



European  
Commission

# CLEAN AIR FORUM

*#cleanairEU*

*Summary Report*

Environment



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## INTRODUCTION BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Air pollution is the number one environmental cause of premature death in the European Union. Despite progress in recent decades, it still causes more than 400 000 premature deaths every year, and it brings respiratory and cardiovascular diseases to millions. The economic costs of air pollution in the EU are well over EUR 20 billion a year.

The European Commission is committed to addressing these issues, and to cleaning up Europe's air. Our citizens deserve air that is safe to breathe, and which poses no significant risks to health and the environment. The First European Clean Air Forum, organised by the European Commission and held in Paris on 16 and 17 November 2017, brought together a wide variety of stakeholders for a panoramic view of the current situation. This two-day event, which included the launch of the European Air Quality Index, showcased Europe's ambitions and sought solutions to ongoing problems through structured dialogues, knowledge and information exchanges, and the sharing of good practices.

After two days of intensive discussions and debate, the Forum concluded with a clear message: the solutions we need are ready and waiting. But tackling air pollution successfully will require a concerted approach, combining three different strands. We need to bring together economic sectors like transport, energy, agriculture and industry; levels of governance at the European, national, regional, and city level; and policy areas such as environment, climate and energy, mobility, agriculture, and fiscal policy, while always keeping Europe's citizens at the heart of these issues.

Over 300 participants from government, industry, and non-governmental organizations as well as citizens shared their views at the Forum. Discussions focused on three themes: air quality in cities; air pollution from the agricultural sector; and clean air business opportunities. More than 30 high-level speakers reflected on the clean air challenge, on areas for action, the actors involved and on how policies can be crafted to deliver benefits on multiple fronts.

In this synthesis report you will find a summary of the presentations and debates that took place over those packed two days. The second Clean Air Forum will take place in two years' time – I invite you all to join us again in 2019.

Daniel Calleja Crespo  
Director-General for Environment

## START OF THE EUROPEAN CLEAN AIR FORUM: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

### Karmenu Vella

*Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries*



Commissioner Vella opened the inaugural edition of the Clean Air Forum on 16 November by reminding the participants of the scale of the challenge society faces in air pollution, and the impressive efforts that are already under way. He noted that while the GDP of the European Union has increased by 32% over the past 15 years, emissions of the main air pollutants have decreased during that period, with sulphur dioxide emissions falling by as much as 70%. But he also pointed out that reductions in ammonia are lagging behind, falling by only 10%, and that despite these positive trends, premature deaths from air pollution are still some 15 times higher than fatalities from road traffic accidents.

The Commissioner recalled that many of the tools we need to tackle pollution are already in place, especially on the legislative front, and that new, innovative approaches to working with the Member States to meet this challenge are also being deployed through Clean Air

Dialogues, the European Implementation Review, and the Partnership on Air Quality under the Urban Agenda for the EU, for example. Introducing the programme of the first edition of the Clean Air Forum, he pointed to the key role of technology in efforts to reduce pollution, and called on Europe to lead from the front. He concluded by stressing that air quality is one of the most fundamental tests of any society and that failure to secure clean air for Europe's citizens is not an option.

### Anne Hidalgo

*Mayor of Paris*



In her intervention, Mme Hidalgo highlighted the key role that mayors from large cities can play in addressing the air quality challenge. She noted how measures enacted by cities should support actions by national governments and international associations and vice versa, as mayors are the decision-makers closest to the realities of everyday life. She alerted the Forum of how mayors from across Europe and beyond have formed alliances in recent years, sharing best practices, learning from each other and implementing innovative ways to ensure a better quality of life for their citizens, as awareness of the role played by the clean air challenge in the fight against climate change has grown.

Pointing out that Paris has developed as a «car-centred» city in recent decades, and citing Amsterdam and Copenhagen as role models, Mayor Hidalgo recognised the difficulty of moving towards a different mobility model, more focused on pedestrians, cycling, and improved public transport. But she reminded delegates that local decision-makers in Paris or elsewhere do not face the challenge alone: they are supported by business innovation in sectors like car manufacturing, and a digital revolution, in the context of a wider framework of rules and objectives set at the European and global level. Recalling that there is no Planet B, Mme Hidalgo stressed the need to resist the temptation to delay change. The answers are to be found in better organisation, more coordination, and stronger alliances between different decision-making levels, backed by a firm belief in the long-term advantages of the pursuit of clean air.

## FRAMING THE PROBLEM – WHY DO WE NEED TO FOCUS ON CLEAN AIR AND WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT SUCCEEDING?

### Maria Neira

*Director, Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health, WHO*



Dr Neira recalled recent studies by the World Health Organization (WHO) which show some 12.6 million people worldwide dying prematurely every year due to exposure to environmental risk factors such as air pollution. According to the WHO, these premature deaths

could be avoided as sufficient measures to improve air quality are already available. Dr Neira highlighted the pressure that cities now face to implement measures to combat the negative health aspects linked to poor air quality, not least from their own citizens, who are increasingly aware of the effects of air pollution on their health.

For cities, she said, the measures required are related to transport, energy use and urban planning. Citizens want mobility, so there is a need for a transport system that is sustainable, affordable, comfortable and safe, and transport measures in urban areas show immediate beneficial effects on citizens' health. She reported that the WHO is carrying out an assessment of existing measures taken in cities all over the world, including their health benefits. From the energy perspective it is necessary to focus on the energy sources used, as well as energy efficiency, as the combustion of fossil fuels and wood can bring major negative health effects. Urban planning measures are also essential, enabling cities to become clean, healthy, and better organized.

### François Bourdillon

*Director-General, Santé Publique France*

François Bourdillon, the Director-General of Santé Publique France, stressed a wealth of scientific data on the effects of air pollution was available and pointed out the long experience of his service in estimating the effects of air pollution on human health and providing support to decision makers to inform their decisions for tackling pollution. He highlighted a number of social inequalities regarding exposure to pollution, with regions that are more industrialised and subject to heavy traffic having higher rates of premature deaths due to pollution and associated health problems. He noted how some population groups, such as pregnant women, the elderly, infants and children, are more vulnerable than others.

Dr Bourdillon stressed that as there is no single cause to air pollution, action to reduce it needs to address both background pollution and local emission sources such as traffic, agricultural practices and domestic heating. A focus on pollution peaks alone was not the answer. He ended by recalling the role of the scientific community, which is not only to provide the knowledge base, but also to develop tools that enable decision makers to evaluate the effects and impacts of their policy choices.





## REFLECTIONS – WHAT IS THE CLEAN AIR CHALLENGE WE FACE? WHO AND WHERE DO WE NEED TO ACT (MORE)?

### Panel discussion

- Norbert Kurilla, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Slovakia
- Marko Pomerants, Member of Parliament, Estonia
- Cor Lamers, Mayor of Schiedam/Committee of the Regions
- Teresa Ribera, Director IDDRI
- Anne Stauffer, Director for Strategy and Campaigns HEAL

Poor air quality is not a problem experienced only by a small number of cities, but is a common feature across the EU. Panellists pointed out that the growing awareness of air quality problems is a recent phenomenon, often linked to recent smog episodes in Europe and on-going problems in Asian cities. Although the current suite of EU legislation to improve air quality has been in force since 1997, many Member States are still failing to meet the targets. According to the panellists, this indicates that the problem was not taken seriously for many years. They shared the view that the invisibility of most air pollutants is probably one reason behind the comparative absence of air pollution from public and political agendas in the past.

From a health perspective, knowledge of the need to act has been available for decades, on issues such as the

need to consider the consequences of air pollution on the most vulnerable groups, as had been pointed out in numerous interventions at the Forum.

Panellists agreed that improving air quality in the EU would require the involvement of all decision-making levels. Much can be done at city level, but cities alone cannot fully address the challenges, especially as air pollution originating elsewhere has a major influence on ambient air quality. Panellists urged Member States to step up to the challenge and prioritise good air quality through more measures at the national level and greater support for cities. These measures should include promoting behavioural change, as walking and cycling for example bring benefits for health, air quality and climate.

Panellists also emphasized the strong link between fighting climate change and air pollution. This was also clearly illustrated at the Conference of the Parties on Climate Change which met at the same time as the Forum, and where discussions on measures to reduce climate change showed an explicit link with air pollution, and highlighted the co-benefits of tackling such issues. Health aspects are an important link between both policies. Panellists encouraged governments to take stronger action, and urged industry to tap into its innovative strength to find valuable opportunities. Panellists acknowledged the need for a transition period, as well as the unavoidable effects on employment in certain sectors, but considered the need for immediate action to be undeniable. Innovation and implementation are challenges, but they are tremendous opportunities as well.

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSIONS – ASSESSING AIR QUALITY IN EUROPE TODAY, AND HOW WE MIGHT TRANSITION TO A CLEAN AIR FUTURE?

### Hans Bruyninckx

*Executive Director, European Environment Agency*

Dr Bruyninckx outlined the links between air quality and the socio-technical systems that contribute to and underpin modern society. He singled out three, focusing on the energy system and the transition to low carbon economy, the agriculture and food system, where farming practices and food choices are strongly related to the ammonia emissions that are responsible for the formation of secondary particulate matter, and the urban system, and issues related to building stock, spatial

planning, heating and transport. All these systems have a strong link with both air quality and climate change.

Mr Bruyninckx noted that EU policies are clearly working, as Europe is moving in the right direction. Emissions of several pollutants have been significantly reduced in recent decades, but despite this positive trend, there are still 400 000 premature deaths in the EU each year, with many more people are affected by poor air quality. Effective air quality policies, he said, require action and cooperation at three levels – (pan-)European, national and local.

If Europe is to deliver air quality in line with the WHO Air Quality Guidelines, and to achieve the EU's 2050 vision of "living well within the limits of the planet", then systematic solutions will be required: the «low-hanging fruit» in the EU has now been harvested, and we now need systemic solutions to make the necessary changes.

The Clean Air Forum saw also the launching of the European Air Quality Index, developed by the EEA in cooperation with the European Commission. The Air Quality Index uses colour coding to show the air quality situation across Europe's cities and regions, and enables citizens to easily assess the air quality information in their city. This Index is based on officially transmitted measurements of more than 2000 monitoring stations, in near real time and based on the concentrations of PM10, PM2.5, NO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub> and O<sub>3</sub>. The index can be accessed here: <http://airindex.eea.europa>





## FOCUS SESSION: AIR QUALITY IN CITIES—BOUNDLESS MOBILITY AND CLEAN AIR: FRIENDS OR FOES?

**Winfried Hermann**

*Minister for Transport, Baden-Württemberg*



In a keynote address, Minister Hermann recalled the existing legal framework that requires Member States to ensure good air quality for their citizens. He highlighted the scale of the challenge for his own constituency of Baden-Württemberg in Germany, as it is a 'car-state' where some 30 cities including its capital, Stuttgart, do not meet the required ambient air quality standards. The automotive industry is strongly represented in the region, employing around 200 000 people, adding a further layer of complexity.

He stressed that Baden-Württemberg is taking a range of concrete measures to tackle high PM and NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations: 28 cities in the state have introduced Low Emission Zones, and have restricted the access of diesel cars without a particle filter already some years ago. The use of electric vehicles is also promoted, for example through an expanding network of charging stations. Furthermore, the city of Stuttgart last year introduced a novel alert system ('Feinstaubalarm'), which allows to forecast levels of particulate matter – and if and when high levels are expected, citizens are encouraged to switch to public transport, cycling or car sharing (on a voluntary basis). In addition, the recreational use of woodstoves is prohibited during such periods. These measures have been partially successful, but to achieve full compliance

with air quality standards additional measures will be needed, the Minister insisted.

Minister Hermann stressed that retrofitting of existing high emission vehicles remains needed. He also presented estimates that show that a new 'blue low emission zone' (i.e. which restricts access for diesel engines that do not meet Euro 6/VI standards) would be necessary to achieve compliance. Introducing such access restriction could reduce NO<sub>2</sub> exceedances by more than 90% in the short term. He called upon the next Federal government in Germany to introduce the possibility to establish 'blue low emission zones' without delay. This might be part of a longer-term 'Mobilitätswende' (i.e. a transition of our mobility systems) to fully reconcile health protection and boundless mobility.

### Panel discussion

- Winfried Hermann, Minister for Transport, Baden-Württemberg
- Pex Langenberg, Vice Mayor, City of Rotterdam, Netherlands
- Daniel Rees, Special Adviser to Vice Mayor Berg, Oslo
- Aurélie Solans, Environment Councillor Paris City Hall
- Emmanuel Nedelec, Managing Director, Ubeeqo France
- Simon Birkett, Clean Air in London

A private car is seen as an important symbol of freedom, which makes it difficult to change mobility behaviour. Attempts in several cities have shown that voluntary measures alone are insufficient to create the necessary change. To achieve a sustainable transport system, mandatory measures may be required to ensure a breakthrough in current mobility patterns. A broad consensus emerged among the panellists in favour of Low Emission Zones, one of the most successful measures to reduce transport emissions to date.

Rotterdam and Oslo were given as examples, where either direct restriction of certain diesel vehicles or congestion charges have shown that emissions can be reduced significantly, and has, at the same time supported the market penetration of electric vehicles.

Panellists admitted that while there is general support for transport measures, there will always be some resistance. To facilitate the transition to low-emission mobility, cities need to provide or support alternative transport modes such as clean public transport, provide for plenty and proper bike lanes and ensure abundant charging stations for electric vehicles. Differentiated parking fees are also effective, provided sufficient alternatives are available for



easy access to the city. Panellists also stressed the crucial role communication with the public plays in these efforts, to convince people to use more sustainable solutions.

Panellists touched also on the possibility of improving the performance of the current 'fossil fuel' fleet. The trend towards bigger and heavier vehicles however has offset potential emission reductions. Increased use of electric vehicles would result in a significant reduction of emissions, but emissions of particulate matter would persist due to tyre and brake wear. Some speakers flagged the impact electric vehicles have on the environment due to the mining of raw materials needed for the batteries. Initiatives resulting in the need for fewer cars will therefore not only lead to lower emissions, but also to reduction of the use of resources. Car sharing schemes fit well in this.

But transport is not the only culprit for bad air quality in cities. Local decision-makers should also focus on the reduction of emissions related to energy use. This is the second most important source of poor air quality in cities. The main measures in urban areas regarding energy use include the need to increase the energy efficiency of district and home heating systems and to reduce the use of fossil fuel and wood for heating and cooking.

Panellists agreed that where both energy and mobility are concerned, real progress towards the WHO Air Quality Guidelines will require lifestyle changes to be considered. These have big benefits and low costs, but are often seen as having high political costs, despite the fact that the cost of inaction is far higher. To change this perspective it is necessary to emphasize the health costs and benefits, and the legal obligation to take action.

## FOCUS SESSION: AGRICULTURE AND AIR QUALITY – CAN OUR AGRICULTURAL REGIME SUSTAIN CLEAN(ER) AIR?

**Peter Power**

*Head of Cabinet of Phil Hogan, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development*



Stressing that good air quality is vital for the health and wellbeing of citizens, animals and plant life alike, Mr Power urged stakeholders to find solutions that reduced or avoided ammonia emissions without undermining the EU's agriculture production potential, food security and social aspects. He referred to a number of win-win solutions such as precision agriculture, which improves the efficiency and productivity of agricultural activities, while also keeping emissions to a minimum. Improving farmers' access to training, research, knowledge and best practice is crucial in this context, he said.

Mr Power also stressed the need to interest farmers and keep them fully engaged. This requires information sharing and demonstrating the benefits to be gained by taking action. He ended with a reference to the role of financial incentives for farmers, many of which were already in place, as the necessary measures would pay dividends in the long run, but would often be costly at the outset.

### Panel discussion

- Peter Power, Head of Cabinet of Phil Hogan, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development
- Dacian Ciolos, Former Prime-Minister of Romania and Former Agriculture Commissioner
- Jannes Maes, President, Young Farmers Association
- Prof Mark Sutton, Chairman UNECE Task Force on Reactive Nitrogen
- Louise Duprez, Senior Adviser, European Environmental Bureau

There was broad agreement among panellists that agriculture does have a significant impact on the environment and air quality, and that little action has been taken at Member State level despite the scientific evidence. But awareness is increasing, especially among the younger generation of farmers, together with the realisation that they are part of the solution.

Panellists stressed the importance of translating research and technological developments into on-farm realities that are affordable and usable. The need for greater integration of food production, environment, rural development policy was also recognised, including at the EU level.

One difficulty that clearly emerged was the fact that Common Agricultural policy (CAP) had originally been set up to safeguard food production and not to protect the environment. Today, by contrast, farmers are expected to provide public goods, protecting our natural capital and the environment in which they operate, but this is not always clearly reflected in the agricultural policy framework, and this new additional focus is not always adequately reflected in the distribution of funds.

It was also noted that farmers often have difficulties in taking a long-term view, as incomes in the sector are relatively low, profit margins are small or non-existent, and returns on investment can take up to 20 years. A specific call was made for the reform of the CAP to be re-orientated towards providing funding only to active farmers, especially those who truly contribute to society beyond their primary goal of producing food.

To achieve this, panellists highlighted the need for political will to address the agricultural sector, with a specific focus on large industrial farmers who have an important role to play, and recognition of the different challenges faced by small family farms, which could continue to benefit from the CAP for general income support. All panellists

agreed that large industrial farmers need more rigorous treatment.

Measures to reduce ammonia emissions already taken in several Member States showed this did not harm the sector's competitiveness, but rather enhanced it. It was also recalled that ammonia emissions are an economic loss, with as much as EUR 14 billion lost every year (all nitrogen losses via ammonia in Europe multiplied by the fertilizer price), and a strong call was made for an integrated nitrogen policy.

Educating farmers was another key element raised during discussions. The proper use and appropriate amounts of fertilizer and manure, for example, should be at the core of these efforts to share information.

Delegates heard that while the pollutant reduction targets under the National Emissions Ceiling Directive can be achieved by technical measures alone, a challenge such as producing sufficient food for the increasing world population will require decision makers and society as a whole to address consumption patterns as well. Current food production levels are more than enough to meet the needs of the global population, so the focus should shift to reducing food waste. Reducing the consumption of animal products would bring benefits for air quality and the climate, with additional benefits for public health (current red meat intake in the EU is twice the recommended maximum level for healthy diets). It would also ensure food availability for a growing world population.

The role of consumers and their impact on farmers' choices was also discussed. It remains to be a key challenge to meet the dual expectations of ensuring affordable food while reducing the negative environmental and health impacts of its production. To this end, panellists called for public policies that provide good quality, healthy food and at the same time provide farmers with a decent income.

## FROM UNDERSTANDING TO POLICY TO IMPLEMENTATION

### Brune Poirson

Secretary of State attached to the Minister of State, Minister of Ecological and Solidary Transition, France



Opening the second day of the Forum, State Secretary Brune Poirson called for increased determination in tackling air pollution from all decision-makers in France and beyond. Locally, French cities with more than 20 000 inhabitants are required to develop and implement joint plans for Climate-Air and Energy by 2019, and to promote cleaner mobility in these urban areas on the basis of the national classification of vehicles under the Crit’Air scheme.

At the national level, France has adopted an action plan to implement the new National Emissions Ceiling Directive, with a clear commitment to reduce these pollutants through, inter alia, measures to support investment in domestic housing renovation, investment in clean equipment by industrial actors, and grants for replacing older vehicles with newer, less polluting ones.

She emphasized the key role Europe has to play in fighting air pollution and called for greater ambition at the EU level, pointing to France’s commitment to phase out the sale of internal-combustion engines by 2040, and reiterating the French Government’s call for a new vehicle emissions standard – Euro 7 – which should aim to drastically reduce NOx emissions from cars.

### Daniel Calleja Crespo

Director General Environment, European Commission

Building on the discussions of the opening day, Director-General Calleja Crespo made the transition towards the business of the second: solutions to tackle air pollution, which exist and are within reach. He began by calling for closer collaboration between different decision-making levels both in the Member States and at European level, involving all sectors. He noted that a comprehensive toolbox is already available, including low-emission mobility and revised common agriculture policy approaches, new emission ceilings, and industrial emission standards, all of which are supported by significant funding available to the Member States.

He welcomed the new Air Quality Index as an excellent example of translating the fight against air pollution and its results into something concrete and easily accessible for citizens. He concluded by noting that more awareness, greater mobilisation and additional empowerment for citizens would facilitate societal buy-in.





## PRESENTATION OF UPCOMING EU ECO-INNOVATION SUMMIT ON AIR QUALITY

**Neno Dimov**

*Minister for Environment and Water, Bulgaria*



Minister Dimov recalled that air pollution is a serious environmental and social issue posing many challenges related to management and mitigation of its harmful impacts. He stressed the need to look beyond vision and ambitions, and to focus instead on viable solutions and concrete actions, while stressing that the specific geographic, social and cultural situation of individual Member States needs to be taken into account when implementing policy.

Underlining how air quality means quality of life, he noted the need for policies that strike a delicate balance between economic efficiency, social fairness and environmental friendliness. This will be the backdrop for the eco-innovation Forum to be held in Sofia, Bulgaria, in February 2018, where the costs and benefits of eco innovations will be compared to other technologies whose market prices do not reflect environmental aspects. Noting the importance of building time into the process of scaling up efforts, Minister Dimov finished with a plea for air quality policies that are implemented at the appropriate speed.

## FRAMING THE RESPONSE – THE COST OF INACTION IS HIGH FOR OUR HEALTH, OUR ECONOMY, OUR SOCIETY: BUT WE CAN ALL HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**Richard Fuller**

*Co-Chair Lancet Commission on pollution and health*



According to the Lancet Commission, pollution is the largest environmental cause of disease and death in the world today, responsible for an estimated 9 million premature deaths, with air pollution as the biggest factor. Presenting these findings, Mr Fuller deplored the lack of political commitment to deal with air pollution, while praising the Forum's efforts to make clean air a political priority.

Mr Fuller stressed the need to assess how many lives can be saved in order to choose the best option to solve pollution problems. When the EU takes action, one should not look only at the costs, but also consider the global business opportunities created, as in several parts of the world problems with pollution are much worse than in the EU. For the EU he also stressed that, in addition to saving lives, the most economic important benefit is in reduced loss of productivity.

## FOCUS SESSION: CLEAN AIR BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES – CLEAN TECH FOR CLEAN AIR, ALREADY A REALITY

### Panel discussion

- Richard Fuller, Co-Chair Lancet Commission on pollution and health
- Rosalino Usci, CEO TRE P Engineering srl, CHIMERA Life Project
- Arne Heijman, Director Mobility and Environment Zuid-Holland, CLINSH Life Project
- Tomasz Pietrusiak, Deputy Director of the Department of the Environment, Małopolska Life Project
- Thomas Kerting, President Les Respirations

Panellists acknowledged the ongoing debates that surround the effects of air pollution, in particular regarding the number of premature deaths, while pointing out that the actual death toll due to pollution is likely to be even higher. They also stressed that such discussions risk leading to unnecessary delays, as the most effective measures are easy to implement and need not be extremely expensive.

Panellists elaborated further on the results of their respective projects, both for their own situation, and for potential dissemination of their experiences. The importance of disseminating results was stressed, both to create awareness and with a view to rapid improvements in air quality. Support from the European Commission had helped a number of projects get off to a swift start.

Under the Małopolska project thousands of boilers are replaced in the region every year, with an immediate positive impact on air quality. The tourism industry is a key supporter, as they have experienced first-hand the impact of poor air quality on tourist numbers, leading to significant falls in income.

The treatment of poultry manure as done in the CHIMERA Life Project is economically beneficial for operators, but also has the added benefit of improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The CLINSH project helps ship owners overcome the problematic long life-cycle of inland ship engines, which can remain in use for up to 30 years. This extended lifetime makes it difficult for ship owners to invest, so extra incentives are needed, with a demonstration of the actual potential of reducing emissions from new technologies.

All panellists agreed that education is a crucial aspect in order to bring about change. Stakeholders should be shown the available options as well as the benefits of these options, while citizens should be empowered to make informed choices.

## REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUDING DEBATE: ARE EU, NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY ACTIONS TO ENSURE CLEAN AIR COHERENT AND HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE SYNERGIES?

### Panel discussion

- Valerie Péresse, President, Ile-de-France Region
- Seb Dance, Member of European Parliament
- Camille Gira, State Secretary for Environment, Luxembourg
- Ingrid Felipe Saint Hilaire, Environment and Transport Minister, Tyrol, Austria
- Shirley Rodrigues, Deputy Mayor of London
- Daniel Calleja Crespo, Director-General for Environment, European Commission

Recent Eurobarometer polls show that Europeans consider climate change and air pollution to be the two most important environmental concerns of today. About half of those asked see the EU as best placed to address the issue of air pollution, with one third preferring national policy-makers, and one sixth local government. These surveys once again highlight that citizens in Europe expect action at all levels, in a coordinated manner.

Panellists acknowledged the lead role that the EU level can and should play in tackling air pollution, and that the existing legislative framework has driven air quality improvements over the past decades. A direct link was made to the recent European Commission low emission mobility package which aims at increasing the number of electric vehicles, improving related infrastructure, and battery production in the EU to achieve mid- to long-term reductions of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and air pollution.

Panellists also noted that there was scope to improve the coherence of policy action impacting on air quality: coherence across different sectoral policies and coherence across the action at different government levels. Similarly it was stressed that it is also important to keep in mind the social aspects of air pollution, and help those that

want to make a shift to cleaner, low-emission options in transport or heating.

A first example of how to achieve such coherence was highlighted by panellists as the interplay between EU Clean Air policies and the respective policies or incentives that guide the sectors responsible for related emissions. In several instances, for example, national governments still incentivize the sale and use of diesel cars over that of low emission vehicles.

Another example introduced was that of traffic originating in one region affecting another. Tyrol, for example, which sees a lot of through traffic crossing the Alps, requires all trucks that transport non-perishable goods to be Euro VI classed, or use railways for transiting a specific part of the region. While not an easy decision to take and implement, it needed to be done for the sake of protecting human health.

A third example is that of heating, including in cities. Around half of the pollution in the Paris and Ile-de-France region in winter is caused by wood burning, demonstrating the need to consider every aspect of air pollution. National, regional and local authorities have now coordinated financial incentives to replace the current 11 000 wood burning heating systems with new technologies that pollute less.

Panellists noted that while regions and cities often needed to address air quality locally, what regions and cities can achieve by themselves is somewhat limited. Experience from London, for example, showed that city governments can influence transport policies to some extent, but that there remain several key sources of air pollution are

outside the city's influence, including construction sites, river transport, vehicle tyre and brake wear, and fiscal incentives for certain types of transport.

Similarly, experience from Paris and the Ile-de-France region pointed to successes that can be achieved when working across scales: giving commuters incentives such as subsidies for car-sharing, or opening emergency lanes to taxis, buses and shared cars under particular circumstances. Improving air quality in cities often requires coordinated investments into similar action in the regions surrounding major cities, i.e. to ensure complementary and affordable transport systems.

Looking ahead, panellists reflected that both the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions could play a bigger role in facilitating the uptake of good ideas and examples to address air pollution that originate in regions and cities. In Luxembourg for example, all municipalities have signed up to a voluntary covenant of mayors to further both climate change and air pollution measures, and many have since taken additional action.

It was also acknowledged that a key task at all levels is to inform citizens and engage in a dialogue about air pollution and its impacts on people's health.

Finally, panellists voiced a hope that the ongoing Fitness Check of the European Air Quality Directive would further reflect on ways to bring more evidence-based health advice into policy planning, and on how the coherence of policies and governance could be enhanced with a view to achieving cleaner air for all Europeans.





## CONCLUDING REMARKS

### Pierre Moscovici

*Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs*

Closing this inaugural edition of the Clean Air Forum, Commissioner Moscovici stressed the main message that had emerged repeatedly throughout the Forum – that we can and should do more to reduce air pollution, using the comprehensive toolbox that is available to the full. He recalled the important role fiscal policy has to play in these efforts. He put things in perspective by recalling that the total cost of air pollution in developed countries was more than EUR 1100 per person each year, and that it could reach EUR 2500 per person each year by 2060.

Commissioner Moscovici highlighted the role environmental taxes can play, pointing also, however, to the low take-up of such taxes in Europe. He stressed the need for governments to step in, as the market alone cannot address distortions between polluters and those suffering from its results. He specifically called on national governments to avoid fiscal policies that indirectly favour air pollution, citing the diesel example, as most EU Member States still under-tax diesel in comparison to gasoline. He recalled that the all-round environmental impact of fuels should also be considered, reminding delegates that diesel, while helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions, remains a major source of NOx and PM emissions. He concluded by announcing a revision of the European rules on energy taxation for early 2018, which should, inter alia, better reflect Europe's climate and broader environmental commitments, together with technological advances.





*Clean air is essential for healthy living. The EU is working to ensure that every citizen can breathe without risking their well-being.*



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

EU laws and clean air policies have a direct benefit on our health, the economy and the environment.

EU air policy:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/air/>



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