

In Serbia, 3,600 people die prematurely every year from partial air pollution, half of them in Belgrade, while the World Health Organization predicts that, if there are no changes, this trend will accelerate the death of 75,000 Belgraders in the next ten years.

RERI drew the public's attention to the fact that the Assembly of the City of Belgrade is procuring two air purifiers with a total value of 6,300,000 dinars. According to the data from the public procurement portal, this purchase is in the range of the value of the development of the new Air Quality Plan in the Belgrade agglomeration, which will cost almost ten million dinars. Instead of filters, which will protect employees in the city assembly in the short term, the administration should invest the money in the planning and implementation of pollution reduction on the entire territory of the city, according to RERI.

According to numerous independent sources, air pollution in Belgrade is becoming more and more alarming from year to year. Last year and this year, the capital was at the top of the international lists of cities with the most polluted air. Belgraders inhaled air of the third category, "excessively polluted air where tolerance values for one or more pollutants have been exceeded". The consequences of pollution, it is believed, are worsened by climate change, due to which strong winds and precipitation purify the air less and less often. The pollution itself, however, is crucially caused by the human factor - the operation of industrial plants, traffic and heating with dirty fuels.

RERI estimates on its website that the situation would be much better if the city did not tolerate excessive construction and destruction of green areas. However, this institute considers it crucial to respect the Air Quality Plan, a strategic document by which the local self-government controls and improves air quality.

While the City Secretary for Environmental Protection, Ivana Vilotijevic, recently stated that the previous Plan, adopted in 2016, was fulfilled with 90 percent, and that "in recent years, the limit values of monitored particles, which are sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and ozone, they have never been exceeded", RERI interprets the situation differently. According to their assessment, the City did not fully implement the activities envisaged by the valid Plan. In addition, RERI warns that the previous Plan did not contain precise measures to improve air quality and clear indicators for monitoring the implementation of these measures, and that it was adopted without the active participation of the public.

The same source comments that the Environmental Protection Agency of Serbia recently changed the criteria for assessing air quality. Due to the shift of the upper limits, air containing over 40 µg / m³ of PM 2.5 particles is no longer classified by the Republic Agency as "polluted", but as "acceptable", while air containing 50,000 µg / m³ of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), which before the change criteria was "good", now "excellent".

Who is responsible for the crime of air pollution in Serbia?

Descriptive assessments of air quality given by the Republic Agency now differ from those of the European Environment Agency. On its website, RERI also drew attention to the fact that the City of Belgrade decided in October 2020 to reduce the funds intended for air quality monitoring: In January, 53 million was planned for the Air Quality Control Program for 2020, while in October this amount was reduced. at 39 million dinars. We expect the city authorities to explain why the previously planned funds were reduced, where that money was redirected and how it will affect the monitoring of air quality and monitoring the impact of polluted air on human health? Due to all of the above, RERI launched the “Air Kills” campaign and called on the city authorities to involve the public and experts in the drafting of the new Air Quality Plan, which will be valid for the next ten years.

Source: masina.rs