

Romanian local authorities should embrace their important role in the health of the citizens they serve. Air pollution is a critical public health issue that needs to be addressed. To build a sustainable future, authorities should shift from treating problems to preventing them.

The Romanian Health Observatory has analysed actions aimed at combating air pollution taken by the 15 largest municipalities in Romania in the past two years. Unfortunately, the findings are not very encouraging. As in the previous 2018 edition of our ranking, none of the cities have managed to reach half of the maximum score.

The analysis is based on 20 indicators, spread around 5 dimensions using a scientifically validated methodology:

Economic interventions;

Administrative interventions;

Behavioural interventions;

Infrastructure;

Direct indicators of air pollution.

Air pollution kills 29.000 Romanians every year, 15 times more than traffic accidents.

Romania ranks 7th in the European Union for premature deaths caused by air pollution. As indicated by CE DELFT recent report for EPHA, Romania has the highest annual social cost per capita caused by air pollution, each Romanian losing €1.810 because of this public health threat. Given this data, combating air pollution should be a top priority for any local government and especially for the ones serving high-density areas. Sadly, this has not been the case in the past years:

Although ranked among the most efficient transport policies at combating air pollution, congestion charging or low emission zones cannot be found in any Romanian city.

Only 8 out of the 15 largest municipalities in Romania (53%) have purchased electric buses for public transport in the past two years, while 12 out of them (80%) have purchased diesel buses, even though diesel emissions are classified as group 1 carcinogens.

Half of the vehicles in Romania have diesel engines, the largest number of diesel cars per 1000 inhabitants being in Bucharest. At the same time, half of the cars in Romania are older than 15 years.

The average length of cycling paths in these 15 cities is 29 km, two of them having no cycling paths at all.

In Iași, the second-largest city in Romania, the daily limit for PM10 has been surpassed 138 times in 2020, while in Bucharest it has happened 128 times.

Source: epha.org