

Air Quality in Slovakia



The Audit Results

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Air quality in Slovakia

Main audit question

What is known about the effectiveness and efficiency of measures taken by the national and local government to improve air quality and are these measures compliant with international and national legislation?



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Answers to main audit question

The SAO has verified in the area of air quality: compliance of the national legislation with the EU legislation, fulfillment of the international obligations of the Slovak Republic, fulfillment of obligations arising from EU and national legislation, air quality management system, financing of measures in the field of air quality, spending of funds for projects funded by and on the effectiveness and efficiency of the measures taken to address the air quality problem in the Slovak Republic.

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Answers to main audit question

The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for the transposition and implementation of European environmental legislation aimed at air protection and permissible pollution. The audit of the SAO SR revealed problems with not full or exact transposition and implementation of European environmental legislation of air quality.

In the Slovak Republic, compliance with the specified limit values for selected areas and concentrations of PM₁₀ dust particles was not ensured for which EU sanctions are threatened.

Answers to main audit question

The implemented measures failed to achieve the air quality objectives set, so the current measures need to be evaluated and subsequently adopted new, more efficient and more effective measures.

There is no system to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the measures adopted in the field of air quality, it will be necessary to establish and adopt binding indicators for their measurement, to periodically evaluate them and subsequently to propose relevant measures to improve air quality.

Main findings of national audit on air protection

Above average of Slovaks are exposed to harmful dust particles. More than 12% of the population is exposed to increased levels of PM_{2.5} particulate matter in the atmosphere, which is the highest in the OECD. The concentration of larger particles of PM₁₀ is close to the EU average. The concentration of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) is the worst in the EU, and the concentration of ground-level ozone in the air is third worst in the EU.

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Main findings of national audit on air protection

The most significant problem identified is air pollution with solid PM particles (PM₁₀, PM_{2,5}). In 2014, 18 air quality management areas were identified in the Slovak Republic, where limit values for some pollutants were exceeded. The number of air quality management areas is declining slowly, reaching 20 in 2016. In the year 2016, there was more than 1.1 million inhabitants living in that territory, representing about 21% of the total population of Slovakia. The establishment of zones and agglomerations and the assessment of air quality are carried out annually within the meaning of Directive 2008/50 / EC on Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air Quality in Europe.

Main findings of national audit on air protection

Basic results of the air quality assessment in the Slovak Republic were the results of constant measurements of concentrations of pollutants in the air carried out by the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute at 38 stations of the National Air Quality Monitoring System. The number of monitoring stations and their location corresponded to the set criteria so that the data obtained were representative of the urban background, industrial areas, transport pollution, rural areas and the regional background. However, the SAO SR considers the National Air Quality Monitoring System to be inadequate due to the complexity of the territory of Slovakia.

Main findings of national audit on air protection

Slovakia lacked a comprehensive strategy for air protection and no national emission reduction program for basic pollutants was developed until 2020 or 2030. At present, the Ministry of the Environment is preparing a new strategy for air protection, which should include a strategy for improving air quality and a national emission reduction program. Its processing and adoption is expected in 2019.

Main findings of national audit on air protection

Air quality improvement programs are aimed at solving the air pollution problem. They are designed by their district offices for each area of air quality management. The programs are published on the web sites of individual district offices and on the web portal: www.enviroportal.sk. Implementation of measures to improve air quality is being evaluated on a continuous basis at local and national level. For air quality management, integrated air quality improvement programs for pollutants PM₁₀ and NO₂ have been developed. Action plans are issued by District Offices by a binding decree. They contain short-term measures to avert the risk of exceeding the limit value.

Main findings of national audit on air protection

Interdepartmental cooperation in the air quality management system was insufficient, regular and dependent on the capacity of human resources. Also, the coordination of policies for population health and economic policies, with a policy to ensure good air quality, has not yet been sufficiently effective and not at the required level.

Slovakia uses mainly EU funds, the state budget, the Environmental Fund and private sources for air protection programs. The most important source of funding for air quality measures was EU funding.

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Main findings of national audit on air protection

Although the financing of measures to improve air quality is directed to the most polluted areas, but given that the PM₁₀, PM_{2.5} and other pollutant concentrations are still exceeded, funding can not be considered sufficient.

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Recommendations of national audit on air protection

To Government of the Slovak Republic

Focus on taking effectiveness and efficiency measures to improve air quality, focusing in particular on reducing dustiness, especially from local heating and transport, as well as stepping up the funding of such measures, and strengthening inter-ministerial cooperation and cooperation with cities and municipalities;

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Recommendations of national audit on air protection

To Government of the Slovak Republic

To impose an obligation on the relevant ministries to regularly inform the Government of the Slovak Republic about the status of air quality in the framework of the implementation of the Air Protection Strategy, taking into account the impact on the health status of the population in cooperation with the Ministry of Health.

Recommendations of national audit on air protection

To Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic

To improve and accelerate the air pollution modeling calculations to help identify and search for tailor-made measures for a specific territory.

To transfer more competencies and part of the responsibility for solving air quality in the given area to self-government (to higher territorial units and to municipalities).

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Recommendations of national audit on air protection

To Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic

To establish and adopt binding indicators to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of measures to combat air pollution, regularly evaluate them and subsequently propose relevant measures to improve air quality in the Slovak Republic.

Air quality in Slovakia

Best practices in air protection in Slovakia

The Slovak Republic was the fourth country in the Europe and the sixth country in the world that had introduced unleaded fuel.

Promoting change in the fuel base of energy sources in relation to use of renewable energy sources to reduce emissions of pollutants.

The greening of public transport in areas requiring special air protection, buses gasification and replacing buses for trolley buses and electric buses.

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Cooperation with an invited expert from Comenius University in Bratislava

The SAO SR invited to consultations during the audit and to prepare an expert opinion on the final report of the professor of Comenius University in Bratislava Prof. RNDr. Milan Lapin, PhD.



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Informing the members of Parliament about audit results 2018 May 22nd

The Members of Parliament were informed on 22 May 2018 by the President of the SAO SR on the main findings of air quality audit in the 24th SAO Annual Report 2017.



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Next steps ...

Clean Air Dialogue between the Commission and Slovakia promotes actions for cleaner air in 2018

On 24 and 25 April 2018 the Commission held in Bratislava a Clean Air Dialogue with Slovakia to promote actions to improve air quality and contribute to Slovakia's compliance with EU air quality rules. The dialogue focused on the main challenges Slovakia faces – emissions from the burning of solid fuel in homes, emissions from agriculture, transport and industry. The need for robust air quality monitoring and air pollution data, and integrated policy making across levels of governance were also discussed.

6 main conclusions were released from the dialogue.

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Next steps ...

Clean Air Dialogue between the Commission and Slovakia promotes actions for cleaner air in 2018

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- 1.** The commitment of the Slovak Government to upgrade its air quality monitoring network by the end of 2019, and to invest €25 million in its improvements, is essential for better monitoring data for public information and planning.
- 2.** As domestic solid fuel combustion is the main source of particulate matter emissions, more targeted actions are needed to promote the use of cleaner fuels and technologies, in parallel with promoting energy efficiency of buildings in line with broader energy and climate priorities.

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Next steps ...

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- 3.** Agricultural development will need to be accompanied by a strategy to reduce ammonia emissions. The first national air pollution control programme to be finalised in 2019 under the EU National Emission Ceilings Directive will provide an opportunity for Slovakia to do just that and to make use of all available EU funding support mechanisms.
- 4.** While there is already a focus in Slovakia on clean transportation, e-mobility and sustainable urban mobility planning, there is also a need for short term measures to reduce emissions from existing vehicles, especially in urban areas. To achieve this, a range of possible tools exists including low emissions zones, fiscal incentives such as fuel and vehicle taxation, and retrofitting schemes. They should be further explored.

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5. Learning from the experiences of other Member States is very relevant. It is positive that Slovakia has taken the lead on two workshops on emissions from agriculture and domestic heating using funding from the EIR peer-to-peer tool.

6. Industrial emissions need to be addressed through implementation of relevant EU rules. These reduction efforts need to be integrated into National Air Pollution Control Programmes using synergies with the EU Energy Union and the Coal-Regions-in-Transition initiative. Particular attention will need to be paid to the prioritisation of cost-effective measures.

Thank you for your attention.