The EU should lead by example in environmental matters, as it aims to be a global leader in this area.
- While some may argue that other countries are not keeping their goals, the EU will remain competitive in the future by pushing its Member States to make climate adaptations.

³ [European Commission - Zero pollution targets](#)

Against

- Due to the current unstable times, countries are focused on securing enough energy sources for the winter months, making it difficult to reconcile efforts for zero pollution.
- The EU should prioritize helping citizens through the winter and addressing their general concerns instead of investing European resources in air pollution when other parts of the world are worse polluters than the EU.
- Achieving the complete zero pollution ambition by 2050 and meeting strict interim targets until 2030 could negatively impact European businesses and the competitiveness of the whole Eurozone.

Undecided

- Some are sceptical about how effective this proposal would be in protecting citizens and ecosystems, given that the majority of EU nations continue to undermine environmental regulations like the European Green Deal.
- While promoting the health of citizens and the environment is essential, some doubt the feasibility of this proposal at the national level.
- The idea of zero pollution is ambitious, and implementing it across 27 Member States seems even more challenging.

Compromise-oriented

- Addressing air pollution is crucial since it can seriously harm citizens, but the efforts to tackle the problem should be proportionate.
- Some EU Member States have their own approaches to safeguarding the environment.
- Overregulation may impede innovative solutions developed by individual EU Member States. Similarly, this proposal may hamper the competitiveness of the European market with other countries in various sectors.

More information on the Zero pollution ambition of the European Union:

[Halleux, Vivienne – Briefing. The EU's zero pollution ambition: Moving towards a non-toxic environment](#)

[Zimmermann, Antonia & Coi, Giovanna - Leader or laggard: EU struggles with 'zero pollution' ambition](#)

[European Environment Agency – Zero pollution monitoring assessment](#)

[Siman, Frédéric & Taylor, Kira – The Green Brief: Europe's 'zero pollution dreams'](#)

[Rankin, Jennifer – EU plans tighter controls on pollution as doctors call for urgent action](#)

[European Commission – Zero pollution action plan](#)

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY ON:



together.eu