



Brussels, 21 November 2011

To: Members of the European Parliament Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

**Re: ENVI discussion on Energy Efficiency – Indoor air quality and health concerns**

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

Tomorrow you will consider the amendments on the draft opinion on the proposal for a directive on energy efficiency and repealing Directives 2004/8/EC and 2006/32/EC (COM(2011)0370), ENVI rapporteur Peter Liese.

As the leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union, the Health and Environment Alliance HEAL welcomes the proposals' focus on making buildings more energy efficient, given that reduced energy consumption can contribute to better health. Yet we urge you to ensure that health concerns are central in the activities on efficiency, especially regarding indoor air quality. It has to be ensured that when buildings become energy efficient, they also remain health-friendly.

Europeans spend the majority of their time indoors, and the quality of the indoor air has an important impact on their health. Indoors, they are exposed to a range of indoor pollutants from biological and chemical sources, and the physical characteristics of the indoor environment also play an important role. It is estimated that the burden of disease of inadequate indoor air quality is 2 million DALYs (disability-adjusted life years) in the EU27, which represents a major strain on the healthcare systems and budgets, not to speak of the impact of people's lives. You highlighted the need to address indoor air quality in your recent resolution on the UN Chronic diseases summit in September.

There have been numerous EU funded research projects analysing the sources of indoor air pollution and ways to tackle it. There are currently projects ongoing looking especially at the interlinkage between energy efficiency measures and indoor air quality (see below for further information).

In a recent report "**Health co-benefits of climate change mitigation – housing sector**" ([http://www.who.int/hia/brochure\\_housing.pdf](http://www.who.int/hia/brochure_housing.pdf)), the **World Health Organisation WHO** looks at the role of climate change mitigation measures in the housing sector on a global scale. They stress the large health co-benefits that could be gained from the right mix of mitigation policies, for example reductions in noncommunicable and infectious diseases. However, the report also underlines that "good ventilation is critical to ensure health gains from energy-efficient housing", and that it is important to decrease health risks from chemical emissions from insulation and construction materials by using healthier substitutes.

This report and many other studies carried out stress that health concerns should be central when deciding on measures to improve energy efficiency of buildings.



**HEAL believes it is crucial that you as Members of the Committee on Environment and Public Health highlight the link between energy efficiency and health in your opinion:**

- When renovating public buildings and making them more energy efficient, specific attention should be paid to ensuring good indoor air quality, for example through adequate ventilation requirements and the use of low-emission building materials, equipment and products (Amendments 29, 105, 363)
- Public bodies play a key role in ensuring greater energy efficiency. When they develop energy efficiency plans and management systems, health concerns should be taken into account (Amendment 123)
- The Commission proposal also foresees the promotion of energy audits for consumers and businesses. Since suggestions for cost-effective energy savings opportunities should be made, health impacts should also be addressed when looking into options for greater energy efficiency (Amendments 65, 192)
- Public authorities, businesses and consumers all have an important part to play in making health-friendly and energy efficient buildings a reality. The new energy efficiency law should therefore be used to promote awareness-raising, information campaigns and the development of criteria (Amendment 127)
- There are certain groups of the population who are more susceptible to health risks from indoor air pollution, such as children. The EU is currently funding a major research project to determine factors for indoor air pollution and health impacts in schools (SINPHONIE: Schools Indoor Pollution and Health: Observatory Network in Europe) with results expected in autumn 2012. With a view to preventing health impacts on children, we call on you to include an obligatory health check where energy efficiency renovation measures concern buildings such as schools or day care centers, where children spend a lot of their time (Amendments 29,106)

Your support for these clear requirements is essential to ensure that energy efficiency measures for buildings do not have a negative impact on people's health.

Yours sincerely,

Genon K. Jensen  
Executive Director

**Science on Indoor air quality and energy efficiency**

World Health Organisation: Health co-benefits of climate change mitigation – housing sector (2011):

[http://www.who.int/hia/brochure\\_housing.pdf](http://www.who.int/hia/brochure_housing.pdf)

INSULATE: [www.insulateproject.eu](http://www.insulateproject.eu)



HOPE: Health Optimisation Protocol for Energy-efficient buildings (2005):  
<http://hope.epfl.ch/>

Project: Clean air, Low Energy (in Flanders):  
<https://esites.vito.be/cleanairlowenergy/Pages/Home.aspx>

HealthVent: Health-based ventilation guidelines for Europe:  
<http://www.healthvent.byg.dtu.dk/>

WHO Europe: Preliminary results of the WHO Frankfurt housing intervention project:  
[http://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/98696/E91699.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/98696/E91699.pdf)

World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe: Guidelines for Indoor Air Quality (Dampness & Mould, Chemical Pollution):  
<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/environment-and-health/air-quality/policy/indoor-air-quality>

Promoting actions for healthy indoor air (IAIAQ):  
[http://ec.europa.eu/health/healthy\\_environments/docs/env\\_iaiaq.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/healthy_environments/docs/env_iaiaq.pdf)

SINPHONIE: Schools Indoor Pollution and Health: Observatory Network in Europe:  
<http://www.rec.hu/sinphonie/about.html>

Belgian EU Presidency Event: Indoor air quality in different living settings:  
<http://www.eutrio.be/indoor-air-quality-different-living-settings>

JRC: study on developing an EU Ecolabel and Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria for “buildings”:  
<http://susproc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/buildings/>