



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
ENVIRONMENT  
Zero Pollution  
Industrial Emissions & Safety

Brussels  
ENV.C.4/BZ

Dear Mr Smit, Mr Heldoorn and Mr Dales,

Dear representatives of the Dutch municipalities of Beverwijk, Heemskerk and Velsen,

I would like to thank you for your letter dated 15 December 2021 in which you express your support and provide input to the ongoing revisions of Directive 2010/75/EU (the Industrial Emission Directive - IED) and Directives 2004/107/EC and 2008/50/EC (the Ambient Air Quality Directives - AAQDs). You also highlight the case of the steel production plant Tata Steel IJmuiden BV and the environmental pressures caused by this installation's operations in the surrounding areas. Commissioner Sinkevičius asked me to answer on his behalf.

You refer to the letter sent by the Dutch Deputy Minister for Infrastructure and Water Management on 27 September 2021 highlighting the importance of ambitious environmental policies at EU and Member State level. In its reply, sent on 21 December 2021, the Commission welcomed the support from the Dutch Deputy Minister to ambitious environmental policies but also expressed its concerns about the health issues and environmental pollution in the area of the steel production plant Tata Steel IJmuiden BV.

As you point out in your letter, the IJmond Region is a densely populated area with many industrial activities, including the steel production plant Tata Steel IJmuiden BV. The health issues and environmental pollution in the area of the steel plant have been drawn to our attention. The Commission is also aware of the RIVM Deposition report<sup>1</sup> on the sampling, analysis and risk assessment of PAH (Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons) and metals in dust deposited in the IJmond region, including inside homes. The findings include that high quantities of PAH and metals are measured in the region, with levels of some metals (such as iron, manganese, vanadium and chromium) and PAH, 20 to 100 times higher than levels currently found beyond the borders of the IJmond region. The report also indicates that exposure to such quantities of lead and PAH in dust can have detrimental health effects, especially to children.

I consider the conclusions of this report of particular concern and, whilst some actions could be taken at EU level in the long term to reduce industry's environmental impact in general, shorter-term actions are already possible within the existing EU legal framework and need to be taken at national level to address the particular case of the Tata Steel plant. The Commission will continue to follow this case.

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<sup>1</sup> Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu (RIVM), 2021. Depositieonderzoek IJmond 2020. RIVM-rapport 2021-0110

As signalled in the European Green Deal (EGD), the Commission is revising EU measures to address pollution from large industrial installations, notably by looking at the scope of the legislation and at how to make it fully consistent with the EGD, the zero pollution ambition, and climate, energy and circular economy policies.

I thank you for your proposals for an ambitious revision of the IED in this context. We take good note of your specific proposals in relation to the setting of emission limit values in permits, the granting of derogations under Article 15(4) IED and the environmental quality standards as per Article 18 IED. I confirm that these issues are being considered in the ongoing revision of the IED. The Commission proposal to revise the IED is planned to be made available to the EU legislator in the beginning of April 2022.

Concerning the Best Available Techniques Reference documents (BREF) review cycle, the Iron and Steel BAT conclusions<sup>2</sup> were among the first ones published under the IED. The last BREF reviews in the current review cycle are underway and reflections have started about scheduling BREF review work beyond 2022, including for the iron and steel sector.

Furthermore, you also point out to the updated Air Quality Guidelines as recently published by the World Health Organization (WHO), which include lower guideline exposure levels than previous editions for several air pollutants – including particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide. In line with the EGD, the European Commission will “propose to align EU air quality standards more closely with WHO recommendations”, as part of the ongoing revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives, planned to be completed in the second half of 2022. To inform the revision, the European Commission is currently conducting an impact assessment, as required by Better Regulation principles, which would inter alia look into the social, environmental and economic impacts of different scenarios of aligning the EU air quality standards more closely with WHO recommendations. As part of the process, the Commission is also consulting a broad range of stakeholders. I would also like to use this opportunity to thank you for your contribution to the open public consultation on the revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives. In addition, a targeted stakeholders survey has recently been launched in which we are seeking expert opinion on technical aspects of the revision, including from competent authorities at all levels.<sup>3</sup>

Yours Sincerely,

*(e-signed)*

Aneta Willems  
Head of Unit

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<sup>2</sup> Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2017/1442

<sup>3</sup> Part 1 of the targeted survey (on closer alignment of the EU air quality standards with the latest recommendations of the World Health Organization): <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/RevisionAAQDStakeholderSurvey1>; Part 2 of the targeted survey (on improving the current air quality legislative framework, including provisions on penalties and public information; and strengthening of air quality monitoring, modelling and plans): <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/RevisionAAQDStakeholderSurvey2>