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AIR PROJECTS

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: AN UNRESOLVED MATTER IN SPAIN

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As we said on [our article last month](#), the Environmental and Health Information System (ENHIS) allows to assess the environmental health in Europe. This information system is based on the valuation of health according to environmental factors such as the quality of air, breeding and chemical safety, as well as the quality of water and the drainage. The problem with this database is that it has not been updated, as the most recent data appearing on it date from 2005, although some reports were issued on 2007. Likewise, not all the countries in the European Union supply with the data for all the variables, reason why the comparisons are not always homogeneous.

Taking into account the compiled data regarding the said environmental matters, there are indicators that allow knowing and comparing the environmental health in the European Union. According to these indicators, what is the situation in Spain?

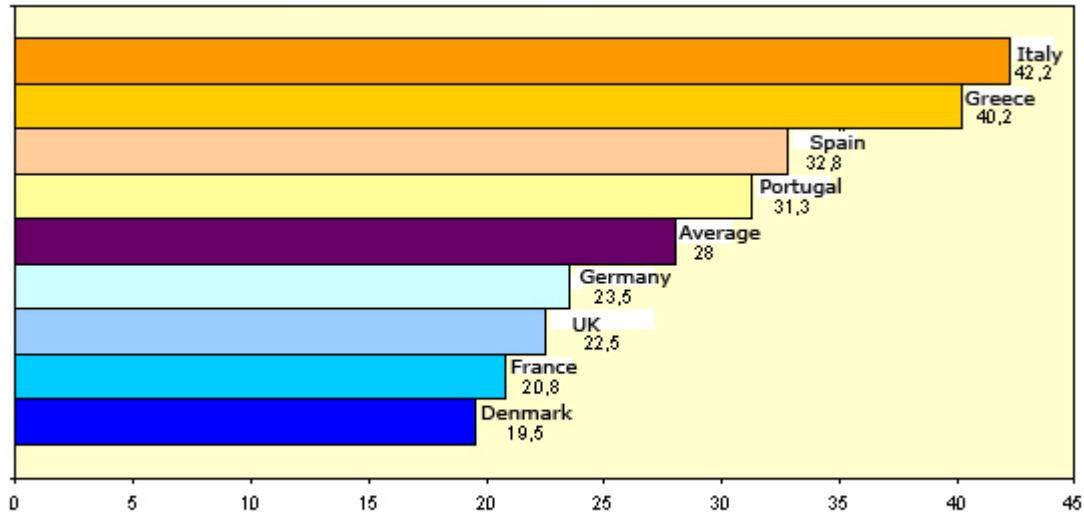
The revision of the data shows that, surprisingly, **Spain obtains much worse values than the European countries average in too many questions related with environmental health.** Let's see some of them.

If we look at the area related to reduction of infant mortality due to traffic accidents and obesity, the evaluation obtained by Spain places our country in the last third of the scale regarding the following indicators: Mortality due to car accidents suffered by children and young people under 24 years old, excess of weight among 13 years old teenagers, lack of physical activity in 11 years old children and grade of implementation of politics addressed to a reduction of involuntary accidents.

The area connected to the reduction of respiratory diseases due to air pollution shows that Spain still maintains very low values, so we are placed again in the last third of the scale in the percentage of people who lives in houses with damp problems. Besides, data show that our levels of exposure to small particles such as PM10 are quite high compared with the average.



Level of exposure to small particles such as PM10 *



Source: Our elaboración according to the data supplied by the European Environment and Health Information System. WHO.

*Data are expressed in mg/m3. The European Union average has been calculated in 28 countries.

Finally, our worst position in the ranking is in the area devoted to reducing the risk of diseases and disabilities arising from the exposure to dangerous chemical products. In that case, the data show that we have very high levels of dioxin in the breast-feeding. Likewise the levels of radon in the houses are higher than the average. At the same time it is very worrying our position concerning the European average in standardized estimates regarding leukaemia suffered by children under 15 and the melanoma rates on males under 55 years old.

Perhaps it is even more worrying the fact of knowing that Spain does not supply with data concerning the levels of lead on children's blood or the excessive ingestion of metal through food.

Obviously this data do not keep us indifferent. Knowing that, concerning some matters connected with environmental health, Spain is placed in the last third on the European countries ranking lead us to ask ourselves firstly the importance of keeping these statistics updated in order to know our situation nowadays and, the most important thing, knowing if we have improved regarding the previous stage. Finally, and not less important, what measures are being taken to improve our current position.

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