



Air quality

A dramatic growth in new scientific evidence of the harm to health from air pollution gave HEAL much material for policy dialogue; more medical professionals in member organisations took action.

The EU Air Quality package has the potential to improve health for millions of children and communities in Europe. As a member of the EU's expert group on air quality, HEAL worked throughout the year to gather support for its policy demands in collaboration with many health and environmental organisations.

Three key demands:

1. Ambitious emission reduction commitments in the revised National Emissions Ceilings (NEC) Directive including black carbon and methane
2. Sectoral legislation to cut emissions from all major sources
3. Enforcement and strengthening of EU ambient air quality limit values to bring them in line with WHO health standards



Supportive MEPs demonstrated with the pink inflatable lungs in front of the Strasbourg parliamentary buildings in December 2013. They were calling for the release of the EU Clean Air Package with the help of the giant lungs brought back from the UN COP19 climate summit in Warsaw. The EU published its proposals a few days later. The photo was published in the *European Voice*.

HEAL shares findings of a research boom

Research evidence on the harm to health from exposure to air pollution expanded almost weekly. First came the news from the global burden of disease assessment that air pollution now ranks 11th in Western Europe. WHO's cancer agency, IARC then released a statement confirming that exposure to air pollution is a risk factor for both lung and liver cancer. Then the science review of WHO showed effects of air pollution at lower concentration levels and links to new conditions, such as diabetes and impacts on children's development.

Expert witnesses speak to Parliament

Leading scientists on air quality and health, including Professor Bert Brunekreef, Dr Roberto Bertollini, World Health Organization (right), and patient group representatives told a joint event in the European Parliament in March 2013 how lung conditions are aggravated by air pollution. The event, **'Spotlight on Clean Air'**, organised by HEAL, European Respiratory Society and European Lung Foundation, brought together MEPs and representatives from both the Commission and the Lithuanian EU presidency to discuss the future EU clean air package.



Genon K. Jensen highlighted HEAL's concerns at a breakfast hosted by the European Voice, where the White Book on Lung Health in Europe was launched. The White Book was published by HEAL members European Respiratory Society (ERS) and European Lung Foundation (ELF), and HEAL helped to promote the findings.



Maximising the impact of research projects

HEAL's press release on the launch of the WHO REVIHAAP results on health effects of air pollution attracted interest from a leading leading British newspaper, the Guardian.

TIPS ON REDUCING YOUR CHILD'S EXPOSURE



Checking the daily air quality forecasts for your city or town (e.g. <http://watch.eyearth.org/>). Use this information to plan your child's activities.



Avoiding outdoor activities near busy roads especially during rush hour. Consider alternative routes with lower levels of pollution.



When pollution levels are high, for example in the summer because of ozone, avoid energetic outdoor activities or by encouraging your child to do them in the morning or late in the evening and keeping windows closed.

In February 2014, HEAL worked with the EU funded research ESCAPE project (European Study of Cohorts for Air Pollution Effects) to launch four patient information leaflets on lung disease; cardiovascular disease; lung cancer; and, children's asthma and allergies.

INFORMATION LEAFLET:
PATIENTS WITH LUNG DISEASE

AIR POLLUTION AND LUNG HEALTH

New findings from the EU-wide research project 'European Study of Cohorts for Air Pollution Effects' (ESCAPE) make raising awareness of the effects on health of exposure to air pollution even more urgent. This leaflet developed by the ESCAPE project in collaboration with the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) explains the latest news on the links between outdoor air pollution and lung disease: chronic bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and adult asthma. It also provides prevention tips for patients to achieve a healthier future.

WHAT DOES THE LATEST RESEARCH SHOW?



The EU-wide ESCAPE project found that the ability of human lungs to function well is affected by exposure to air pollution. The number of new cases of reduced lung function and COPD is directly related to how close people live to busy roads and to levels of chemical compounds known as nitrogen oxide (NO_x) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in the air. Although the results were less clear on chronic bronchitis and asthma, this does not imply that poor air quality does not have an impact on these conditions.

The research showed the inhalable particles in the air (PM₁₀) to be of greatest concern. A significant association was established between exposure to higher levels of PM₁₀ in the air and the number of people developing COPD.

The quality of outdoor air is crucial to children's health and lives. Cleaner air would allow children to spend more time playing outside.

MEDIA COVERAGE

In the UK's Guardian (4 July 2013), Anne Stauffer HEAL Deputy Director said the results were:

"A wake-up call for decision-makers in Europe to take air pollution more seriously. The new findings provide evidence-based science that EU policies are inadequate. Twice as many people suffer from asthma today compared to 30 years ago"