



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EPIDEMIOLOGY

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Annette Peters, Ph.D., *President*
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December 8, 2013

Dear President Barroso and Commissioners:

The International Society for Environmental Epidemiology (ISEE) is writing to support your 'Year of Air' efforts to prepare a comprehensive air policy strategy package that will improve controls and lower air pollution emissions in Europe.

We are concerned about the burden of disease caused by ambient air pollution both globally and in Europe, which was highlighted recently in the Global Burden of Disease 2010 study (Lim S et al. *The Lancet* 2012), and which attributed 3 million deaths per year globally to fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and ranked ambient air pollution among the top risk factors for chronic disease mortality in 2010. The trends in population exposure to the main air pollutants damaging health show no, or only a small, decline in most areas of Europe in the last decade. In some parts of the European Union (EU), the diseases caused or aggravated by exposure to air pollution reduce the population's average life expectancy by over a year. Across Europe, individuals affected by air pollution may suffer many years of illness or lost life. Throughout the EU these diseases reduce wellbeing, affect productivity and increase pressure on medical services. Significant inequalities in exposure exist both between and within the Member States, leading to increase in health inequalities often affecting less privileged populations.

Many of the members of our Society are involved in research discovering new evidence on the health effects of air pollution in European populations, as well as in other parts of the world. Many ISEE members, both from Europe and elsewhere, contributed to the recent evaluation of the accumulated scientific evidence on health aspects of air pollution prepared for the European Commission by the World Health Organization (WHO) (REVIHAAP)^[1]. This review provides a state of the art summary of the evidence and leaves no doubt about both the severity of air pollution impacts and the quick, and significant, benefits from exposure reduction.

The REVIHAAP project report also presents an assessment of the new evidence from studies on significance of the physical and chemical characteristics of particulate matter in causing health effects, on the impacts of long term exposure to ozone and on other aspects important for the revision of EU air pollution strategy. It demonstrates that the range and magnitude of impacts from air pollution are daunting. Air pollution needs to be reduced generally, now and at the source. Strengthened European policies and actions, through continuity and the tightening of standards to maintain and improve their effectiveness, are urgently needed to reduce the burden of disease caused by air pollution. We are aware of the potential co-benefits of these actions with

efforts to protect the climate, enhancing both short- and long-term benefits to people and the environment. The tools and methods of environmental epidemiology, developed by members of ISEE, are ready to be used in demonstration of the benefits of effective air pollution policies on health.

We are looking forward to assisting you, and the citizens of Europe, in proving that comprehensive efforts to clean the air have a positive impact on health and wellbeing *and urge you to strongly support the reduction of air pollution exposures.*

Please agree a bold package for the ‘Year of Air’ and announce it, as long expected, before the end of 2013.

Yours sincerely,

Annette Peters
President, International Society for Environmental Epidemiology

Manolis Kogevinas
Chair, Executive Council, European Chapter, International Society for Environmental Epidemiology

[1] Review of evidence on health aspects of air pollution – REVIHAAP Project.
http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/193108/REVIHAAP-Final-technical-report.pdf