

Member States set to undermine key industrial pollution prevention rules, green NGOs warn

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Environmental NGOs warn that the EU Council Presidency proposal for a general approach on the revision of the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) ignores the urgency of aligning an industry with climate neutrality, zero pollution and circular economy goals. Instead of improving ambitious pollution prevention at source, EU government representatives - in particular from Germany, France and Italy - are set to insist on business as usual for Europe's top polluters while weakening protection for people and the environment.

According to the NGOs, the text proposes a 16 year transition period for Member States to reflect stricter emission limits consistent with the Best Available Techniques, a significant weakening of the Commission proposal. Transition periods above four years for catching up with pollution prevention standards should be rejected. Furthermore, there is no need for revised standards - as the Council proposal suggests - to kick-start a more ambitious implementation of IED rules. Any other position ignores the urgency of European Green Deal goals, which may be pushed close to two decades further into the future.

A new compensation right under the IED should have acknowledged that people suffering under unlawful pollution have the right to hold law-breaching industry operators or authorities accountable. Instead, the Council undermines promising references to this right. The proposed General Approach renders it essentially meaningless by not alleviating the burden of proof, deleting any responsibility of unlawful authorities and removing support from civil society for people that feel helpless to claim their rights.

In a minor step forward, the Council includes decarbonisation as one of the objectives of the IED. On paper, this sets the need for the IED to contribute to the EU's climate goals and paves the way for emissions reduction targets to be enshrined in future environmental permits. However, in practice, this provision does nothing to actually regulate greenhouse gases under the IED, making it impossible for this law to fulfil its proposed climate objective.

Lastly, despite improvements on the timeline and format of industrial transformation plans to ensure real evolution for installations, the Council should take better consideration of scale and speed and require plans to be operational by 2030. The revised text must also ensure that the transformation of industrial sites is effective, through intermediate targets for all relevant key environmental objectives. To support the integrated approach of the IED, plans need a clear reference to key environmental objectives, including climate, zero pollution and circular economy goals and not fall back behind the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive.

Christian Schaible, Head of Zero Pollution Industry at the EEB said:

“It is the job of the operators to provide the non-feasibility assessment as to how their installation is so special that tested, proven and commercially viable strict state-of-the-art performance would not work for them. This assessment can be done right away and it should be published to the EU Industry Portal by 2026, so technique providers and competing industries but also civil society can support the permit writers in the scrutiny assessment. The authority should not need more than two years to get their permits in order.”

Bellinda Bartolucci, Senior Lawyer at ClientEarth said:

“With a stronger Industrial Emissions Directive, health damages that have been caused by unlawful operations could finally be paid by the operators or authorities responsible for violations of this law. Victims suffering from cancer, heart diseases and other severe damages should be able to confidently ask for compensation. If Member States vote against tighter limits and an effective compensation right, we must ask ourselves if they actively do not want to protect their citizens.”

Agnese Ruggiero, Lead on EU Industrial Decarbonisation at Carbon Market Watch said:

“Making the Industrial Emissions Directive fit for climate protection must go hand in hand with empowering it to regulate carbon pollution. We call on the European Parliament to correct this and make sure greenhouse gas emission limits are included in the IED.”

Boris Jankowiak, Steel Transformation Policy Coordinator at CAN Europe said:

“The IED needs to be a driver for the transformation of industrial sites, to enable them to meet key environmental objectives in a coherent and integrated way with other industrial policy tools. The European Parliament should now build on the agreement to ensure transformation plans will effectively contribute to those objectives.”

Notes to editor

[Background briefings on IED](#)

[EEB input to the EU Environment Council Meeting](#)

[BREF timetable](#)

[Alternative proposals on Transition periods](#)

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