

Allergies in a Changing Environment in Europe

21 March 2012, Brussels, EU-Parliament

The EAACI Interest Group „Aerobiology and Air Pollution” organised a 2 hours workshop in the EU-Parliament in Brussels. The aim was to make politicians aware of the ongoing epidemic in allergic disease (Prof. Dr. Isabella Annesi-Maesano, France, and Peter Burney, UK), that current therapies are still insufficient (Prof. Dr. Antonella Muraro, Italy), that changed land use in the EU can lead to more allergic sensitizations (Prof. Dr. Carmen Galan, Spain), and that allergies are an environmental, multifactorial disease that need a concerted research approach (Prof. Dr. Jeroen Buters, Germany). We tried to identify where the EU currently spends its research money on allergic diseases (Prof. Buters), and where more attention is needed (exposome). A 30 minutes panel discussion led by Dr. Lorenzo Cecchi (Italy) and supplemented with Prof. Mikhail Sofiev (Finland) gave stakeholders time to vent their interests.

The key messages were:

1. Currently an epidemic in allergic disease going on and an end is not in sight
2. More research funding into the causes of this increase is needed

A Member of Parliament, Esther de Lange, sponsored and spoke at our meeting. About 46 participants were present, including WHO, FP7 and patient organisation stakeholders. Surprisingly was the vivid interest of patient organisations (Allergy UK, European Federation of Allergy, EFA, European Public Health Alliance, EPHA, and more). They would like to be heard by politicians and concluded that allergic patients are not satisfied with the current situation and ask for improvements (more funding for pollen monitoring and into the causes of the epidemic).

Although we had hoped for more Members of Parliament and the Commissions, the workshop was a success. In the Parliament many parallel sessions are held, like on “The Effect of Climate Change on Illegal Immigration”, “Healthy Buildings”, “COPD” (all at the same time), and on this political market “Allergies” is just another stand. We need to do more to be heard. This EAACI workshop was the beginning of a series of workshops planned by the Academy.

I thank all the participants for devoting time to this political activity.

Prof. Dr. Jeroen Buters
Interest Group Aerobiology and Air Pollution Secretary

More information about the programme can be found on www.eaaci.net and/or www.hialine.eu. Under the EAACI Website you can also read the press release about this workshop.