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Air Pollution in Europe – A Continuing Threat to Health from the Very Air We Breathe

By providing fresh information, the new Aphekom project will further elucidate the characteristics and consequences of air pollution for policy and individual decision making across Europe

Barcelona, 16 of September, 2008 – Much has been done in recent years to reduce air pollution and its detrimental effects on the health of Europeans. Yet pressing gaps remain in stakeholders' knowledge and understanding of this continuing threat, impeding progress in the planning and implementation of measures to protect public health.

Aphekom (Improving Knowledge and Communication for Decision Making on Air Pollution and Health in Europe) is a project involving many cities that cover a large part of Europe, from Stockholm in the north to Athens in the south, and from Dublin in the west to Budapest in the east.

The Aphekom project will 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 as a result.

This project will provide up-to-date information and practical and reliable tools so that, at a local and European level, politicians can promote more effective policies, health professionals can better advise vulnerable groups, and individuals can choose the healthiest option in their daily lives.

In particular, during the project's two and a half years **Aphekom's 35 scientists and specialists in 23 cities across Europe will suggest and report on health impact indicators**, and will calculate and report on related costs. They will evaluate strategies designed to reduce air pollution. They will stimulate dialogue between stakeholders. And they will provide guidance to health professionals on helping patients reduce their exposure to air pollution.

In Spain several research groups from different scientific specialities participate in the project. Results obtained will thus directly be applicable to various Spanish citizens. **The Centre for Research in Environmental Epidemiology (CREAL) in Barcelona leads a very important work package within this project. CREAL's work consists of, for example, improving methods of establishing exposure to traffic and evaluating the impact of air pollution on chronic illnesses such as asthma and atherosclerosis, integrating new scientific evidence into the policy decision making process.**

In all these ways the project hopes to contribute to the development and evolution of local and EU policies aimed at reducing both air pollution and its impact on respiratory and cardiovascular morbidity and mortality across Europe.

The Aphekom project expands on the earlier Apheis health impact assessment project by adding new research, interaction with stakeholders, and more effective communication on health impact assessments for those who need to know in Europe.

Formally launched at a meeting on the 1st and 2nd of July in Paris hosted by the project's coordinator, the **French Institute of Public Health Surveillance (InVS)**, Aphekom is 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 institutions participating in the project.