

Macedonia says its capital is most polluted city in Europe

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Health authorities in Macedonia say Skopje is now Europe's most polluted capital, with poor air quality blamed for the premature death of 1,300 people each year.

Dragan Gjorgjev of the country's National Public Health Institute told reporters Wednesday that the finding was based on a study by the Finnish Meteorological Institute which monitored levels of PM 2.5, tiny toxic particles that damage lung tissue.

He said pollution contributed to between 30 to 35 percent of deaths during the winter period over the past three years, with the figure in other capitals rarely exceeding 20 percent.

Health officials here have been warning for years of the deteriorating air quality in Skopje, a city of some 500,000 people, noting that the elderly and people with chronic diseases are most at risk.

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