

# IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION FOR DECISION MAKING ON AIR POLLUTION AND HEALTH IN EUROPE

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## Aphekom

Health impact of current levels of air pollution is well established mostly through epidemiological studies from all over the world.

Short-term effects like increase in respiratory symptoms, small impairments in lung function, increases in hospital admissions and emergency calls for respiratory diseases, asthma medication use, school absenteeism, and mortality from respiratory and circulatory causes have been consistently shown in time-series and panel studies. Effect estimates are usually small but because exposure is widespread and health endpoints concerned are rather frequent, even these small effects pose a major threat to population's health.

Long-term effects studied mostly in cohort studies and underpinned by findings from cross-sectional studies are stronger, although in Europe, robust studies are not numerous.

Encouraging sound policy, unbiased and easy-to-understand information for decision makers, health professionals and the general public is vital, albeit not easy to achieve. Communication should neither evoke unreasonable fears nor should it neglect real risks, thus uncertainties on all levels should clearly be explained.

The EU-sponsored Aphekom project (Public Health Program EC grant agreement 2007105) has been set out to develop and deliver new, reliable and actionable information and tools so decision makers can set more effective local and European policies, health professionals can better advise vulnerable groups, and individuals can make better-informed decisions.

Aphekom builds on the experiences from the former Aphis project ([www.apheis.net](http://www.apheis.net)) and adds new exposure and health models, economic evaluation and considerations about uncertainties in the use of the project outcomes for public participation processes.

An Aphekom web-site is under preparation.

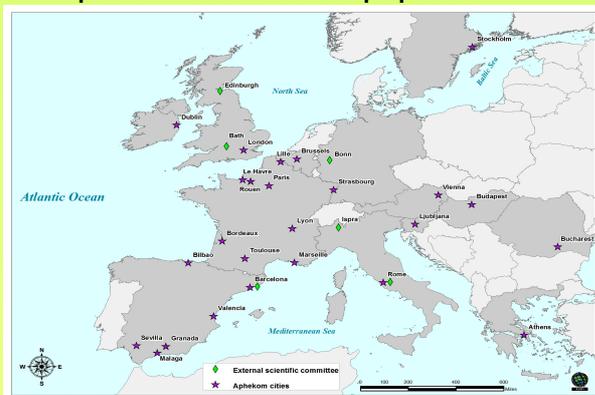


Figure 1: Aphekom partner cities

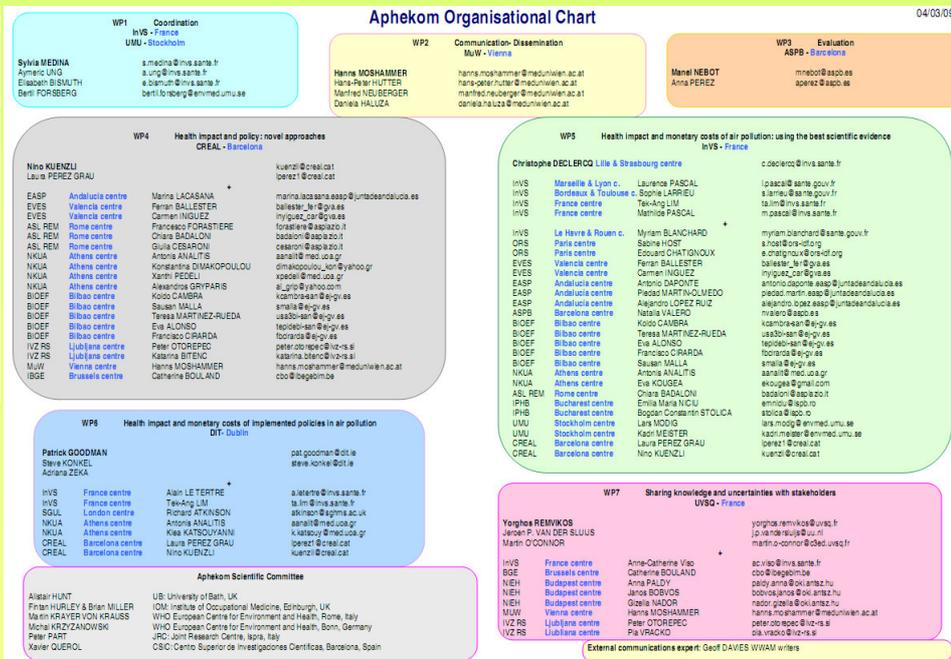


Figure 2: Aphekom organisational chart

**Figure 1:** During the project's two and a half years Aphekom's more than 40 scientists and specialists in 25 cities across Europe will develop health-impact indicators, and will report on health impacts and related costs. They will evaluate strategies designed to reduce air pollution, stimulate the dialog between stakeholders, and provide guidance to health professionals on helping patients reduce their exposure to air pollution.

- WP "Health Impacts and Policy: Novel Approaches"** (coordinated by Nino Künzli, Center for Research in Environmental Epidemiology, Barcelona, CREAL, Spain)
  - How many people in Europe live next to traffic pollution / How does this vary across different cities in Europe?
  - How many diseases could be avoided among the European population if less people were living next to traffic pollution?
  - How recent findings allow expressing the benefits in a manner more relevant for policy makers and the general public?
- WP "Health Impacts and Monetary Costs of Air Pollution"** (coordinated by Christophe Declercq, French Institute of Public Health Surveillance, InVS, Saint-Maurice, France)
  - What would be the health benefits of reducing air pollution levels in the Aphekom cities?
  - What would be the associated health-related monetary costs of air pollution in the Aphekom cities?
- WP "Health Impacts and Costs of Implemented Policies in Air Pollution"** (coordinated by Patrick Goodman, Dublin Institute of Technology, DIT, Ireland)
  - Are there any initiatives which were taken in Aphekom cities that improved air quality?
  - What are the health impacts and related monetary costs of implemented policies in air pollution in Aphekom cities?
- WP "Sharing Knowledge and Uncertainties with Stakeholders"** (coordinated by Yorghos Remvikos, Centre of Economics and Ethics for the Environment and Development, C3ED, University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, UVSQ, France)
  - How to deal with uncertainties in the decision-making chain (from knowledge production to policy action)?
- WP "Communication and Dissemination"** (coordinated by Hanns Moshhammer, Medical University of Vienna, Austria)
  - Communicate focused information to all those who need to know using diverse local and European media, organisations and events
- WP "Evaluation"** (coordinated by Manuel Nébot, Barcelona Public Health Agency, ASPB, Spain)
  - Conduct on-going, internal evaluation of the project
- WP "Coordination"** (coordinated by Sylvia Medina, InVS, France and Bertil Forsberg, Umea University, Sweden)

More information about Aphekom can be found at:

- Medina S., Ung A., Moshhammer H. (for the Aphekom team). 2008. Aphekom tackles air pollution in Europe. WHO Newsletter No. 42, Dec. 2008, p. 14-15, Berlin, Germany.
- Medina S., Ung A., Moshhammer H. (for the Aphekom team). 2009. The Aphekom Project. Aphekom General Brochure (order: [a.ung@invs.sante.fr](mailto:a.ung@invs.sante.fr)), Saint-Maurice, France.