

The EC and the European Environment Agency emphasize that they are working with the countries of the Western Balkans to achieve technical standards when it comes to air quality, and thus to protect the lives and health of citizens.

The use of solid fuels, coal in industry, energy and household heating, and the exhaust fumes of old cars are the main causes of pollution in the countries of the Western Balkans, the European Commission assessed.

“We do not see the dramatic progress that is needed, especially when it comes to the health of citizens,” said European Commissioner for the Environment Virginijus Sinkevičius, reports Tanjug.

He added that the countries of the region are still waiting for a “big job” in that area, which requires both political will and financial support.

Brussels estimates that the number of premature deaths caused by air pollution is decreasing in the EU, but that it is still at a high level. It is stated that exposure to small particles caused approximately 417,000 premature deaths in 41 European countries in 2018, of which 379,000 deaths occurred in the EU-28. The Air Quality in Europe 2020 report shows that Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Italy, Poland and Romania have exceeded the EU limit value for fine particles (PM_{2.5}) in 2018.

Only four countries in Europe (Estonia, Finland, Iceland and Ireland) had concentrations of fine particles that are below the stricter guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO).

The European Environment Agency has not yet prepared a final report on the impact of pollution on health for this year, but the processed part confirmed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant drop in the concentration of NO₂ and PM particles was recorded in large cities.

It is concluded that locking society is not a way to reduce pollution, but a continuous application of environmental and climate policies throughout Europe and the world.

Source: balkans.aljazeera.net