Project description:

Background

Air pollution has negative impacts on human health, the environment and the climate. It is responsible for some 430,000 premature deaths in the European Union each year, with an estimated cost to society of between €330 billion and €940 billion. Major sources of air pollution are urban transport, heavy industry and household heating.

EU citizens have a right to clean air. The European Commission has begun infringement proceedings against 16 Member States for non-compliance with the Air Quality Directive and has given Germany and the Czech Republic a final warning for exceeding PM10 limit values.

Where limit values are breached, individuals directly affected have the right to demand that action is taken and the Aarhus Convention, which has been signed by the EU, grants the public rights regarding access to information, public participation and access to justice.

Legal action initiated by NGOs and/or citizens can motivate the responsible authorities to meet their obligations. However, few citizens know about their rights regarding clean air and their options to act against violations of legislation. Many NGOs complain about the lack of access to information, particularly on air quality measurements, and the barriers to participating in the decision-making process. It is thus important to strengthen the commitment of citizens and NGOs to enforce these rights.

Objectives

The LIFE Legal Actions project aims to empower NGOs and citizens to take part in public participation processes on the development or revision of air quality
plans, to improve their access to justice by supporting their demand for air quality measures or as a last resort to initiate legal action. The project also aims to improve the relationship between citizens and government as well as government accountability, transparency and responsiveness. The specific aims of the project are:

- To empower and motivate EU citizens and NGOs to campaign for effective air quality measures by providing information about the sources and effects of air pollution and potential solutions, and by providing advice on their right to participate in decision-making processes and to take legal action if necessary; and
- To motivate political decision-makers to improve air quality legislation and implementation by advising them on existing national and European funding schemes, promoting green public procurement (GPP) as part of a resource-efficient economy, and transferring examples of best practice.

The project activities will be carried out in seven EU Member States with a particular focus on Germany and the Czech Republic. The activities and the results will be relevant, transferable and replicable in all Member States. Improving the implementation of air quality measures will also directly improve the implementation of the EU climate change policy since several air pollutants contribute significantly to global warming.

Expected results: The project expects to reach an estimated 13 million citizens in at least seven EU countries through the following awareness-raising activities:

- 200 press articles read by a combined audience of 10 million;
- TV and radio spots reaching 6 million people; and
- 100,000 visitors to the project website and social media channels.

NGOs and/or citizens will participate in at least 15 decision-making processes leading to a revision of air quality plans, and - if their requests are ignored by authorities - to legal action. Those “model cases” will have an effect on other regions since responsible authorities will provide information and allow public participation to avoid the risk of being sued.

These actions will be complemented by a strategy for engaging with experts and decision-makers with the following expected results:

- Publication of specialist newsletters and workshops targeting 200 NGOs and legal experts;
- Background briefing notes reaching 1,000 political decision-makers, authorities and experts, of which 200 will enter into an intense dialogue with the project;
- Networking with 500 administrations, NGOs and coordinators of related projects to facilitate uptake of activities in other EU countries;
- 100 municipalities informed about GPP and 20 will be motivated to file an application to implement air quality measures; and
- 100 representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament and Brussels based NGOs and business associations contacted.

In the long run, the project expects that better information on the funds available to carry out mitigation action will lead to more investments in air pollution reduction measures such as accelerated change to public bus fleets, improved infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians and better ‘best available technology’ to reduce industry emissions.
Results

Top

Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Air & Noise - Air pollutants
Information - Governance - Awareness raising - Information

Keywords

public health, human exposure to pollutants, public awareness campaign, urban area, environmental training, air quality management

Target EU Legislation

- Air
- Directive 2008/50/EC - Ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe (21.05.2008)

Natura 2000 sites

Not applicable

Top

Beneficiaries:

Coordinator Environmental Action Germany (Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V.)
Type of organisation NGO-Foundation
Description Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH) is an independent non-profit environmental and consumer protection organisation founded in 1975. The organisation has carried out projects on climate change and energy, law, nature conservation, local environmental protection, recycling and
administrative data:

project reference  
LIFE15 GIE/DE/000795

duration  
01-aug-2016 to 30-nov-2019

total budget  
869,936.00 €

EU contribution  
521,834.00 €

project location  
Praha (Czech Cesko) Stredni Cechy (Czech Cesko) Jihozapad (Czech Cesko) Severozapad (Czech Cesko) Severovychod (Czech Cesko) Jihovychod (Czech Cesko) Stredni Morava (Czech Cesko) Moravskoslezsko (Czech Cesko) Extra-Regio (Czech Cesko) Associated Czech (CZ) (Czech Cesko) Schleswig-Holstein (Deutschland) Hamburg (Deutschland) Niedersachsen (Deutschland) Bremen (Deutschland) Nordrhein-Westfalen (Deutschland) Hessen (Deutschland) Rheinland-Pfalz (Deutschland) Baden-Württemberg (Deutschland) Bayern (Deutschland) Saarland (Deutschland) Berlin (Deutschland) Brandenburg (Deutschland) Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Deutschland) Sachsen (Deutschland) Sachsen-Anhalt (Deutschland) Thüringen (Deutschland)

read more:

leaflet  
Title: "Can you breathe? Information on clean air" (773 KB) Editor: Deutsche Umwelthilfe e. V. No of pages: 4

project web site  
Project's website

publication: comparative study  
Title: "Deutsche Umwelthilfe: Klagen für Saubere Luft" (2.50 MB) Editor: Deutsche Umwelthilfe e. V. No of pages: 26