



PRESS RELEASE

Environment targets should meet health priorities at the European Parliament The ENVI Committee has a key opportunity to vote for cleaner air

Brussels, 13 July 2015 – On Wednesday, the 15th of July, the European Parliament Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) will vote on the National Emission Ceilings Directive - a key legislative dossier of the Clean Air Policy Package proposed by the European Commission in December 2013.

From the perspective of the European Parliament Interest Group on Allergy and Asthma, the air we breathe is directly impacting our health and should be cleaned up with ambitious legislation on pollution reduction and sufficient investment to make it possible. This was clearly expressed at the Policy Event of the Interest Group - “Allergy and Asthma Patients Need Clean Air in Europe” - held on the 1st of July at the European Parliament co-hosted by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) Sirpa Pietikäinen and Nessa Childers.

Every year, over 400,000 Europeans die prematurely because of air pollution. Current EU air quality standards are obsolete and not in line with the World Health Organisation (WHO) air quality guidelines. Although the EU is currently reviewing the National Emission Ceilings Directive (NEC) on air pollution levels, the discussions held at Council have weakened the initial proposal and suggest flexible air pollution limits until 2030. The European Parliament will have the chance to express its vision further on Wednesday during the vote on the NEC Directive in the ENVI Committee.

No air pollution level is healthy. During the Policy Event, Thomas Verheye, responsible for the NEC dossier at the European Commission, reminded that delaying emission reduction in Europe will not help industry whilst costing thousands of lives: “*A strong voice from the health community can help overcome undue resistance to taking further cost-effective action on air pollution.*” In order to balance the debate, the health community “*can help to convince others that healthy citizens mean a healthy economy*”, he assured.

Furthermore, the President of the EAACI Professor Antonella Muraro, highlighted the detrimental costs of inaction for the health of European citizens over the years to follow. She stated that “*breathing dirty air heavily influences the severity of allergic manifestations not only in adults but also in children with huge impact on the health of the next EU generations if no actions are taken to counteract this issue.*” This was confirmed by the President of the European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients’ Associations (EFA) Ms Christine Rolland who pointed out that, by 2025, half of the European population will suffer from at least one type of allergy and for them the health effects due to air pollution can be devastating and lead to a significantly reduction of their quality of life.

According to Professor Buters, Chair of the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) working group on aerobiology and air pollution, the EU should prioritise regulating Particulate Matter (PM 2.5) and Nitric Oxide (NO), which are most dangerous for human health. Ms Anne Stauffer, representing the pan-European NGO Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), further stressed the harmful effects of mercury, ammonia and methane. She called for binding 2025 targets, as an intermediate step to reach the 2030 targets envisaged in the Commission’s NEC proposal, and to have more ambitious legislation adopted by the Council and the Parliament.



EAACI and EFA are coordinating the secretariat of the European Parliament Interest Group on Allergy and Asthma, and are jointly committed to raising awareness about the huge personal, social and economic burden of allergy and asthma in Europe and the need to tackle them through evidence-based and patient-centred policies at EU level.

Both organisations therefore call the European Parliament Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee (ENVI) to stand next to citizens and patients and adopt a clear legislation to put the European Union on track to protect its citizens from dirty air.

Notes to editors:

The National Emission Ceilings Directive is a policy file currently being reviewed as part of the [Clean Air Policy Package](#) proposed by the European Commission in December 2013. The [proposal](#) tackles air pollutants and ensures that the national emission ceilings (NECs) set in the current NECD for 2010 onwards for sulphur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOC) and ammonia (NH₃) shall apply until 2020 and establishes new national emission reduction commitments applicable from 2020 and 2030 for SO₂, NO_x, NMVOC, NH₃, fine particulate matter (PM_{2,5}) and methane (CH₄).

The European Parliament leading Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) will vote on the [draft report](#) of the rapporteur Mrs Julie Girling (ECR, UK) on Wednesday from 10:30 onwards. The Committees on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) and Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) had already voted on their opinions and all documents, including tabled amendments can be found [here](#).

The [European Parliament Interest Group on Allergy and Asthma](#) last policy meeting “Allergy and asthma patients need clean air” debated the NEC Proposal ahead of the ENVI voting. An event report can be found [here](#).

For more information please contact:

- Claudie Lacharité, EAACI Communications Manager (claudie.lacharite@eaaci.org, +41 44 205 55 32)
- Isabel Proaño, EFA Communications Manager (isabel.proano@efanet.org, +32 2 227 2720)

European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI)

The European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) is the largest medical association in the field of allergy and clinical immunology, uniting more than 9,000 academicians, research investigators and clinicians from 121 different countries. Visit www.eaaci.org for more information.

European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA)

The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA) is a non-profit network of allergy, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD) patients' organisations, representing 40 national associations in 24 countries and over 400,000 patients. Visit www.efanet.org for more information.