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## Luchtreinigers en binnenmilieu

 **Eindrapport**

DEPARTEMENT  
**OMGEVING**

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# INHOUDSTAFEL

1	VRAAG IKV REFERENTIETAAK .....	3
2	Introduction.....	4
2.1	Types of indoor air pollutants	4
2.2	Ways to reduce the indoor air pollutants	4
2.3	Types of air cleaners	4
3	Air purification techniques .....	6
3.1	Mechanical filtration	6
3.2	Electric filtering	8
3.3	Adsorption	9
3.4	Ozonation	10
3.5	Photocatalytic oxidation	11
3.6	Plasma filtration	12
3.7	Ultraviolet (UV) radiation	13
4	Effect of air cleaning technologies on the main groups of indoor air pollutants.....	15
4.1	Effect of air cleaning technologies on particles	15
4.2	Effect of air purifiers on chemical compounds	17
4.3	Effect of air cleaners on microorganisms	20
	Referenties.....	30

# 1 VRAAG IKV REFERENTIETAAK

## luchtreinigers en binnenmilieu

Als gevolg van klimaatverandering wordt gesteld dat de gezondheidsimpact van allergenen (pollen, fijn stof,... ) zal toenemen.

In het verleden heeft VITO al onderzoek uitgevoerd naar de werkzaamheid van mobiele en vaste luchtreinigers in het binnenmilieu. Ook komen nu steeds nieuwe toestellen/filters op de markt die beweren dat ze zorgen voor een gezond binnenmilieu. Of deze luchtreinigers effectief voldoende werkzaam zijn is niet zeker.

Graag hadden wij een overzicht van de mogelijke soorten van mobiele of vaste luchtreinigers en hun beschikbaarheid op de markt met een kritische evaluatie van hun werking. Ook voor het toepassen van filtermogelijkheden in mechanische ventilatiesystemen moet deze kritische evaluatie worden uitgevoerd. In deze evaluatie dienen minimaal volgende zaken te worden meegenomen: werkzaamheid, geschikt voor welke allergenen, prijs, onderhoudskosten en -voorwaarden, ...

Daarnaast moet een antwoord geformuleerd op volgende deelvragen:

- worden luchtreinigers al door andere overheden aangeraden? bv in buitenland?
- zijn er situaties waar gebruik wel aan te raden is en andere situaties waar ze helemaal niet nuttig zijn?
- Overzicht van de relevante wetgeving
- Relatie met ventilatie/verluchten?

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 TYPES OF INDOOR AIR POLLUTANTS

There are three main categories of indoor air pollutants that can have influence the quality of air in indoor environments: Particulate Matter, Gaseous pollutants and Biological Contaminations.

**Particulate Matter (PM)** can be composed of microscopic solids, liquid droplets, or a mixture of solids and liquid droplets suspended in the air. Typically, indoor PM can contain: dust, fumes, smoke, as well as particles from outdoors, which are complex mixture of solid and liquid particles.

**Gaseous Pollutants (GP)** include inorganic gases such as combustion gases (e.g. CO, NO<sub>x</sub>), ozone, as well as organic components that are not attached to the PM.

**Biological Contaminations (BC)** includes: viruses, bacteria, pollen, fungal spores and fragments, dust mite and cockroach body parts and droppings, and animal dander.

### 2.2 WAYS TO REDUCE THE INDOOR AIR POLLUTANTS

There are three major strategies to reduce pollutant concentrations in indoor air: Source Control, Ventilation, and Air Cleaning (US EPA, 2018)

**Source Control** eliminates individual sources of pollutants or reduces their emissions. This represents the single most effective way to reduce the indoor pollutant concentrations and improve the indoor air quality.

**Ventilation** with outdoor air is a strategy to dilute the indoor air pollutant concentrations, considering that the outdoor air is relatively clean and dry or that it can be made so through air cleaning technologies (e.g. filtering).

**Air Cleaning** has been proven useful when used along with source control and ventilation, although it is not considered as a substitute of either method. When significant sources are present and/or exhaust and outdoor air ventilation are insufficient, the air cleaning alone cannot assure adequate indoor air quality.

### 2.3 TYPES OF AIR CLEANERS

There are two basic types of air cleaner/purifiers: HVAC duct-mounted air cleaners/purifiers (Figure 1A) and portable (standalone) (Figure 1B) devices. The HVAC duct mounted air cleaners are typically installed in the central HVAC system of building and can provide filtering/cleaning for many spaces in the building where and when the HVAC system is operating. The portable (standalone) air cleaners/purifiers on the other hand, are designed to provide cleaning/filtration of the air in the space where they are installed (US EPA, 2018).



### 3 AIR PURIFICATION TECHNIQUES

In general, the process of air purification includes removal of the unwanted materials, such as PM and gas/vapor compounds from an air stream. The most common techniques currently used for air purification in many municipalities and homes includes:

- Mechanical filtration
- Electric filtering
- Adsorption
- Ozonation
- Photocatalytic oxidation
- Plasma filtration
- Ultraviolet (UV) radiation

An overview of the effect of each air purification technology onto the main types of indoor pollutants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Effect of single purification technology to main types of indoor pollutants (Liu et al. 2017)

Purification technique	Suspended Particles	VOCs	Bacteria (0.2 – 10µm)	Viruses (0.01 – 0.3µm)
<b>Mechanical filtration</b>	Effective	Noneffective	Effective	Noneffective
<b>Electric filtration</b>	Effective	Not obvious	Partially effective	Partially effective
<b>Adsorption</b>	Partially effective	High efficiency	Partially effective	Noneffective
<b>Ozonation</b>	Not obvious	Effective	Effective	Effective
<b>Photocatalytic oxidation</b>	Not obvious	Effective	Effective	Effective
<b>Plasma filtration</b>	Not obvious	Effective	Effective	Effective
<b>Ultraviolet (UV) radiation</b>	Noneffective	Noneffective	High efficiency	High efficiency

#### 3.1 MECHANICAL FILTRATION

Mechanical filtration is simple and one of the most common techniques for removing particulate impurities (e.g. pollen, inert particles, microorganisms). The mechanical filtration utilize media with porous structure (usually fibers or stretched membrane material) to capture the particulates from the air stream passing through the filter. Typically, the air is passed through the filter by means of a fan engine. The most commonly used type of mechanical filters is typically an assembly of fibers, usually made from cotton, polyester, polypropylene or other materials, that are randomly laid perpendicular to the air flow (Figure 1). The fibers may range in the size from less than 1µm to greater than 50µm in diameter. Filter packing density may also range in the interval between 1% and 30%.



Very common modification of the fibre filters are the electrostatically enhanced filters which contain electrostatically enhanced fibres. These fibres attract the particles to the fibres in addition to retaining them, which increases significantly their collection efficiency especially for fine and ultra-fine particles (Stephens and Siegel, 2013). These types of filters are known to have lower initial pressure drop compared to filters using uncharged media of the same filter design and efficiency. However, because these filters generally rely on their charged fibres in order to provide high collection efficiency, the exposure of these filters to certain chemicals, aerosols, or high relative humidities may decrease significantly their collection efficiency.

The main advantages and disadvantages of the mechanical filtration includes (US EPA, 2018):

Advantages:

- + High efficiency and removal capability for many particle sizes including microorganisms and allergens (e.g. pollen)
- + The efficiency of the mechanical filters is typically improved with loading

Disadvantages:

- Regular replacement is required to maintain the desired level of filtering efficiency
- Used particle filters can be source of sensory pollution/odors
- High pressure drops on some fibrous media filters (HEPA and ULPA) can negatively impact HVAC systems
- Electrostatically enhanced media filters suffer from reduced efficiency with loading

### 3.2 ELECTRIC FILTERING

Air filtration using an electrostatic precipitation (ESP) is also a commonly used technology for removing particles from the air stream in various industrial systems. However, due to its high efficiency in removing fine and ultra-fine particles and the low air flow resistance, this technology is also applied in HVAC systems and portable air cleaners.

The main principle of particle removal in ESP is based on electrically charging the particles, typically using corona wires or ion generation, followed by collecting these charged particles on oppositely charged deposition plates (precipitators) (Figure 4).

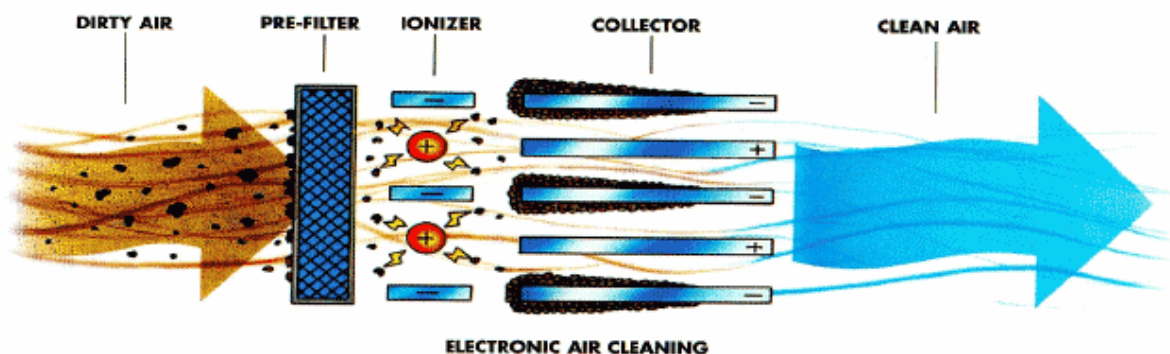


Figure 4 ESP operational diagram (source: <http://www.airscrubbersinc.com>)

The particle removal efficiency of an ESP filter is typically a function of particle size and several design parameters such as flow rate, voltage, collection cell area and strength and distribution of the electric field (Huang and Chen, 2002). A common method for classification of ESPs is the number of stages used to charge/remove particles from the air flow. ESP devices that use the same set of















## 4 EFFECT OF AIR CLEANING TECHNOLOGIES ON THE MAIN GROUPS OF INDOOR AIR POLLUTANTS

### 4.1 EFFECT OF AIR CLEANING TECHNOLOGIES ON PARTICLES

One of the major and also the most studied impact of air cleaning to the indoor air quality is the removal of particulate matter (PM). Studies showed that the PM concentrations in indoor air can be effectively reduced using air cleaning based on mechanical filtration (Quang et al., 2013; Azimi et al., 2014; Sadiktsis et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2016; Alavy et al., 2019, Blondeau et al., 2021). The particle collection efficiency of different filter classes has been reported to be >50% for F7 (Sadiktsis et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2016, Blondeau et al., 2021) and >80% for F9 (Sadiktsis et al., 2016; Azimi et al., 2014) tested with 0.4 $\mu$ m particles. Typical characteristic for the mechanical filters is that their particles removal efficiency is not affected by air velocity, temperature and humidity making them preferable air cleaning technology in various HVAC and portable air cleaning systems (Blondeau et al., 2021). A review published by Cheek et al. (2020), the authors showed that using air cleaners (utilizing various air cleaning technologies) indoors reduce the PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations by 22.6% to 92.0% in homes and 49% in schools. The large variation of the removal efficiency between the analysed studies, the authors attributed to various factors including study design, intervention duration, cleaning technology and user compliance.

Although the higher efficiency filters i.e. Efficiency Particulate Air (EPA) and High-Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters have much higher removal efficiency i.e. between 99.5% and 99.995% of removing fine and ultra-fine particles, these filters are usually not installed in residential HVAC systems. A typical residential air handling unit and the associated ductwork would not be able to accommodate such filter size and increased airflow resistance. Only specially built high performance homes may occasionally be equipped with HEPA filters installed in properly designed HVAC systems. However, those types of filters are widely used in standalone portable air purification units, where the devices are designed to work with the increased air flow resistant of HEPA filters. The particle removal efficiency of such portable air purification units has been reported in the range of 40% - 90% for particle size range of 0.1 – 2  $\mu$ m (Sultan et al., 2011; Wheeler et al., 2014; Barn et al., 2018). However, the studies showed that the overall relative effectiveness of these units with respect of reducing indoor particle counts is a function of particle diameter. In a study published by Ward et al. (2005) the authors found that the overall relative efficiency of these units decreases as the diameter of particles increases above 0.25 $\mu$ m.

Although the theory of Electrostatic precipitation (ESP) air cleaning technology has been extensively studied, only few studies have investigated removal during the operation of in-duct ESP within a residential building. Howard-Reed et al. (2003) reported removal efficiency of an in-duct ESP system of 55% - 85% for particles between 0.3 $\mu$ m and 10 $\mu$ m. In another study conducted by Wallace et al (2004) the performance of ESP technology for removing particles smaller than 0.1 $\mu$ m was assessed. The authors reported that ESP operation reduced the concentration of particles greater than 18 nm by more than 50%. According to Bliss et al. (2005), the efficiency of electronic filters is more than 90% for 0.3 – 6  $\mu$ m particle sizes. Similar results were reported also from Blondeau et al. (2021), where the authors observed nearly 100% PM removal efficiency from a commercial in-duct ESP air cleaner tested with Di-Ethyl-Hexyl-Sebacate particles with size range of 0.2 – 5.0  $\mu$ m at airflow rate of 1200 m<sup>3</sup>/h. During the same study, the authors also observed decrease in the efficiency to 55%













Photocatalytic systems showed high efficiency in eliminating fungi, viruses and bacteria. Typical use of this technology is the deep coating of HEPA or glass filters with a photocatalyst such as  $\text{TiO}_2$ , which further decontaminates the airborne bacteria in a photocatalytic reaction (Ahmadi et al., 2021). Studies reported nearly 100% bacteria removal efficiency (Blondeau et al., 2021), 72 – 98% removal efficiency for viruses (Zhao et al., 2014; Ishiguro et al., 2013), and > 90% fungicidal efficiency (Rodrigues-Silva et al., 2017). Chuaybamroong et al. (2010) conducted a study where the microbial removal efficiency of HEPA filters combined with photocatalysis was assessed using various bacteria. The study reported that when the filtering system is used the microbial concentrations can be reduced by 60 – 100%, depending of the microbial species.

## 5 INITIAL AND MAINTENANCE COST OF AIR PURIFICATION DEVICES

Proper maintenance, including monitoring of the filter efficiency and the system integrity is critical to ensure proper operation of the air cleaners/purifiers. Not properly maintained air cleaner/purifier devices might deteriorate their air cleaning efficiency or even become a secondary source of pollutions. Therefore, to ensure better performance of their devices, the manufacturers often give detailed information regarding the cleaning or replacement frequency of each particular filter type. Many of the products on the market also integrate filter efficiency monitoring and warning system in order to prompt the customer when filters need to be replaced.





Although, the high removal efficiency of the HEPA filters widely used in consumer grade standalone air cleaning devices, these filters have relatively high cost and need to be changed frequently. Following the information presented in in **Fout! Verwijzingsbron niet gevonden.** the service life of these filters is limited to 2 - 6 months up to 1 year at normal conditions, adding significant amount of maintenance cost per year (**Fout! Verwijzingsbron niet gevonden.**). Only one manufacturer (Philips) from the listed in the **Fout! Verwijzingsbron niet gevonden.** devices, reports longer filter service life (up to 3 years). However, the manufacturer stipulated that *“the recommended life of the filters is based on a theoretical calculation of the average annual regional values of harmful outdoor air particles and daily use of the air purifier for 16 hours in automatic mode”* ([www.philips.be](http://www.philips.be)). The manufacturer also recommend following the information of the integrated into the device filter efficiency monitoring system for replacing the filters. It is very likely in real conditions the service life of these filters to be significantly shorter that suggested by the manufacturer.

With regards to the cost ESPs has a higher initial setup cost than the mechanical filters, but do not need to be replaced yearly. The ESPs operational cost is expected to be less than the mechanical filters because of the much lower pressure drop that they impose to the system (i.e. do not need very powerful fans). Although, the installation cost of the cold plasma air filtration is rather high, the devices based on this technology only need regular cleaning of the filters than completely replacement. In addition the pressure drop of these filter systems is negligible, which further reduce the overall operational and maintenance costs of these devices in a long term.

The UV-PCO air cleaning technology has typically high initial as well as operational costs. The initial costs are usually associated with the configuration of the reactor, the intensity of the UV light, selection of appropriate catalyst and etc.

An overview of various in-duct mounted and standalone (portable) air cleaners available on the market with information about their initial and maintenance prices is shown in Table 3 and **Fout! Verwijzingsbron niet gevonden.**






Table 3 An overview of standalone air purification devices available on the Belgian market

#	Product	Capacity	Technology	Price, EUR	Maintenance (average service life/cost)	Maintenance Cost (€/year)
1	Philips 800 Series 	190 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 49 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA)	160	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) – (12m/40€) <sup>a</sup>	40€
2	Winix ZERO N Luchtreiniger 	168 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 45 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA)	179	HEPA Filter – (2m/49€)	294€
3	Refresh Luchtreiniger /Airbi/ 	200 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 30 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) Active Carbon Filter Plasma Wave ionization	189	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) + Active Carbon Filter – (2m/39€) Prefilter – (2m/19€)	348€
4	Spring Luchtreiniger /Airbi/ 	320 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 50 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) Active Carbon Filter Plasma Wave ionization Cold Catalyst Filter UV irradiation	279	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) – (2m/39€) Active Carbon Filter – (2m/39€) Cold Catalyst Filter – (2m/39€) UV lamp – (2y/25€)	714€

5	Winix ZERO Luchtreiniger		462 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 92 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) Active Carbon Filter Plasma Wave ionization	299	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) – (2m/59€) Active Carbon Filter – (2m/27€)	516€
6	Philips 1000 Series		260 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 63 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) Active Carbon Filter	300	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) – (24m/43€) <sup>a</sup> Active Carbon Filter – (12m/35€) <sup>a</sup>	56€
7	Winix ZERO Pro PlasmaWave luchtreiniger		480 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 96 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) Active Carbon Filter Plasma ionization	329	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) – (2m/69€) Active Carbon Filter – (2m/27€)	576
8	KC-D40EUW /SHARP/		190 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 22 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) Active Carbon Filter Ion Generator	334	Mechanical Filter – (1y /79€) Active Carbon Filter – (10y/59€) Humidifier filter – (1y/39€)	123.9
9	Blaupunkt UVirus Killer		370 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 74 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) Active Carbon Filter Plasma Wave ionization Cold Catalyst Filter	369	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) – (2m/39€) Active Carbon/Photocatalytic Filter – (2m/28€)	402





				UV irradiation			
10	Philips 2000 Series		333 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 79 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) Active Carbon Filter	430	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) – (24m/43€) <sup>a</sup> Active Carbon Filter – (12m/35€) <sup>a</sup>	56€
11	Philips 3000 Series		520 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 135 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) Active Carbon Filter	500	Mechanical Filter (HEPA)+ Active carbon – (3y/68€) <sup>a</sup>	23€
12	Airbi Maximum luchtwasser/bevochtiger		-	Mechanical Filter (HEPA)	519	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) – (2m/39€)	234
13	Philips 4000 Series		610 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 158 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) Active Carbon Filter	580	Mechanical Filter (HEPA)+ Active carbon – (3y/100€) <sup>a</sup>	33.3€
14	Airbi Space Luchtreiniger		800 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 160 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) Active Carbon Filter Plasma Wave ionization	649	Prefilter – (2m/19€) HEPA + Active Carbon Filter – (2m/139€)	948







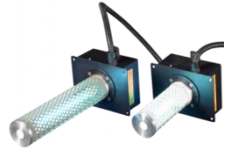



15	SNE RAS-60 Photocatalytic Air Purifier		for rooms up to 80 m <sup>2</sup>	UV/photocatalytic technology	906	UV/Photocatalytic Cell – (1y/205€)	205
16	agronLab UVGI-80 - Sterilizer : UV air purifier		800 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 32 m <sup>2</sup> )	UV Radiation (UVC)	999	UV lamp – (6m/100€)	200
17	AirExchange 600-T luchtreiniger		600 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 100 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) Active Carbon Filter UV/photocatalytic technology	1199	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) + Active Carbon Filter + UV/photocatalytic technology – (2m/168€)	1008
18	PureAirPro 1200 air purifier		1245 m <sup>3</sup> /h (for rooms up to 600 m <sup>2</sup> )	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) Active Carbon Filter	1440	Mechanical Filter (HEPA) + Active Carbon Filter – (2m/180€)	1080





Table 4 An overview of HVAC duct mounted air purification devices available on the Belgian market

#	Product		Capacity	Technology	Price, EUR	Maintenance (average service life/cost)	Maintenance Cost (€/year)
1	Elixair® E1250		1000 m³/h	Electric Filtering (ESP) Active Carbon Filter	2200	Active Carbon Filter - 40 EUR – (12m/40€)	40€
2	Brink Pure induct - WTW ionisatie filterbox		600 m³/h	Plasma Wave ionization	1150	-	-
3	SNE CAP H		400 - 4000 m³/h	UV Photocatalytic	499 - 619 EUR	UV / photocatalytic cel – (1.5y/156€)	104
4	SNE FAP DF		3500 - 25000 m³/h	UV Photocatalytic	995 - 1445 EUR	UV / photocatalytic cel – (1.5y/180€)	120
5	CC 400 Concealed		83 - 471 m³/h	Mechanical filter (possible upgrade with adsorption filters)	1995 - 2645 EUR	Mechanical filter – (-y/-€) Adsorption Filter – (-y/-€)	-

6	Genano® Tube		max 400 m <sup>3</sup> /h	Electric Filtering (Corona discharge) Active Carbon Filter		Active Carbon Filter (-y/-€)	-
- No information available							



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