

Europe-wide pollen count map unveiled

April 9 2013



In future there could be precise, personal travel warnings for hay fever sufferers covering the whole of Europe. The pollen warning service of the MedUni Vienna is working on a pollen count map in order to be better able to warn hay fever sufferers. This is being reported by Katharina Bastl from the University Department of Ear, Nose and Throat Diseases of the MedUni Vienna on the occasion of the coming international Allergy Week (8-14 April).

As an initial step on the path to creating the pollen map, scientists in Austria, France and Serbia have collected the threshold values for ragweed (ambrosia) on the basis of the user entries in the pollen diary

(www.pollendiary.com). Common ragweed or [Ambrosia artemisiifolia](#) is a weed that blossoms from August to October, which demonstrates cross reactions with mugwort and causes increasing problems to those who are allergic.

The result of the research in the period between 2009 and 2012: the physical problems of [allergy sufferers](#) in Serbia only started at a pollen count of 37.7 pollen grains per cubic meter of air, the Austrians at a count as low as 9.5 and the French even lower at 5.2 grains of pollen per cubic meter of air. "The higher the pollen count you have been exposed to in life so far, the more tolerant you become," is Bastl's analysis of the results. "It is even possible that there is an adaptation effect if you have lived in a region with a high pollen burden long enough."

In Serbia the density of ragweed pollen is fundamentally higher than in Austria and France: the average ragweed pollen count per year is approximately 5,800 in Serbia (Vojvodina), in Austria (Pannonian Basin/Vienna/Burgenland) approximately 1,760 and 1,130 in the French Rhone-Alpes region. Thus a trip to Serbia during ragweed blossom time would be inadvisable for a [hay fever](#) sufferer from Austria whilst, in contrast, a trip to France would result in a slight amelioration of his/her problems.

With the assistance of the pollen diary which is already in use by more than 29,000 of those affected in the eleven countries of Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France, Sweden, Finland, Serbia, Turkey, Hungary, Lithuania and Slovenia, now even further threshold values are to be obtained. The next research object is the grass pollen. Says Bastl: "The aim is to collect the threshold values in individual countries for all allergens relevant to pollen allergy in order to be able to personalise warnings to hay fever sufferers throughout Europe in future."

This will also take place with the support of the new, personalised and

free pollen app (download at www.pollenwarndienst.at and www.polleninfo.org), which has been operational for Austria since the middle of March, and is going operational for Germany and France from April, and will likewise be usable throughout Europe in future. Based on entirely individual data on allergy symptoms it will supply a general prediction for the next few days (zero pollen count to very high [pollen](#) count) directly to the mobile of the persons concerned. Starting in April, this service will be available for the users of the pages www.pollenwarndienst.at and www.polleninfo.org as well.

The international Allergy Week of the World [Allergy](#) Organization (WAO) is taking place from 8th to 14th April 2013. Information: www.worldallergy.org.

Provided by Medical University of Vienna

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