

PRESS RELEASE

15 November 2022

Ricardo air quality and economic expertise to help European Commission reduce hundreds of thousands of premature deaths from air pollution

Ricardo's world-leading expertise in air quality policy, management and economics has guided the European Commission's revision of the key European air quality legislation to protect human health and the environment

Ricardo, a global strategic environmental and engineering consulting company, has significantly contributed to the European Commission's revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directive which sets air quality standards for European Union Member States. This Directive underpins the improvement of air quality to reduce the 300,000 premature deaths a year and a significant number of noncommunicable diseases such as asthma, cardiovascular problems and lung cancer, which are still attributed to air pollution.

Led by Ricardo, a team of air quality experts, including IIASA, Met.No, VITO and Trinomics, carried out an impact assessment into options to revise the legislation. Using scenario modelling to 2050, Ricardo considered what the potential impacts of the new air quality standards could be in relation to public health, the environment and business. Ricardo provided economic expertise to the impact assessment which shows that the benefits of the proposed revision for society far outweigh the costs. The main benefits expected are related to health: including reduced mortality and morbidity, reduced healthcare expenditure, reduced absence from work due to illness and increased productivity at work. Additionally, key benefits for the environment include reduced ozone-related crop yield losses.

A further study, also led by Ricardo, set out suggestions to improve support for local authorities in achieving cleaner air through strengthening air quality monitoring, modelling and plans.

Dr Beth Conlan, Technical Director – Air Quality at Ricardo said: “Ricardo has the longest-established specialist air quality team in the world and, with over 130 experts, one of the largest, and this is reflected in the UK's position as a world-leader in air quality expertise. As our corporate mission is to create a safe and sustainable world, we are honoured that the European Commission chose to entrust this seminal project to us, which will significantly reduce deaths, improve people's quality of life and public health in general. Legislation really does push forward change and, in my thirty years of working in this sector, this regulatory revision is likely to be the most far reaching and valuable in terms of improving air quality.”

Ricardo has provided expertise to the European Union (EU) in air quality and climate change since the 1990s, supporting the EU's drive to lower emissions, through the Green Deal, and air quality directives – the last one of which was enacted in 2008. Ricardo's air quality team has very well-established capability in air quality assessment and management practice. It was this capability, together with Ricardo's economic expertise and proven track record in successfully delivering co-beneficial air quality and climate change programmes for the European Commission that led to the Ricardo-managed air quality team working on this project.

In the UK, Ricardo's air quality expertise is helping the national Government shape strategies that offer routes to delivering national emissions reduction commitments such as the UK's Clean Air Strategy, the National Air Pollution Control Plan, National Emission Ceilings targets, Environment Act Air Quality targets, and the UK's net zero strategy, as well as international objectives through the Gothenburg Protocol.

Ends

About Ricardo

Ricardo plc is a global strategic, environmental, and engineering consulting company, listed on the London Stock Exchange. With over 100 years of engineering excellence and employing close to 3,000 employees in more than 20 countries, we provide exceptional levels of expertise in delivering leading-edge and innovative cross-sector sustainable products and solutions. Every day, we enable our customers to solve the most complex and dynamic challenges to help achieve a safe and sustainable world. Visit www.ricardo.com

Media contacts:

Kathryn Bellamy
Group Senior Communications Manager
Ricardo plc
Email: kathryn.bellamy@ricardo.com
Telephone: +44(0)7921 941824