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Haifa 370. (Photo by: Wikimedia Commons)

Haifa to join European air monitoring project

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Pan-European project called CITI-SENSE aimed at increasing cooperation and awareness regarding air pollution.

The City of Haifa will participate in a pan-European project called CITI-SENSE aimed at increasing cooperation and awareness regarding air pollution.

Officially called “CITISENSE – Development of sensor-based Citizens’ Observatory Community for improving quality of life in cities,” the project encourages citizens in participant cities to contribute to their environmental governance through resident-based environmental monitoring and information systems. Headquartered at the Norwegian Institute for Air Research in Kjeller, Norway, the project involves 27 partner institutions from Europe, South Korea, Australia and Israel that will launch the program in nine cities: Haifa, Belgrade, Ljubljana, Oslo, Barcelona, Ostrava, Edinburgh, Vienna and Bilbao.

The project’s budget is over 12 million euros and it will rely on sensor technologies for distributed monitoring, information and communication technology platforms, informational services and citizen involvement to both monitor air and make societal decisions.

CITI-SENSE is part of the Seventh Framework Program for Research and Technological Development (FP7), the European Union’s 8.1 billion euro instrument for funding research in Europe and its partners in areas like environmental protection, human health, waste management and urbanization, according to the EU.

The two Israeli institutions working to deploy the Haifa system are the start-up Air- Base Systems and the Technion, led by Prof. David Broday and Prof. Barak Fishbain, of the Environmental, Water and Agricultural Engineering Department at the school.

At the heart of the project will be the concept of the “Citizen Observatory,” which will enable the active participation of the public in data collection and provide easily accessible information to enhance their decision-making capabilities, according to a joint statement from AirBase and the Technion.

“The research opens new horizons for measuring air pollutants, very high resolutions and in exact time in areas and times that we are exposed to pollution and can become affected by its

harmful characteristics,” Broday said.

“The innovative concept of ‘citizen monitoring’ offers partnerships between academia, industry, the public and decision-makers, while building a community that is aware, understanding, connected and has the ability to make change and reduce personal exposure to air pollution.”

Irak Kuhnreich, the CEO and founder of AirBase, which develops advanced air quality sensors, went as far as to call the CITI-SENSE project a catalyst for a “technological *kfitzat haderech* (shortcut),” in air monitoring, referring to the kabbalistic term for miraculously jumping from one place to a distant other at warp speed.

“Involvement, participation and transparency are going to be major milestones in collecting and presenting environmental information in the 21st century, and CITI-SENSE implements this practice for the first time ever,” Kuhnreich said.



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