

Medical experts in the western Goriška region and the Medical Chamber of Slovenia have urged decision-makers to properly address the local environmental issues, pointing at pollution effects on people's health in the area. They also expressed concern over efforts to expand incineration capacities at a local cement factory.

The region's doctors and dentists have sent their appeal to a number of relevant institutions and decision-makers, most notably to the Environment Ministry and Environment Agency. The medical chamber endorsed the petition. So far, it has been signed by more than 140 doctors and dentists from the region as well as a number of their colleagues from other parts of the country, altogether more than 160 experts.

"The area has been marked by several decades of asbestos-cement production, moreover, in the recent years, the local cement factory or co-incineration plant has been producing an increasingly larger share of energy by incinerating waste, including toxic waste," said the signatories.

The Salanit Anhovo cement factory endeavours to get the go-ahead to incinerate more waste. The factory is the largest such facility in Slovenia, incinerating more than 100,000 tonnes of waste per year.

In December, the local branch of the opposition party Left held a public debate on these developments which included experts and environmental civil initiatives.

The debate heard warnings about detrimental effects of such an activity on general health and requests for the area to be declared degraded land and restored.

The Environmental Agency is currently examining the factory's request for expanding its incineration capacities by almost 25%.

Meanwhile, the medical experts have warned about exercising caution in technology implementation and capacity expansion due to potential long-term effects and interactions among pollutants.

They have urged decision-makers to employ the precautionary principle, prevent any further exposure to pollutants and set the same limit values for all citizens regardless of where they work or live.

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