

The research was realized from August 1 to 13, 2020, ie two months before the start of the heating season in Serbia, when the pollution concentrations are by far the highest, which we are witnessing this winter as well.

How are citizens informed about pollution?

A frequent problem of informing on this topic was among the first questions in the research, and citizens pointed out that the media - 31.7% and social networks - 28.9% were among their primary sources. And while standard media often neglects this topic, social networks as much more viral media in conjunction with the sharing of content from individual applications are gaining increasing primacy. Also, applications (AirVisual and AirCare), which are followed by 14.2% of respondents, show a growing trend of popularity among citizens, while the website of the Environmental Protection Agency is far less visited. Air pollution as a problem cannot be hidden and the citizens believe that the air is not only polluted, but they also give it very negative assessments in terms of quality. Namely, the vast majority of as many as 84.5% of them believe that the air in the whole of Serbia is polluted or excessively polluted. The grayness of the sky over Serbia in the direction of this percentage is also shown by the fact that 86.5% of citizens point out that the air in their places of residence is also polluted. Therefore, they should not be surprised by the very bad grades that citizens give in terms of air quality on a scale of 1 to 5. Grades 1, 2 and 3 dominate, while the average score is below the average for this scale and is very poor 2.37.

How do citizens evaluate the work of competent bodies?

One of the main questions is where and what the competent institutions are, which are certainly among the most responsible for the current situation not getting better. In accordance with the winter dream in which they obviously fell, bodies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, line ministries, as well as local authorities did not receive positive evaluations from the citizens for their work. When it comes to transparency in reporting on air quality, a huge 84.8% of citizens believe that those responsible are not doing their job adequately. There is nothing better when it comes to solving the problem of air pollution, because 72.9% of citizens believe that the competent authorities are not doing enough. Another 21.9% of respondents believe that the authorities are doing their job, but that in addition there are no visible results of their work, given that the problem is still largely present.

Impact on health

Over time, citizens have probably come to the conclusion, by connecting different sources of knowledge, how negative the impact of pollution is on their health. Thus, in support of this, the attitude of the respondents is that air pollution greatly affects the health of citizens. On the other hand, when it comes to specific health problems, among the most common citizens pointed out: breathing problems and related asthma and bronchitis, cardiovascular problems and more. If we connect this problem with the current pandemic of the COVID-19 virus, it is certain that citizens with respiratory and cardiovascular diseases are among the most endangered, and many scientific papers in the previous year presented data linking polluted air with a higher risk of death due to COVID-19.

Which sources of pollution do the citizens of Serbia point out as the most important?

As the biggest air pollutants, the citizens in Serbia, with the largest number of 30.6%, point out that they are factory plants. As for other sources, traffic, thermal power plants, but also individual furnaces are among the leading ones, however, only 14.6% of them see that source as the most important. Although individual fireboxes, according to the data of the Environmental Protection Agency, are certainly the biggest source of pollution, we should not be surprised by this order of the biggest polluters in the responses of citizens. Namely, large fireboxes in the form of factory plants and thermal screens have been polluting the air in Serbia for decades, and the citizens have created an image of them, which is also expressed in these answers. What is inevitable is that the problem with individual furnaces and thermal power plants is a very big challenge for the state in terms of emissions. Therefore, the process of solving this problem will require a lot of investment, but also time until these problems are solved. As the heating season is the period when the pollution is most pronounced, it is interesting to point out the data on the way in which the citizens of Serbia heat their homes. Two energy sources, wood and coal, which mostly pollute the air with carcinogenic PM particles, are at the same time the most common in our country, so 41.8% of respondents heat themselves using these fuels. Immediately behind them is central heating, which is heated by 28% of respondents, while other energy sources are obviously expensive for citizens in Serbia, and therefore they are far less represented.

Citizen activism

The question of activism in solving this problem brought very interesting answers. 30.8% of citizens would be ready to join protests, public advocacy or individual measurements, while slightly less would certainly not participate. The majority of 44.9% of citizens are undecided,

and this uncertainty can be reflected in the thinking that it is difficult to make any changes in Serbia and that this process often takes too long.

What do citizens see as possible solutions to this problem?

Citizens recognized the problem of polluted air, but the choice of a proposal to solve it was somewhat surprising. Namely, they have largely highlighted the answers that are based on turning to greater energy efficiency. Thus, the citizens emphasize the standard standard phrase the most now - the necessity of greater investment in the installation of filters, and immediately afterwards the necessity of strengthening energy efficiency measures and a faster transition to RES. Given that wood and coal are the energy sources most often used by citizens for heating, the following data are commendable: Citizens support the transition to alternative energy sources, and thirdly emphasize the need to enable greater and more favorable use of environmentally friendly fuels, but also greater subsidies. energy production from RES.

When we look at the results, we notice that the citizens realize that the air is polluted, that it harms their health, but that they also have suggestions on how to improve the situation. However, it is obvious that the wind will blow again for a long time and carry the pollution if the competent authorities do not start in the meantime, and the citizens do not continue to draw their attention to the problem, otherwise the pollution will continue to live with us.

Source: klima101.rs