

Why air quality and children/youth?



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Air pollution and its impact on children

01. Air pollution has a devastating effect on **children's health**. Children's **brains, lungs and other organs are still developing** making them uniquely vulnerable to air pollution

02. Children are also physically more exposed to air pollution than adults because they **breathe twice as fast**, often by mouth, **taking in more pollutants**.

03. Breathing polluted air during childhood causes **asthma, bronchitis, inflammation, and eye irritation**. It causes a range of **cardiovascular, neuro-degenerative, and respiratory diseases and diabetes**.

04. It disproportionately affects **the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalized children**



**99% of children in the
Western Balkans are
exposed to air pollution**

- The Western Balkans is Europe's major hot spot for air pollution.
- 99% of children are exposed to air pollution (UNICEF CCRI, 2021)

How can youth contribute to better air quality?

What are young people already doing to improve air quality?

Presentations from youth actions in the Western Balkan countries:

- Albania
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Kosovo
- Montenegro
- North Macedonia
- Serbia



14:30 – 15:00 The programme “Improving air quality in the Western Balkans”

Session breakdown:

- Overall purpose and outcome (5 minutes) Annakarín
- SwEPA activities and timeline (10 minutes) Annakarín
- UNICEF activities and timeline (10 minutes) Maria Osbeck
- Q&A (5 minutes)

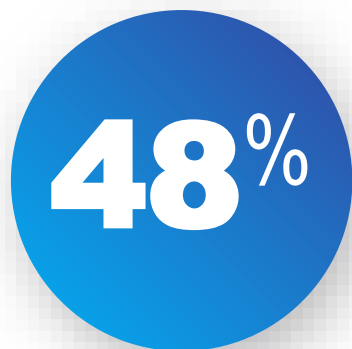
UNICEF-SwEPA and SMHI partnership for Improved Air Quality in the Western Balkans 2022-2027



Annakarin slides

Surveys with adolescents and youth

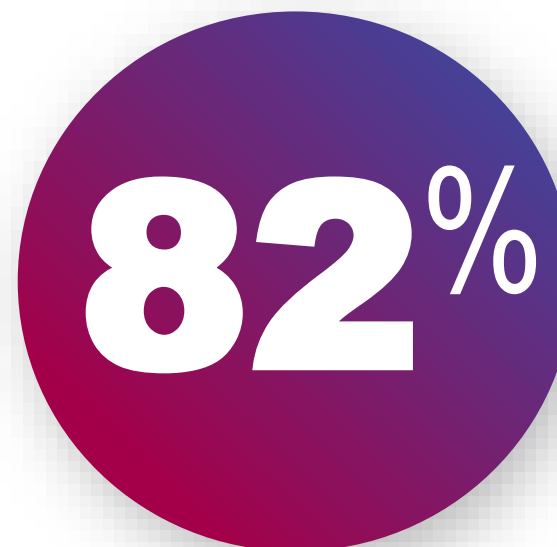
The results of U-Report surveys in the Western Balkans indicate that young people are strongly aware of the negative impacts of air quality in their communities.



of the young people [in Serbia](#) think that children are more affected by air pollution than other age groups



of young people [in Albania](#) noticed that air quality has deteriorated since their childhood



of the young people in [Kosovo*](#) believe that air pollution is a serious problem



A healthy environment is among the #3 most important priorities for youth in [North Macedonia](#)

UNICEF in the Western Balkans

6 countries

52 municipalities

- Awareness and Education
- Youth Mobilization and Advocacy



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Awareness & Education



Children learn about climate change and build scientific curiosity through experiments

UNICEF North Macedonia



Educational materials on air quality

UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina



Air & Climate watchdogging techniques in local communities

UNICEF Albania



Demonstrating the use of digital technology to understand air quality data

UNICEF Kosovo*

Youth mobilization and advocacy



[Youth Climate Declaration](#) on creating space for young people in municipalities and the Government

UNICEF North Macedonia



[Youth Manifesto](#) for air quality and climate change

UNICEF Albania



Youth Declaration on preserving clean air in the Republic of Serbia

UNICEF Serbia

Youth mobilization and advocacy



Youth4Air ambassadors and the UNICEF Youth Advisory Board created youth-friendly content for edu-videos on the most pressing environmental issues

UNICEF Serbia



Youth campaigns drawing attention to the air quality, its health consequences in most polluted communities, and how to act towards decision-makers

UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina



#AirHeroes from five municipalities talk about their role and activism in topics related to air quality and climate change

UNICEF Albania



Youth from ten municipalities addressing the issues they face every day due to air pollution

UNICEF Kosovo*

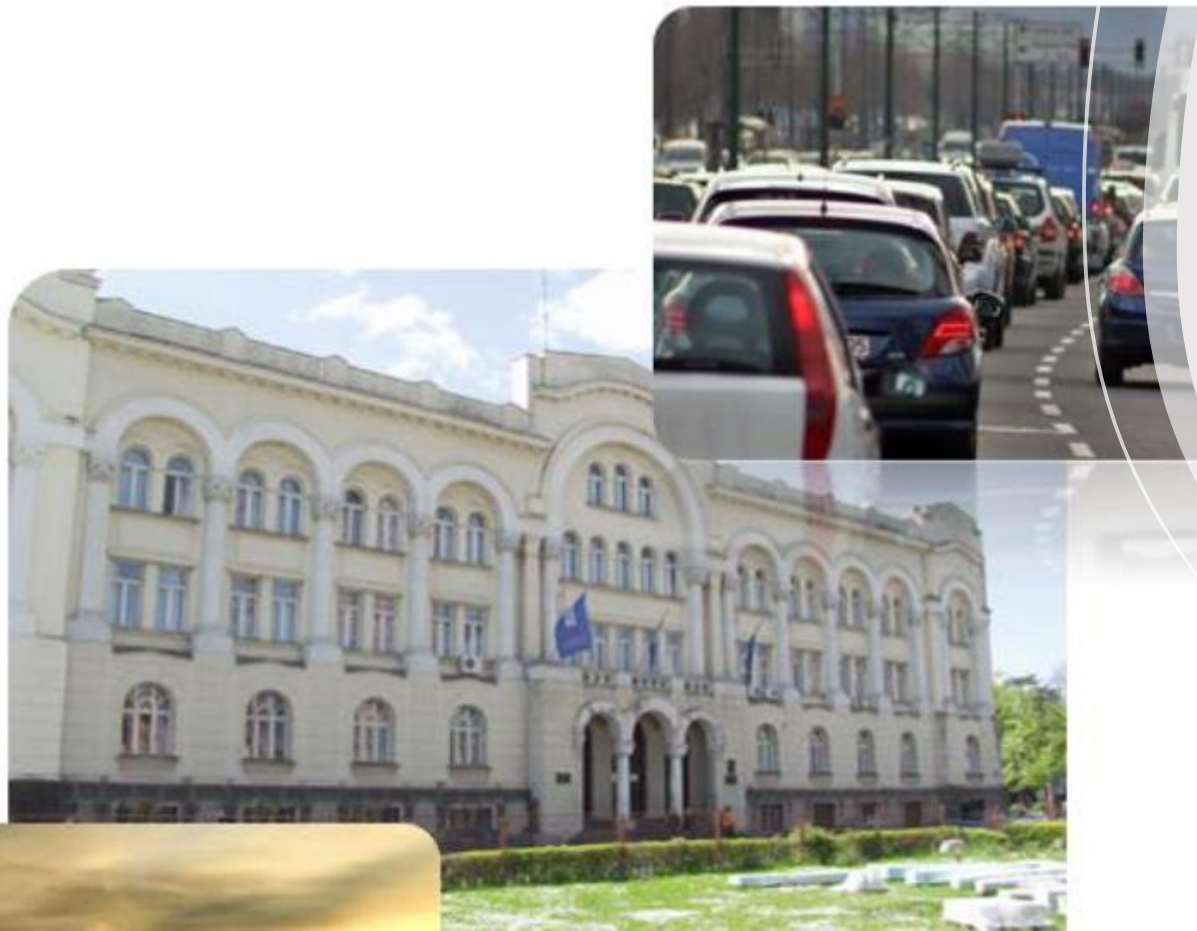
Milestones

- Earth day, 22nd April
- World Environment Day, 5th June
- EU Sustainable energy week, 20-23 June
- International Day for clean air and blue skies, 7 September
- COP28, 30 November-12 December

Children breathe twice as much as adults, so they are more vulnerable to the effects of air pollution.

[#EarthDay](#)

ПЛАН КВАЛИТЕТА ВАЗДУХА ЗА ПОДРУЧЈЕ ГРАДА БАЊА ЛУКЕ



Overall advocacy strategy

- Support child and youth sensitive Air Quality plans, and
- Engage youth to advocate for the full implementation of the already existing AQ plans



Thank you!

15:00 – 16:00 Group discussions

Session format: participants sit on tables per country

Session outline:

- Questions related to the partnership between youth and air quality work in the ministry (air quality plans)
- Questions related to reflection of the day

Questions for the group reflection and discussion

- Discuss key highlights from the presentations today. Are there any important implications for your country?
- What challenges does your country face with regards to accessing and communicating about air quality data?
- How can youth engagement support national level institutions with regards to managing air quality information?