



# The European Lung Corner

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This issue of the *European Respiratory Journal (ERJ)* sees the first of a new bimonthly section of articles entitled the European Lung Corner. The European Lung Corner will introduce topics of European Union (EU) affairs relevant to respiratory medicine and science. As you may or may not be aware, the European Respiratory Society (ERS) has an office in Brussels, Belgium, situated in the heart of the European quarter, entirely dedicated to advocacy and raising awareness among the public and policy makers of the burden of respiratory diseases across Europe. In doing so, the EU Affairs Dept works to promote prevention, health research, environmental protection, tobacco control and public health. As the ERS Secretary for EU Affairs, it is my privilege to present the EU Affairs Dept: B. Ward (Head of European Affairs), M. Barry (Policy Officer), T. El Nemr (Advocacy Officer) and N. Kamel (Scientific Officer).

Governed by the Advocacy Committee, ERS advocacy in Brussels covers various fields. The current five objectives are to increase EU policymakers' understanding and awareness of respiratory diseases, identify opportunities for research, strengthen tobacco control, strengthen environmental policy, and raise the profile of the ERS by actively participating in noncommunicable disease (NCD) discussions.

At an operational level, the EU Affairs Department is in close contact with the EU Institutions (the European Commission, the European Parliament and Council of the European Union). The Brussels office also monitors activities at the international level *via* the Global NCD Alliance, the Framework Convention Alliance and at the World Health Organisation. In addition, we are involved in various alliances with other scientific societies: the European Chronic Diseases Alliance (ECDA), the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and the Alliance for Biomedical Research (often called the "Biomed Alliance"). At the ERS level, we are involved in the Tobacco Control Committee and in the Environment and Health Committee, chaired respectively by C. Gratziou (Athens University, Athens, Greece) and B. Brunekreef (Utrecht University, Utrecht, the Netherlands). The Secretary for EU Affairs participates in the Scientific Committee to allow better communication about European opportunities for research. We work in close contact with the European Lung Foundation located in the ERS Sheffield office and participate in meetings of the Forum of European National Respiratory Societies. The Brussels office works closely with the Presidential Cycle to define and organise the annual Presidential Summit.

In the present issue of *ERJ*, the first article of the European Lung Corner, "Canaries in the coalmine", looks at the topic of air pollution and respiratory health [1]. The article builds on an event organised together with the HEAL in the European Parliament on March 19, 2013, a "Spotlight on Health and Clean Air", which focused on the ERS 10 Principles for Clean Air [2].

A snapshot of other recent ERS advocacy activities includes: a meeting with the new European Commissioner, T. Borg, in the context of ECDA; a breakfast policy debate with an exhibition in the

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European Parliament on an important topic in the context of revision of the tobacco product directive “Protecting children against tobacco: what works?”; participation in a workshop on electronic cigarettes, also in the European Parliament, with an intervention on electronic nicotine delivering systems by the ERS Past President, F. Blasi (University of Milan, Milan, Italy).

2013’s Presidential Summit was held in Dublin, Ireland, in June 2013 dealing with “Research gaps, patient needs and innovative solutions: a forward look on lung health research”. This summit allowed the ERS to prepare for the next European research programme, called Horizon 2020. The ERS has had, in the context of the Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe, success in lobbying the European Parliament, leading to the concept of a scientific panel for health that should be a science-led stakeholder platform to provide input to the preparation of Horizon 2020 calls.

For the remainder of 2013, the Brussels office will focus on a number of key activities and challenges, one which is the revision of the tobacco products directive. During the legislative process, the ERS is supporting the adoption of a strong directive by reminding the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) of the impact of tobacco smoking on health, using new initiatives such as an online petition signed by >700 respiratory professionals. The new tobacco product directive is expected to be adopted before the European Parliament elections in May 2014.

In addition, the ERS will apply to become a partner organisation of the European Medicines Agency and an eventual member of the Healthcare Professionals Working Party. Should this application be successful, this collaboration will help provide a stronger focus on respiratory medicines in these organisations.

At the level of the Biomed Alliance, we will try to involve our organisation in the Science-led stakeholder platform that will be created for Horizon 2020.

In November 2013, the Brussels office will organise an event in the European Parliament with the ERS Secretary General, G.B. Migliori (Fondazione S. Maugeri, Tradate, Italy), on the multidrug-resistant tuberculosis “time bomb”, to raise awareness among MEPs of the necessity of identifying the real risk of drug-resistant tuberculosis in Europe [3]. The event will be hosted by Maria Carvalho MEP with the European Commission, WHO and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) all participating in the debate.

Finally, the year will end with a high-profile launch of the “Facts and Figures” version of the *European Lung White Book* on December 10. The event, which is an official event of the Lithuanian Presidency will see ERS President P. Barnes joined by both the European Commissioner for Health and the Lithuanian Health Minister.

All these events and activities are important ERS achievements. The *ERJ* editorial board believes it important that *ERJ* readers and ERS members be informed on a regular basis of these successes. We hope that the new bimonthly European Lung Corner will generate greater interest and understanding among readers of ERS advocacy activities.

## References

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- 3 Blasi F, Reichman LB, Migliori GB. Presenting the European Forum for TB Innovation: innovative thinking in progressing towards TB elimination in Europe. *Eur Respir J* 2012; 40: 806–808.