

Citizens, “equipped” with sensors, data and knowledge about air pollution, become “owners” of the topic and agree in the demand for clean air. After measuring, it is time for measurements. When the citizens do their “part of the job”, it is the turn of the institutions. The action of expanding the network was carried out during December 2020 and January 2021. Thanks to new sensors installed throughout Serbia, primarily in those environments where there is no real-time monitoring in the state and local network, many citizens can monitor air quality live.

A cursory review of key information on air quality in the Republic of Serbia in 2019, both the text and the accompanying infographics, can leave an impression that is better than the actual situation. The air in two zones, with the exception of only a few cities, was assessed as clean. The image in which the data on air quality by cities, zones and agglomerations are presented is dominated by the color green, which means clean air. However, this image needs to be further sharpened. It is important to note that over 3 million citizens of the Republic of Serbia live in urban areas where excessive pollution has been recorded. From the attached pollution trends, we can notice that large urban areas are continuously faced with excessive air pollution. In addition to the danger that this poses to the health of the population, this is also an indication that the necessary measures to reduce pollution are either not taken or do not give the desired results.

An analysis of the scope of monitoring in the state network, primarily in terms of which pollutants are monitored, as well as the contribution of local monitoring and the contribution of local monitoring results to this Report, imposes an uneasy conclusion: Air in Serbia is mostly clean only in areas where there is no continuous particle pollution monitoring. This is exactly the reason for launching the civil network for measuring air quality, which the Belgrade Open School launched in 2019. The main goal of establishing the network is for citizens to receive real-time air quality information. In addition, the goal is to, through the expansion of the network, involve citizens in air quality monitoring, guidance on air quality standards, obligations and responsibilities of institutions, and to jointly put the issue of air monitoring and protection on the agenda of decision makers in their communities.

In cooperation with “Eco Guard”, one of the most visited forums on the environment on social networks in Serbia, the BOS team came into contact with activists throughout Serbia, who expressed interest in “joining” our network. The sensors are deployed throughout Serbia during the New Year’s holidays, with a symbolic desire to breathe cleaner air in the new 2021 year. After assembling, sending and installing sensors, real-time air quality data are now visible in many new environments: Prokuplje, Leskovac, Trstenik, Popovac, Novi

Pazar, Priboj, Cacak, Valjevo, Zrenjanin, Kikinda, Apatin, Futog, Becej, Vršac... Data from the network for civil air quality measurement can be seen on the website sensor.community, as well as on the mobile application Air Care. The data are not official, but they are very illustrative, as is the whole action - in the absence of action by the institutions, the citizens take matters into their own hands. The list does not end here, and we plan to expand it further soon and practically include all larger urban areas. In addition, we are planning a series of talks and trainings on local air protection policies. We will discuss the distribution of competencies in this area, what the official monitoring system should look like, what are the obligations of broadcasters, what are the competencies of local self-government.

Source: Beogradska Otvorena Škola