

AIRNET

A thematic network to interpret research into health effects from air pollution

AIRNET is the acronym for the Thematic Network on Air Pollution and Health. The Network has been funded by the Commission's DG Research to help with the interpretation of results of European research into health effects from air pollution.

Although the Commission has already been funding research on health effects from air pollution for several years, there was until now no proper interpretation framework. AIRNET has been set up to fill this gap. Its purpose is to develop a general and widely supported framework for interpreting the results of air pollution and health studies, so as to provide a foundation for developing future policy in these areas. This will be achieved by linking findings from exposure assessment, epidemiology and toxicology to risk and health impact assessment, and then to policy issues (standard setting, source control etc.). The main result will be a transparent

link between research findings in these areas on the one hand, and policy implications on the other hand.

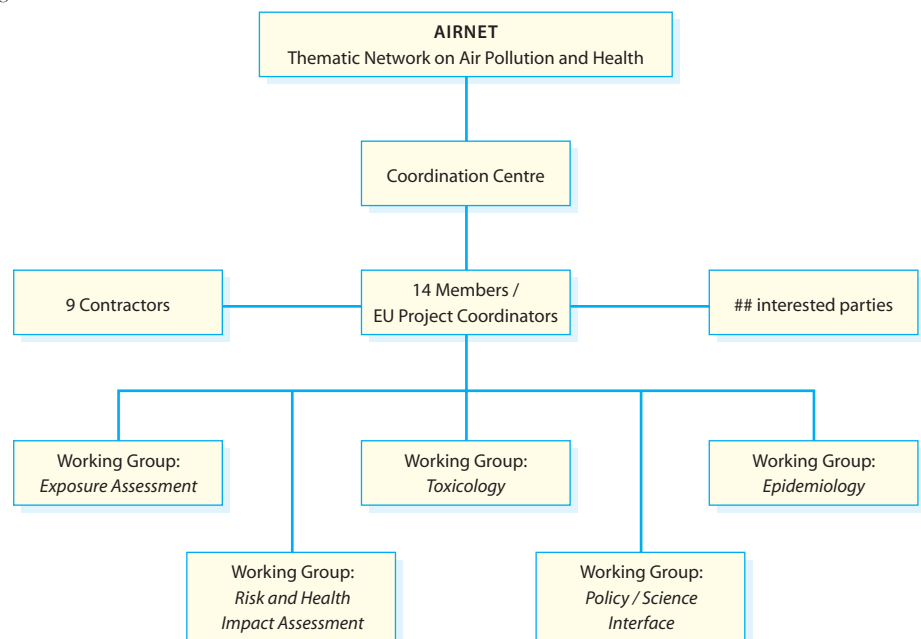
AIRNET will also produce inventories of research projects by discipline, organize annual conferences, write summary reports on the findings of the research, and draw up recommendations for future policy.

The network is coordinated by the University of Utrecht and the RIVM¹. The organizational chart, including several working groups, is shown below.

AIRNET brings together scientists from the various disciplines involved in health research of air pollution, such as exposure assessors, toxicologists and epidemiologists, as well as people with interests in health impact assessment and in the science/policy interface.

¹ *Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu— the Dutch national institute of public health and the environment*

Figure 1
AIRNET organization structure



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Participants include:

- coordinators and additional key investigators of EU-funded projects that were (or are being) conducted within the 4th and 5th Framework Programmes;
- key investigators of non-EU funded major studies (recent or ongoing) on air pollution and health;
- WHO representatives, especially from the Rome and Bonn centres on Environment and Health;
- UN-ECE and related bodies involved in environmental health impact evaluations;
- policy makers from the EU and from some selected national governments;
- representatives of the automobile industry, the oil and/or gas industry (through CONCAWE), and other interested industrial partners;
- representatives of some key consumer organizations; and
- representatives of some key environmental NGOs.

Several international agencies and research centres focusing on air pollution and its adverse impact on human health have expressed an interest in AIRNET and intend to use its output for guiding and structuring their integrated assessments and policy development. These include:

- the European Topic Centre for Air and Climate Change;
- the UN-ECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution; and
- The European Center for Environment and Health of the World Health Organization.

The network is now half way through its first year of existence and is intended to remain active for a total of three years. Although it was not specifically timed to coincide with the CAFE programme, the Commission's DG Environment nevertheless expects AIRNET to make an important contribution to CAFE.

Five out of six AIRNET working groups have recently held their inaugural meetings. CONCAWE was represented at each of them and took the opportunity to put forward its expectations for sound scientific practices. The first annual conference is scheduled for 11–12 December 2002 in London.

The network maintains a web site at <http://airnet.iras.uu.nl>