

Setting the European Environment and Health Research Agenda, 2020-2030: the HERA project

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Background. Environmental degradation and pollution, climate change, and deterioration of biodiversity of ecosystems damage health and quality of life, affecting especially socially disadvantaged and vulnerable populations. Action is urgently needed to drastically reduce exposures that are destructive to the environment and human health and promote healthy environments and sustainable development. The HERA coordination action, funded by the EU Horizon2020 research framework program, will set priorities for an environment and health research agenda in the EU for 2020-2030, closely connected to policy needs.

Significance. This large initiative involves researchers and a wide spectrum of stakeholders and ample consultations and will set priorities for environmental health research to underpin policies for 2020-2030 for Europe. This will be the first time that such a wide-scale initiative on setting environment and health research agenda takes place in Europe. At the symposium we will present the approach, delineate the main themes and discuss the challenges for defining priorities in environmental health research and policy in Europe.

Content: The symposium will be based on short presentations on key aspects of the project, will include online voting tools such as Mentimeter to promote debate, and a final discussion led by a key stakeholder representing European cities. We will discuss challenges in: (i) identifying key areas in the field of environment and health that will benefit from new scientific evidence in the next decade including research on specific exposures (e.g. endocrine disruptors), sectors (e.g. transportation) and global issues particularly climate change; (ii) developing strategies and tools to ensure the engagement of stakeholders, increasing coordination and cross-fertilisation of ideas, and contributing to the European environment and health process and policy activities; (iii) evaluating methods and providing estimates of the burden of disease; and (iv) developing a European medium-term research and innovation agenda covering key strategic research and policy aspects.

The symposium relates directly to the meeting themes discussing specific exposures (e.g. air-pollution, water contaminants), wider settings (e.g. cities, waste) and incorporating a global perspective (e.g. climate change). Community participation is key in defining priorities and this is also a central theme of the conference. We are particularly interested in promoting participation of ISEE researchers from Europe and internationally in this major initiative. We expect that the project will also help cover an existing gap in ISEE, namely, that, until now, ISEE has not developed a systematic approach on priorities in environmental health research for policies.