



Biological Air Quality Monitoring Petition

Munich, December 2013

To the members of the Environment Committee

We are aware that the new “Air Review Package” is currently being prepared. The package concerns air quality in Europe with the aim to improve citizen health in Europe.

In the “Air Review Package” the monitoring of biological components of ambient air is missing.

The Commission’s reason for not including biological components of ambient air is that biological exposure is difficult to regulate and that these components are not from man-made activities and hence cannot be reduced by Member State action. This is also true for weather forecasts and this problem has been tackled successfully in the past. The same could be done for monitoring biological components in ambient air: this helps sufferers to anticipate and react to alleviate their disease. This is supported by the frequency that pollen and fungal spore information is downloaded from websites by users. For instance, prophylactic allergic medication should be administered before pollen exposure occurs, and is less efficient when administered after exposure.

Why is it so important to include monitoring of biological components of ambient air in the “Air Review Package”?

About 24% of European citizens, including up to 40% of children, currently suffer from some form of allergic disease (1, 2), mainly caused by airborne biological particles like pollen or moulds (fungal spores) (3). Airborne pollen and moulds are currently monitored in Europe on a daily basis in a network of approx. 350 sampling sites. These sites are mostly operated by privately funded, non-profit making organizations, which rely on the work of volunteers (4). It is important to note that these national networks might collapse in the near future (5) due to factors such as: (1) lack of outside funding; and (2) a reluctance of people to carry out such voluntary work for extended periods of time. These long time frames are needed because monitoring biological components in ambient air needs education and experience. Funding is lacking to engage sufficient professionals.

The networks have already proven their usefulness for citizens and local governments, and can easily be used in day-to-day forecasting. By matching daily activities and medication management with information derived from pollen monitoring systems, patients can achieve a “free from symptoms” life. Because of their decades-long historical time lines, these networks also allow the monitoring of a changing biological environment due to climate change.

The organisations that we represent include medical doctors (EAACI), allergenic patients (EFA) and networks monitoring biological particles (EAS). We urge the

committee to flag this discrepancy in public discrimination and awareness in improving air quality for European citizens without including the major disease causing components. A recommendation by the committee that national governments should actively support their still existing pollen and fungal spore monitoring networks is urgently needed.

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Literature

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About EAACI

The European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) is a non-profit organization active in the field of allergic and immunologic diseases such as asthma, rhinitis, eczema, occupational allergy, food and drug allergy and anaphylaxis. EAACI was founded in 1956 in Florence and has become the largest medical association in Europe in the field of allergy and clinical immunology. It includes over 7,800 members from 121 countries, as well as 42 National Allergy Societies. www.eaaci.org

About EFA

The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA) is a non-profit network of allergy, asthma and COPD patients organizations, representing 35 national associations in 22 countries and over 400,000 patients. EFA is dedicated to making Europe a place where people with allergies, asthma and COPD have the right to best quality of care and safe environment, live uncompromised lives and are actively involved in all decisions influencing their health. www.efanet.org

About EAS

The European Aerobiology Society (EAS) is a non-governmental organization that gathers together scientific experts working in the field of aerobiology in Europe. EAS represents over 20 countries in Europe. Aerobiology is the study of airborne particle of biological origin, such as pollen grains, fungal spores, bacteria and allergens that are passively transported in the air. It is a multidisciplinary discipline with applications in many areas such as allergology, agriculture, horticulture and biosecurity. Aerobiologists are often involved in monitoring atmospheric concentrations of these biological particles, evaluating their health impact and disseminating health related information. eas.polleninfo.org

An separate list of additional supporting organizations is attached to this mail
("Additional supportive organizations-14dec2013")