

Interactive comment on “Sensitivity of air quality modelling to different emission inventories: a case study over Europe” by Philippe Thunis et al.

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This paper presents the EDGARv5 emissions inventory and evaluates its use in regional air quality modeling for Europe, in comparison with two other available emissions inventories. In addition to presenting the data set, the paper uses the FAIRMODE model evaluation methods to explore the implications of using the different emissions inventories. The analysis presented is useful and significant. The data set is of high quality and well documented. The presentation is good, but warrants some editing. In particular, the conclusions section would be stronger if it were better organized. Some explanations are not clear and are discussed in the line by line comments below.

Lines 33-34: The opening sentence of this paragraph contains several problems. A bet-

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ter formulation would be: “Numerous studies have assessed the sensitivity of modelled concentrations and related indicators to the choice of emissions inventory or emissions uncertainty.”

Lines 38-39: “with an uncertainty (due to emissions variability)” confuses the concepts of uncertainty and variability. This needs to be rephrased.

Lines 44-49: “used in the EMEP model for their policy applications” is a problematic phrase (Whose policy applications? Should this refer to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution?). Why not just provide the labels and refer to Table 1? Why do you refer to CAMS here and later CAMS-REG-AP? This should be consistent and better to refer to CAMS-REG-AP for the emissions data set and CAMS for the service overall.

Line 49: Should “In Section 2, ...” begin a new paragraph?

Line 69: Here you refer to CAMS-REG-AP instead of CAMS. Need to be consistent, and add REG-AP designation to previous section (as noted above).

Line 71: it is not necessary to have the phrase “on the contrary,” and it is distracting.

Line 132-4: this could be stated more clearly: “the use of EMEP as a reference point has no implication on the quality of the inventory itself, ...”

Line 159: I'm not sure that this is obvious, at least as presented. In lines 148-159, I believe that the correlations being plotted are the fraction of EU emissions that are assigned to each country. This should be made more clear. Then, yes the fraction of EU emissions in each country is correlated with population. Thus, the correlations between inventories are influenced by this relationship.

Line 162-164: It would be useful to explain the significance of the differences increasing when the comparison is made on a per capita basis. By controlling for population (i.e., the activity level), you see greater differences in the assumptions about technology (i.e., the emission factors).

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Line 175-179: This bullet needs to be edited for language.

Line 182-190: This section is not presented clearly. Total European SOX emissions are higher in EDGAR than in the other inventories. (Is this the difference observed in Eastern Europe?) However, the explanation provided by the authors does not explain the overestimation. EDGAR assumes all plants respect the 2001 LCP Directive. (The fact that the LCP Directive was updated in 2016 does not play into this case as we are only looking at 2015 emissions.) If small plants are not required to meet the same emission rate limits as large plants, then the EDGAR methodology will underestimate emissions from small plants and the overall sector. The authors also speculate that the UDI Platts database may overestimate how much energy is produced in small plants. Given EDGAR assumes all plants comply with the LCP limits, it is not clear that this has any impact. However, if the emission factors from small plants were assumed to be higher than for large plants, then this overestimate of small capacity might explain a higher total for EDGAR than for the other inventories.

Line 234: Figure 4. I think that the display of the ratio of total emissions by bars and urban emissions by circles works well. The caption should refer to the circles as does the text, not “bullets.”

Line 239: “spatial yearly mean concentration fields” seems repetitive. Better to use “annual mean concentration field.”

Line 242: “but they are also widespread...” introduces a vague “they”. It would be better to replace with “but also ...”

Line 253: Is this model validation or model evaluation?

Line 379: Is the phrase “for this region” correct?

Line 399: Comparing Figure 12 to Figure 9, it appears that the models perform much better in the selected regions than across the whole domain. This does not seem to be reflected here in the text.

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Table 2: Is GNFR supposed to be EMEP? The caption should explain that the numbers in green are below 1 and represent agreement of the model and observations within 2x the observational uncertainty.

Line 417: The conclusion that O3 model results are good contradicts the text at line 399. It would be useful to explain why the regional performance may be better than the domain wide performance, which is especially poor for areas with low observed concentrations.

Line 440: From this line on, the conclusions bounce around a bit from O3, to PM, to methods, back to O3, PM, NOx... A more systematic reckoning would be easier to follow: What did we learn about NOx? What did we learn about O3? What did we learn about PM?

Line 445: I suggest moving the mention of the FAIRMODE methodology to the section before line 440, i.e., before you start getting into the implications for O3 and PM modeling.

Some important conclusions: 1) Differences in emissions do not account for poor model performance for PM (underestimation) and O3 (overestimation). a) For O3, differences in NOx and VOC emissions have marginal impacts on concentrations and spatial gradients are missed by the model. b) For PM, performance is better for PM2.5 than PM10, which is underestimated. This suggests a missing emissions source or modeled process. 2) EDGAR compares well to other inventories for air quality modeling.

Line 447: Important should not be capitalized.

Line 464: Suggest “analysis” as opposed to “analyse”

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