



PRESS RELEASE

Will the European Parliament confirm its commitment to clean air & better health?

Air pollution is often considered as an environmental issue, rather than a health matter when in fact over 400,000 Europeans die prematurely from the effects of air pollution every year. This is 10 times the number that die from road traffic accidents. To address health, environment and economic challenges posed by poor air quality, a new legislation is being voted this week in the European Parliament.

On the 28th of October, the European Parliament will have a final vote on the new National Emission Ceilings (NEC) Directive, a piece of legislation that sets maximum binding air pollution levels within the European Union for the next 15 years. The results of this vote will have implications for the quality of the air that we all breathe, and for the health of generations of Europeans.

Last July, an important step towards a healthier Europe was taken by the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), when it adopted its report on the NEC Directive, setting stricter emission reduction commitments than the original proposal, compulsory reduction of air pollutants by 2025, as well as compulsory targets for methane, ammonia and mercury – three pollutants that pose real threat to human health.

The clear message in favour of health sent by the ENVI Committee must now pass the scrutiny of the plenary vote, and despite a strong commitment by ENVI Committee members, the result of the vote is indefinite. Economic arguments are likely to be put forward for lighter and more flexible pollutants' limits.

However, limiting effectively pollutant emissions is also key in economic terms. Allergy and asthma affect around 150 million Europeans, causing an estimated loss of more than 100 million Euros per year as a result of lost work and school days. Poor air quality exacerbates these chronic diseases, which are amongst the most common in Europe. In times when European health systems are struggling with sustainability, it is of paramount importance that environmental risk factors are properly addressed. Prevention continues to be the cheapest way forward.

The burden of allergy and asthma and its link with air pollution was recently discussed at the European Parliament at the [EU Symposium on Precision Medicine in Allergy and Airways Diseases](#), where the European Commission for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis underlined the need for effective preventive measures in meeting the unaddressed needs posed by allergy and asthma, including in air



pollution. The Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the European Parliament Interest Group on Allergy and Asthma Sirpa Pietikäinen also provided her full support to this statement.

A productive Europe requires healthy citizens: health is a long-term wealth, which cannot be undermined by any short-term economic interests. We therefore call on the European Parliament to support a strong commitment to clean air for a healthy Europe by backing the position of the ENVI Committee on the 28th of October.

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 set in the current NEC Directive for 2010 onwards with regards sulphur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOC) and ammonia (NH₃) shall apply until 2020. It also 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).

About the 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.

About the 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.

About the European Parliament Interest Group on Allergy and Asthma

The [European Parliament Interest Group on Allergy and Asthma](#) is a common effort by European allergy and asthma patients, health professionals and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) committed to fight against the most prevalent chronic diseases in Europe. The Interest Group is chaired by MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen and co-chaired by MEP Nessa Childers. The Secretariat of the Interest Group on Allergy and Asthma is jointly run by EAACI and EFA.