

WHO: Europe's air pollution costs \$1.6 trillion a year

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Air pollution in Europe causes illnesses and hundreds of thousands of deaths, costing the continent's governments a combined \$1.6 trillion each year, the World Health Organization said Tuesday.

This corresponded to nearly a tenth of the European Union's [gross domestic product](#) in 2012, the WHO Regional Office for Europe said in its first such study for the region.

The Copenhagen-based office estimates that 600,000 people died prematurely in 53 European countries in 2010 due to fine particles emitted by vehicles and industries and from burning fuels in homes.

Air pollution causes heart and lung diseases, as well as strokes and lung cancer.

"The evidence we have provides decision makers across the whole of government with a compelling reason to act," said WHO Europe chief Zsuzsanna Jakab.

Dirty air is responsible for the largest relative economic damage in Eastern Europe.

In Georgia, costs linked to premature deaths from [air pollution](#) correspond to 35 percent of GDP, putting it at the top among European countries in this regard.

Serbia, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan also face costs of between a third and a quarter of their economic production due to pollution.

Nine out of 10 Europeans are exposed to a concentration of pollution particles outdoors above WHO guidelines. In addition, [indoor pollution](#) is also a problem, especially in countries with lower incomes.

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