



From evidence to policy action: Building robust, data-driven air-quality plans

In this session, we explored the workflow for developing a local air quality action plan and examined how cities address wood burning as a measure to improve local air quality.

During the panel discussion, three speakers shared their experiences:

- Ellen Formesyn (City of Bruges) presented the step-by-step workflow for developing a local air quality action plan.
- Peter van Breugel (DCMR) outlined the measures taken by the City of Amersfoort, and more broadly in the Netherlands, to reduce wood burning.
- Michiel Kleinijenhuis (City of Utrecht) discussed the city's ambitious plans to completely ban wood burning by 2030. Unfortunately, he had to conclude his presentation early due to a medical emergency.

After each presentation, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions on air quality planning and related measures.

One of the questions raised concerned why the City of Bruges aims to include health benefits in its action plan and how this will be approached, given that this additional component within the local air quality action plan is mainly perceived by the respondent as an extra cost.

The response provided was that we intend to assess the health impacts through E-HIS. In addition, we have also included 'Gezondheidsmakers' (Health Makers) in our stakeholder group, who can provide advice from their perspective. The intention is not to place a strong focus on the detailed quantification of health benefits and financial gains, but rather to explore where benefits can be identified in terms of gained healthy life years and, where possible, healthcare cost savings.

It is acknowledged that these financial gains will not translate directly into immediate savings for the city budget. However, we aim to communicate a positive message to citizens and inform them about the expected outcomes of our actions. Establishing a clear link with health benefits is considered crucial to convince policymakers to support the proposed measures and to demonstrate their impact on the population, across all age groups, and especially on vulnerable groups such as children, who are particularly sensitive to air pollution.

Another question concerned wood burning and how this is handled in practice in Amersfoort. In that case, enforcement officers visit residents at home. However, if residents do not answer the door, they cannot be fined, allowing wood-burning residents to avoid penalties. If there is no response, the enforcement officer leaves a letter in the mailbox to inform the resident about the nuisance.

