

## News Release

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### **Aphekom findings add new dimension to health impacts and costs of air pollution in European cities**

*Project shows that life expectancy and monetary benefits increase significantly when levels of fine particles are reduced further in European cities; it reveals that living near busy roads substantially increases the total burden of disease attributable to air pollution; and it underscores the benefits from regulating pollution near busy roads beyond the achievements of current EU legislation*

Saint-Maurice, France, March 2 – Coordinated by the French Institute for Public Health Surveillance (InVS), the Aphekom project today released the results of 3 years of work on air pollution and its impact on health conducted by 60 scientists in 12 countries across Europe.

Aphekom's work is particularly relevant now when various European Union member states have exceeded mandated limit values on particles since 2005. And when EU and national agendas are being prepared for implementing existing regulations on air pollution and for revising current EU legislation in 2013.

The new information and tools produced by the project will enable decision makers to set more effective European, national and local policies; health professionals to better advise vulnerable individuals; and all individuals to better protect their health.

Using traditional health impact assessment methods, Aphekom (Improving Knowledge and Communication for Decision Making on Air Pollution and Health in Europe) has showed that a decrease to WHO's annual air-quality guideline on PM<sub>2.5</sub> fine particles (10 micrograms/cubic metre) in 25 large European cities could add up to 22 months of life expectancy for persons 30 years of age and older, depending on the city and its average level of PM<sub>2.5</sub>.

In addition, the monetary health benefits from complying with the WHO guideline would total some €31.5 billion annually, including savings on health expenditures, absenteeism and intangible costs such as well-being, life expectancy and quality of life.

Using the same HIA methods, Aphekom's analysis of the effects of EU legislation to reduce the sulphur content of fuels has showed not only a marked, sustained reduction in ambient SO<sub>2</sub> levels in 20 cities but also the resulting prevention of some 2,200 premature deaths valued at €192 million.

By applying innovative HIA methods, Aphekom has separately determined that the additional long-term impacts on the development of chronic diseases from living near

busy roads substantially increase the burden of disease attributable to air pollution in Europe.

Specifically, in 10 European cities we have estimated that living near busy roads could be responsible for 15 percent of asthma in children and possibly for similar or higher percentages of other common chronic diseases in adults 65 and over, such as coronary heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

In the cities studied, for children and adults 65 and over the economic burden likely totals some €300 million every year.

Together these important findings underscore the health and monetary benefits from drafting and implementing effective EU policies on air pollution and ensuring compliance with them over time. And they point to the benefits that could result from regulating pollution near busy roads.

Finally, among other work aimed at serving the needs of our stakeholders better, Aphekom has developed a process, based on a deliberation-support tool, that helps scientists, policy makers and other stakeholders discuss and share their views more effectively on the uncertainties in HIA calculations; and facilitates decision making on air quality and related environmental-health issues.

And we have created a short questionnaire to identify stakeholders' information needs that visitors can fill in on our site.

The Aphekom project, which extended from July 2008 to March 2011, has been co-funded by the European Commission's Programme on Community Action in the Field of Public Health (2003-2008) under Grant Agreement No. 2007105, and by the many national and local institutions that have dedicated resources to the fulfillment of this project.

To learn more about the Aphekom project, its methods and findings, please visit: [www.aphekom.org](http://www.aphekom.org).

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