



PRESS RELEASE: UNMASK MY CITY: health professionals call for improvement of the air quality in Tuzla and Lukavac

Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina; February 26, 2018 – Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is calling city authorities to clean the air in Bosnia and Herzegovina .

Doctors, allied healthcare professionals, and public health practitioners in Tuzla are officially launching [Unmask My City](#), to rally their peers and push for action on air pollution in their region. The Tuzla thermal coal plant in Bosnia is one of the ten largest polluters in Europe, emitting 51,644 tons of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) per year, and is the largest source of PM_{2.5} fine particulate pollution in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Maida Mulić, PhD MD, director of the Public Health Institute of Tuzla said: *“In Tuzla, as in many places in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the air that we breathe harms our health. This poor air quality causes heart and lung disease and brings immense suffering, especially for those who are already ill. We hope that other doctors, nurses, and health professionals in our country become active for cleaner air“. She adds that: “Urgent action from all structures and decision makers is needed in order to solve this problem.”*

Air pollution released from the Tuzla region knows no borders, and travels beyond Bosnia and Herzegovina into Europe. The estimated health costs caused by the existence and operation of the Tuzla Plant alone amount to between EUR 71 to 205 million annually for inhabitants of the Western Balkans, and between EUR 196 to 566 million for inhabitants of Europe. [1]

“It is alarming that Bosnia and Herzegovina has the second highest mortality rate from air pollution in the world, after North Korea [2] where air pollution eats over 21.5 per cent of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s GDP through reduced productivity and costs of treating the diseases caused by the air pollution.” said Vlatka Matković Puljić, Senior Policy Officer for Health and Energy at the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL). *“Solutions that would improve air quality are numerous, however, we need the political will to embrace these solutions for better public health“.*

Unmask my city [3] is global initiative led by doctors, nurses and public health professionals dedicated to improving the air quality and reducing the greenhouse gas emissions in our cities. They are calling on all cities to comply with the World Health Organization air quality guidelines. [4] HEAL leads this campaign in Europe, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the aim of promoting practical solutions, to city-level policy changes to drive a clear, downward global trend in air pollution in urban areas by 2030.

For years, the air quality in Tuzla and Lukavac has not improved. One of the major threats to the health of citizens in this area comes from the high concentration of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}). PM_{2.5} are particles formed by the combustion of materials and are the highest priority for health protection. When inhaled, fine particulate matter can enter into the bloodstream and harm our health in many ways. Scientific studies show that the inhalation of particles causes premature death, heart and lung disease, as well as stroke, and a range of other [health impacts](#).

Healthcare professionals from Tuzla and throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina are joining global efforts to improve the air quality. Only through primary prevention, prevention of pollution, the presence of heart



and lung diseases would be reduced and the mortality from these diseases as well. Thus, the society would have direct economic benefits.

Emir Durić, doctor from Tuzla said: *“Air pollution is an invisible killer in Tuzla. As doctors working for the health of the population, we need to address and work towards clean air in our community. I am especially worried about the health of our youngest ones, the children.”*

A transition to renewable energy sources, and the closure of coal-fired power plants in Bosnia, will save [2564 lives each year](#) [5]. While world economies focus on renewable energy sources, the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina continues its backwards path while considering the investments in coal-fired power plants.

Different solutions, like establishing of strict emissions standards for vehicles or alternative fuels, the use of renewable energy systems for household heating, as well as better infrastructure and urban planning for support and promotion of active and healthy life styles like walking and cycling, will simultaneously improve people’s health, improve the air quality and reduce the global warming.



*Description of the picture: Doctor Emir Durić, in front of the Primary School 'Bukinje' Tuzla and thermal power plant „Tuzla“ in the background.“
As a part of the clean air campaign 'Unmask my city', Copyrights: Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL) / Igor Petrović*

[HEAL](#), together with the [Public Health Institute](#) of Tuzla appeals for the provision of better air quality in Canton and calls for an action that will contribute to better air quality. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, HEAL cooperates with local healthcare professionals, in order to promote the solutions that focus on those sources of air pollution that affect the most cities Tuzla and Lukavac.

Coordinated by the [Global Climate and Health Alliance](#), “Unmask My City“ has been launched in several European cities as well: in Belgrade – Serbia, Warsaw – Poland, Adana, Istanbul and Iskenderun – Turkey and in London – Great Britain. The campaign also includes Salt Lake City – United States of America, Chennai – India, Sao Paulo – Brasil and Emalahleni – South Africa.

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Contacts

1. **Alliance for health and environment** : info.balkans@env-health.org
2. **The Public Health Institute of Tuzla Canton** : zavodzjz@bih.net.b



Notes for editors

1. WHO, OECD: Economic cost of the health impact of air pollution in Europe, p 27
2. World Health Statistics 2017: [Monitoring health for the SDGs](#), page 66
3. <http://unmaskmycity.org/bs/project/tuzla-2/> Unmask My City website: www.unmaskmycity.org
4. The World Health Organization, Information newsletter, Guidelines for the quality of ambient (outdoor) air, September 2016, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs313/en/>
The guidelines of the World Health Organization in relation to the quality of air for particulate pollution: PM2.5: 10 µg/m³ of mean annual value , and for PM10: 20 µg/m³ of mean annual value.
5. Unpaid health bill – How coal power plants in Bosnia and Herzegovina make us sick, HEAL, March 2016, http://env-health.org/IMG/pdf/factsheet_bosnia_en_lr.pdf

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is a leading European not-for-profit organization addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union. With the support of its over 70 member organizations, which represent health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, patients, citizens, women, youth, and environmental experts, HEAL brings independent expertise and evidence from the health community to different decision-making processes. Members include international and Europe-wide organisations as well as national and local groups. Website: www.env-health.org. Follow HEAL via [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).