

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Romania are the three countries at the top of a list published by the European Environment Agency showing that people in Eastern Europe have higher chances of dying as a result of pollution than those in the Western part of the continent.

As much as 27 per cent of deaths registered in Bosnia and Herzegovina are related to air pollution, environmental noise contributing to heart disease and the effects of extreme weather, says a study published on Tuesday by the European Environment Agency. Bosnia and Herzegovina's rate of environment-related deaths is the highest in the continent and is 14 percentage points higher than the EU median, which stands at 13 per cent.

Second in the list is Albania where 23 per cent of deaths are related to environmental problems, while Romania, which leads the ranking of EU countries, is in third place with 19 per cent.

The European citizens who are least exposed to poor air quality and other environment-related risks are in Norway and Iceland, where the rate of deaths influenced by pollution is nine per cent, followed by those who live in Denmark and Sweden, where the figure is ten per cent.

"Eastern European countries carry a significantly higher environmental burden of disease and mortality than western European countries," the report says.

"A factor driving this pattern is energy poverty, which is more prevalent in southern and central-eastern Europe," it adds, explaining that "poorer communities rely on the combustion of low-quality solid fuels such as coal and wood, in low efficiency ovens for domestic heating."

The eastern part of the continent suffers the most from extreme temperatures and weather phenomena such as floods. The fact that Eastern European countries have lower levels of sanitation also makes their residents more exposed to waste substances that are detrimental to their health and life expectancy.

The study says that there are also environmental inequalities linked to ethnicity, explaining that "Roma communities in Central and Eastern Europe are often excluded from basic services and exposed to environmental pollution, with serious health consequences".

Source: balkaninsight.com