



Health organisations urge EU member states to adopt their clean air negotiating position

In view of ongoing deliberations on the revision of the EU's Ambient Air Quality Directive (AAQD), health organisations representing the European health sector, including medical doctors, healthcare professionals, patient organisations and health insurance funds, urge member states to act on the unacceptably high health burden from air pollution and to adopt a negotiating position this week, so that the AAQD trilogues can start, and the revision process can be concluded before the 2024 EU elections.

Air pollution is the top environmental risk to health in Europe. Everyone is vulnerable to its impacts, and some are more at risk than others. People's level of vulnerability is outside of individual control, as it evolves with age, health condition, socio-economic status, as well as where people live, study, or work.

The update of the EU's clean air standards is a unique and not-to-be-missed opportunity for preventing hundreds of thousands of premature deaths and a significant health burden from chronic diseases, including respiratory conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma, heart disease, strokes, and cancer, as well as infectious respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.

Updated clean air standards will bring significant immediate and long lasting health and economic benefits, which clearly outweigh the implementation cost of the revised law, as demonstrated by the EU Commission [impact assessment](#).

Anne Stauffer, HEAL Deputy Director:

"Clean air is a question of political will, not an individual or lifestyle choice. Revised clean air standards bring clear added value for everyone, but especially for those most at risk from air pollution, including children, people already suffering from disease and people facing health inequalities. In view of the 2024 EU elections, we expect national decision-makers to walk the talk on health, and enter into negotiations without delay, to conclude the AAQD revision swiftly."

Dr. Christiaan Keijzer, President, Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)

"All national medical associations across Europe agree: we need better air quality, and public authorities and national governments need to act. Hundreds of thousands premature deaths in Europe are attributable to air pollution every year. The EU air quality standards need to be urgently updated. "

Dr. Barbara Hoffmann, Advocacy Council Chair, European Respiratory Society (ERS):

"The science on the health effects from air pollution is crystal clear, and the health burden from air pollution remains unacceptably high. We need to see greater political will, especially from national governments, to clean up the air that we breathe. Science-based EU clean air standards are essential for protecting people's health."

Susanna Palkonen, Director, European Federation of Allergy and Airways Disease Patients' Association (EFA):



“The quality of life and well-being of patients living with chronic respiratory disease is severely impacted by air pollution. It leads to premature deaths, hospitalisations and absence from work and school. We look to national decision-makers to think health and help people #KeepBreathing, by rapidly adopting revised clean air standards. Air quality is paramount for patients and a right to health”.

Christian Horemans, environment and health expert at the Belgian Independent Health Insurance Funds:

“Clean air will bring significant healthcare cost savings from reduced GP and emergency visits. For Belgium alone, reaching air quality as recommended by the World Health Organization would save 43 million in health insurance cost annually from saved GP visits. It is essential for the Belgian government and other member states to adopt their negotiating position, for a health protective update of clean air standards.”

Dr Hanna Boogaard, Co-Chair, International Society for Environmental Epidemiology (ISEE) Europe Chapter:

“Air pollution is a major public health risk factor in Europe and across the globe. We need to see greater efforts from governments, local authorities and other bodies to improve air quality, especially as new science underlines that health effects can already occur at very low levels of air pollution.”

Dr. Zorana Jovanovic Andersen, Chair of the Environment and Health Committee, European Respiratory Society (ERS)

“Clean air improves lung health, helps prevent new disease and reduces the economic burden of treating respiratory illness. It is vital that environment ministers follow the science and swiftly negotiate revised clean air standards, with health at the center of any agreement.”

Dr. Milka Solokovic, Director, European Public Health Alliance (EPHA):

“The health of marginalised populations is drastically affected by air pollution and the health of these people is under constant threat from air pollution. Achieving clean air with revised EU clean air standards is a crucial component for tackling health inequalities across Europe and leaving no one behind.”

Notes:

See the EU health groups latest [letter](#) to EU environment ministers.