



Air Quality Communication That Works: Bridging Science, Sensors and Society

The breakout session brought together experts in air quality, science communication, and sensor technologies to discuss how complex air quality data can be translated into clear, relevant, and actionable information for citizens, the media, and policymakers.

The session was moderated by Darijo Brzoja, Head of the Air Quality Sector at the Croatian Meteorological and Hydrological Service (DHMZ). Presentations were delivered by Ivana Grljak, Public Relations, Crisis and Science Communication Expert at DHMZ, Hana Matanović, CEO of SMART SENSE Ltd., and Dr. Gordana Pehnec, Associate Professor and Senior Scientist at the Institute for Medical Research and Occupational Health in Zagreb.

In addition to the invited speakers, the discussion actively involved conference participants attending the breakout session. Participants highlighted the importance of tailoring communication to different target audiences, building trust in air quality data, and ensuring that scientific knowledge is effectively translated into concrete actions and evidence-based policymaking.

Particular attention was given to the growing role of low-cost sensor technologies, the challenges associated with their implementation, and the importance of reliable and validated data for informing citizens and supporting the implementation of European air quality legislation.

The discussion also introduced a new citizen science project that will be launched in Croatia, building on the tools and methodologies developed within the LIFE CityTRAQ project.

Hana Matanović emphasized the need for a European certification framework for air quality sensors, which would facilitate public procurement procedures for institutions while also reducing the need for repeated validation and testing.

Ivana Grljak stressed that effective communication must acknowledge that people primarily respond through emotions rather than data alone. She underlined the importance of adapting messages to different target groups in order to increase public understanding, engagement, and trust.

Dr. Gordana Pehnec welcomed the rapid development of new sensor technologies and emphasized their significant potential. At the same time, she noted that calibration and parallel measurements against reference methods remain essential to ensure data quality, improve sensor performance, and build confidence in the results.

The session concluded with a lively discussion that generated more questions than could be addressed within the available time. As the most attended breakout session of the conference, it clearly demonstrated the high level of interest in air quality communication, citizen engagement, and innovative monitoring technologies, as well as the need for continued dialogue between scientists, technology developers, policymakers, and the public.

