

Press Statement

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Insulating our buildings helps tackle the no. 4 threat to human health: air pollution

The International Energy Agency's (IEA) June 2016 report on Energy and Air pollution identifies air pollution as the world's no. 4 threat to human health¹. The report underlines that most of the roots and cures are to be found in the energy sector. As a consequence, the building sector which represents 40% of all energy consumption and 36% of CO₂ emissions should be the first point of action. It is widely known that building insulation can bring significant energy savings; CO₂ reductions; higher energy security; higher employment and increased competitiveness. But, did you also know that building insulation, through the reduced use of energy in domestic heating and cooling limits related outdoor air pollution and thus enables economic, mostly health care related, savings of ≥6.65 billion € /year² and an annual EU gain of 70000 Life Years resulting from the diminished emissions.

Eurima welcomes the International Energy Agency's (IEA) World Energy Outlook - Special report entirely dedicated to "Energy and Air Pollution", raising the awareness of the link between energy, air pollution and health and calling for a pragmatic, tailored alternative: a clean air scenario.

"Once again, we see that improving the energy performance of our buildings - where Europeans spend 90% of their time - has incomparable ancillary benefits that go well beyond reducing our energy bills, helping the climate and our comfort and wellbeing but also tackling one of the global public health concerns, air pollution. We have to stop underplaying the value of existing solutions as insulation, and start pro-actively deploying them." Commented Jan te Bos, Director General of Eurima.

In proposing a cost-effective strategy, based on existing technologies and proven policies, the IEA highlights the importance of efficiency measures, including higher energy efficiency standards, to cut pollutant emissions and improve air quality. As such, any Clean Air Scenario should support acceleration and maximization of existing policies and programmes e.g. for building renovation.

A few weeks ago the World Health Organisation noted that EU Health related economic costs of air pollution are around €940bn and - improved insulation can reduce it up to €40bn³.

As the EU sets out to review the energy efficiency Directive (EED) and the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), it is essential that these multiple co-benefits such as air quality are adequately taken into account for their economic, societal and public health value added. In particular the co-benefits of improving air quality through building energy renovation should be factored in in the national renovation strategies that EU countries have to develop by 30th April 2017.

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¹ Behind blood pressure, dietary risks and smoking.

² Through public health benefits and reduced related societal costs

³ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Media/Factsheet_-_GEO-6_Assessment_for_the_pan-European_region_FINAL.pdf