

To: Members of the ENVI Committee

Subject: Voting recommendations, ENVI vote on 7th EU Environment Action Programme

Dear Member of the ENVI Committee,

Next Wednesday, the 24th of April, you will be voting on the draft report on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020: “Living well, within the limits of our planet” – [2012/0337\(COD\)](#) – *rapporteur* Mr. Franco MEP.

The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients’ Associations (EFA) representing people with allergy, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), we are very concerned about the link between environmental factors and our disease areas and especially the threats on health caused by air pollution, both indoor and outdoor, hazardous chemicals, climate change.

The environment is a major determinant of health. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), environmental pollution is responsible for up to 20% of the burden of disease in the European region.¹ Since the 6 EAP started in 2002, the science on how environmental factors are implicated in cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory disease, diabetes – the main chronic diseases in the EU – and many other health conditions has grown tremendously. If the EU steps up efforts for health prevention through environmental measures, large social and economic benefits will accrue.

Your vote next Wednesday is key to setting the EU on track for protective environmental policy, which will bring real added value for European citizens through greater health protection and improved quality of life. Therefore, we urge you to take the following recommendations into considerations.

Strengthen health protection and disease prevention in the 7 EAP

As health is particularly affected by environmental hazards, the improvement of the quality of life and wellbeing of citizens should be one of the reasons underpinning the document.

Support amendments:

81, 118, 408

Reject amendments:

93

¹ WHO, *The European Health Report 2012*, available at: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/data-and-evidence/european-health-report-2012>.

Ensure that air quality improves to WHO recommended levels (both outdoor and indoor)²

Air pollution is responsible for half a million deaths each year in the European Union and it reduces the average life expectancy by more than 8 months per person. Every year, 3.6 million life years are lost due to the bad quality of the air people breathe.³ A recent Eurobarometer survey reveals that 87% of Europeans are highly concerned about air pollution in Europe and especially they consider asthma and allergy as a serious problem caused by poor air quality in their country⁴. Indeed, people with asthma, allergy and COPD are more responsive than others to all kinds of pollutants and at an increased risk of experiencing harmful effects from exposure to air pollution. Patients with **asthma** suffer more on or after days with higher pollution levels and air pollution can increase the frequency of asthma attacks. Living near polluted roads could be responsible for about 15-30% of all new cases of **asthma** in children; and of **COPD** in adults 65 years of age and older.⁵ Therefore, we support the alignment of EU air quality standards to WHO levels.

Support amendments:

41, 207, 333, 342, 343, 457

Reject amendments:

206, 354

Include a strategy on indoor air quality

Europeans spend most of their time in indoor environments and poor indoor air quality is responsible for 2 million disability adjusted life years (DALYs) in 26 Member States of the European Union (EU) conjointly every year.⁶ Poor indoor air quality is mistakenly believed to be a trouble that concerns only a limited number of people in Europe and a private problem (regarding for example dwellings and individual behaviours). As a result, no proper legislative text has been adopted on the issue thus far. A common comprehensive and urgent response, based on the recognition that outdoor and indoor air is basically the “same air”, is therefore needed.

² Available at: http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/78638/E90038.pdf and <http://www.who.int/indoorair/en/>.

³ Results of the APHEKON project, available at: <http://www.aphekom.org/web/aphekom.org/home;jsessionid=236A8057B5218F73AD9A587954EDEF3D>.

⁴ The full report is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_360_en.pdf.

⁵ Results of the APHEKON project, see note 3.

⁶ Results of the IAIAQ project, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/health/healthy_environments/docs/env_iaiaq.pdf. More information about indoor air quality can be found in the report of the event organised by EFA at the European Parliament in February to present the preliminary results of the HealthVent project, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/health/healthy_environments/docs/env_iaiaq.pdf.

Support amendments:

81, 342, 355

Provide the way forward for the phase out and restriction of hazardous chemicals, especially EDCs, and support human biomonitoring

Harmful chemicals are one of the top environmental health worries of citizens. Especially, chemicals are affecting the quality of the air people with asthma, allergy and COPD breathe in indoor environments and their presence has been proved to be related to **asthma** incidence and symptoms worsening.⁷ In addition to that, chemicals are everywhere and they can be extremely harmful for people with **allergy** that can react to their presence in i.e. cosmetics, cleaning products, clothes. The 7 EAP needs to detail measures to reduce exposure of the population and in particular of sensitive groups.

Human biomonitoring – the measuring of contaminants in our bodies, through hair, urine and blood sampling – is an indispensable way to assess exposure of the population and to guide policy decisions. Hence, greater financial support and commitment is necessary.

Support amendments:

44, 334, 348, 358, 399

Reject amendments:

43, 347

Step up climate mitigation action to protect health

Several studies show that ultimately the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is related to the decrease of health costs and the improvement of the quality of life of people in Europe. If the target of reduction of GHG emissions moves from 20% to 30% by 2020, the EU will save up to 7.9 billion EUR annually in terms of avoided health costs.⁸ Global warming is extending the pollen season and increasing the pollen concentration in the air, and therefore is affecting people with **allergies** and **airways diseases**. Hot nights prevent recovery from high daytime temperatures and have further impacts on health, through the effects of sleep deprivation. High humidity impairs sweating, which helps people keep cool and this results in worsening for **asthma** patients. Peaks of pollution due to climate change and ozone levels worsen the symptoms of people with **respiratory diseases**.⁹

⁷ R. E. Dodson, M. Nishioka, L. J. Standley, L. J. Perovich, J. G. Brody, R. A. Rudel, “*Endocrine Disruptors and Asthma-Associated Chemicals in Consumer Products*”, *Environ Health Perspect*, Vol. 120(7), July 2012.

⁸ Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and Health Care Without Harm Europe (HCWH), “*Acting now for better health: a 30% reduction target for EU climate policy*”, 2010.

⁹ E. M. Fischer, C. Schär, “*Consistent geographical patterns of changes in high-impact European heatwaves*”, *Nature Geoscience*, 3 May 2010.

Support amendments:

236, 351

Reject amendments:

231, 241, 402

Please find more details outlined in the attached document on the proposal.¹⁰

Yours sincerely,



Breda Flood
EFA President

The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA) is a non-profit network of allergy, asthma and COPD patients organisations, representing 35 national associations in 22 countries and over 400,000 patients. EFA is dedicated to making Europe a place where people with allergies, asthma and COPD have the right to best quality of care and safe environment, live uncompromised lives and are actively involved in all decisions influencing their health. www.efanet.org

¹⁰ Additional information on how environment affects the lives of patients with allergy, asthma and COPD is available at: <http://www.efanet.org/>.