European Collaboration in Research and Technology
COST Action 633:
Particulate Matter: Properties related to health effects

COST 633 MEETING-ANNOUNCEMENT

Particulate matter and health in 2020
Are we on the right track?

Challenges of the changing particulate air pollution in Europe
what we know and what we should know in the future

March 13 and 14, 2008

Brussels, Belgium

(venue to be announced on http://cost633.dmu.dk)

Introduction

The revised EU air quality directive is now on track after numerous legislative and implementation efforts during the last few years. During the revision and discussion of this directive, several important issues especially related to particulate matter (PM) were taken up within the Clean Air for Europe (CAFE[1]) Programme. Not all issues could be tackled in the revision process due to lack of scientific data. There are still major uncertainties and important gaps in the present scientific knowledge that need handling by the next evaluation of the air quality directive in 2013. The changing PM pollution in Europe leads to further information needs by stakeholders, policy-makers and decision-makers. Much more emphasis should be put on the dual role of PM in health impact and climate change.

Aims

This two-day meeting aims at providing guidance for dealing with current heterogeneities and future changes in Europe-wide PM levels and characteristics, as well as the health implications due to air pollution and climate change.

Political implications

The legislation on air quality regulates outdoor PM concentrations at fixed sites. However, large differences can exist between these PM concentrations and those people are really exposed to. It is also known that the distribution of PM over Europe is heterogeneous with regard to mass concentration, physical and chemical characteristics, contributing sources as well as related health effects.

[1] CAFE is a programme of technical analysis and policy development that underpinned the development of the Thematic Strategy on Air Pollution under the Sixth Environmental Action Programme.

- Air quality standards are established to protect human health. How shall we include exposure measurements and modelling in future standards?
- Mediterranean countries have often high contributions from natural sources such as wildfires and Saharan dusts. What are the implications for human health?
- Should high background values of PM be considered in the evaluation of exceedances?
- What is the value of alternative indicators for PM-mass such as Black Smoke, elemental carbon, particle numbers or an oxidative stress index?
- Health impact assessment faces the challenge of how short-term and long-term exposure affect health and how it relates to other environmental problems. What are major uncertainties and how can we deal with them?

Structure of the workshop

***First day* (13 March 9:00 – 17:00)**

Scientific discussions in multi-disciplinary expert groups focussing on state of the art questions regarding 'PM and Health':

- Presentation of COST 633 activities and discussion of the major achievements of the Action.
- Future effects expected due to changing source patterns, emission characteristics and chemical pathways caused by current pollution abatement measures as well as by measures to mitigate climate change.

A summary of critical gaps in knowledge as well as recommendations on how to reduce uncertainties will be formulated as input for the second day.

***Second day* (14 March 9:00 – 13:00)**

This day of the meeting will provide policy makers and stakeholders with information about the current state of knowledge, the most pressing open questions, and guidance for policy.

Presentations:

- PM in air pollution, climate change and health
- A policy maker's views on PM pollution
- PM over Europe – from measurement to modelling and from ambient air to exposure
- Heterogeneities in PM-associated health effects, sources and PM characteristics
- The Commission's views on PM research related to air quality and health

Stakeholders and policy makers are specifically asked to actively participate in the formulation of scientific information needs for future policy decisions aimed at 2020.

Scientific committee

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