

To:
Mr. Maroš Šefčovič,
Vice-President of the European Commission
B-1049 Brussels

Cc:
COMMISSIONER Miguel Arias Cañete, Climate Action & Energy
COMMISSIONER Karmenu Vella, Environment, Maritime Affairs & Fisheries
COMMISSIONER Neven Mimica, International Cooperation & Development
COMMISSIONER Johannes Hahn, European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations

Brussels, 09 June 2015

Health benefits of Serbia's climate mitigation ambition

Dear Vice-President Šefčovič,

This week you will be in Serbia for visits including the “EU-SERBIA High Level Conference on Climate Change” on 10-11 June 2015. We understand that during these meetings, the Serbian government may announce its ambition for its greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation target, on the road to the Paris Climate conference in December 2015.

In your meetings with Serbian officials, we call on you to underline the importance of high ambition on climate mitigation, which will also bring benefits to the health of Serbians and Europeans.

Serbia relies heavily on coal power generation for energy production and plans to increase its capacity even more. Coal-fired power plants are both a major contributor to carbon emissions and air pollution. According to a recent assessment by the European Commission¹, Serbia has the second worst air quality in Europe, which results in premature death, ill-health and lost productivity. The health costs of coal power generation alone in Serbia are estimated to be up to 4.98 billion EUR per year².

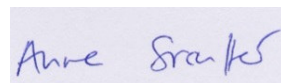
Earlier this month the Deputy Health Minister of Serbia, prof dr Berislav Vekić called on his Government colleagues to consider health protection in energy choices, and to take the long-term effects on population health into account when developing energy policies.³

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) thinks that now is the time for Serbia to show climate leadership, and to facilitate the switch to a low-carbon economy. In our view, any set target for 2030 GHG emissions lower than 40% compared to 1990 levels is insufficient.

We very much hope that in your exchange you will invite the Serbian government to not only increase ambition on climate mitigation for better health, but also encourage them turn away from investments into coal power generation.

In view of the public interest of this matter we intend to make the letter more widely known.

Best regards,



Anne Stauffer
Deputy Director
Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

¹ EMRC (2014). Cost-benefit Analysis of Final Policy Scenarios for the EU Clean Air Package <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/air/pdf/TSAP%20CBA.pdf>

² Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL): Air Pollution and Health in Serbia: http://env-health.org/IMG/pdf/heal_briefing_air_serbia_eng.pdf

³ Press release on “Cleaner air would promote better health in Serbia” from the Serbian Health Ministry and HEAL: <http://env-health.org/resources/press-releases/article/clean-air-would-promote-better>