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ERA-ENVHEALTH

MONTHLY NEWSFLASH



AGENDA OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING THE HAGUE SEPTEMBER 13-15, 2010

THIS MONTH'S NEWS:
AUGUST 2010
ANNUAL ERA-ENVHEALTH GA MEETING AGENDA
WORK SESSION 1 ON STRATEGIC ISSUES AND PRIORITISATION CRITERIA
WORK SESSION 2 ON THE DESIGN OF THE 2ND CALL
WORK SESSION 3 ON ACTIVITIES FOR POTENTIAL NEW PARTNERS
VENUE AND HOST
UPCOMING MEETINGS
HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT: TIME TO ACT – BY FPS
CONTACTS

- REMINDER:**
- NEXT DEADLINES**
- **2 September 2010: deadline for the responses to the indicators questionnaire**
 - **3 September 2010: deadline for presentations for GA meeting by WP leaders**
 - **6 September 2010: deadline for sending the financial reporting for M19-M24**
 - **6 September 2010: deadline for slides for GA meeting by invited experts**

This year's General Assembly meeting is to take place in The Netherlands, in **The Hague from the 13th to the 15th of September, 2010**. The General Assembly meetings comprise a representative of each partner involved in the project and the members of the External Advisory Committee. This year, as it is the mid-term meeting for the project and the focus is on the recruitment of new partners and participants, external experts and potential new partners have been invited to participate in the different sessions.

13 September 2010

- **10.00 to 12.00: session dedicated to the financial issues of the project**, discussion and validation of the project budget and modifications. *Restricted attendance to the GA representatives.*

- **13.30 to 18.30: session dedicated to the management issues and scientific progress of the project**, including a discussion on the future of the project and the introduction of a new task on policy-relevance. A presentation of the 2 projects funded under the first call is also planned. *Attendance is open to all invited participants.*

- **19.00 - till late: dinner and social event hosted by VROM**

14 September 2010

- **9.00 to 12.30: Work session 1 on the identification of strategic and emerging issues in E&H research (Task 2.1).**

A draft copy of the report has been sent ahead of the work session for comment. Emerging issues will be discussed to ensure that no issues have been missed or that the issues that have been included have

established projects running. In this work session, the prioritisation criteria to be used to select areas for the second call will also be considered. *Attendance is open to all invited participants.*

- **14.00 to 17.30: Work session 2 on the design of the second call (Task 4.2).**

A questionnaire has been sent ahead of the work session to guide discussions. The evaluation of the first call will be presented and the recommendations discussed in order to define the framework and objectives of the second call and the suggested governance and content will be discussed. A calendar and the roles of the different actors will be validated.

15 September 2010

- **9.00 to 12.30: Work session 3 on Planning transnational E&H research activities with potential new partners (Task 5.2):**

Extending the network to potential new partners is crucial to achieve ERA-ENVHEALTH's objectives. This workshop will be the opportunity to discuss with invited experts the overall vision and key issues of selected E&H areas. The aim is to launch pilot study activities to be developed by collaborating potential new partners on the topics of climate change, endocrine disruptors and housing and health and, as well, to finalize the mechanisms for participation of interested potential new partners. Presentations of 4 other EC projects (ENRIECO, HEIMSTA/INTARESE and HENVINET) are also planned. *Attendance is open to all invited participants.*

- **12.30 to 13.00: Closure of the meeting**

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WORK SESSION 1 ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF STRATEGIC AND EMERGING ISSUES IN E&H RESEARCH (TASK 2.1)

ERA-ENVHEALTH is a European project aimed at enhancing the coordination of Environment and Health (E&H) research programmes. The objective of the project is to bring together European organisations that finance and plan research programmes in the field of E&H and to establish a lasting cooperation in this area. This objective is to be achieved by analysing the E&H research landscape, defining common priority areas and responding to these through joint activities and transnational calls for research projects.

The discussions in this work session will be based on the draft [report on programme strategic and emerging E&H issues, complementarities and clustering arrangements](#), sent in August 2010 ahead of the work session.

There are two main aims for this report. Firstly to identify common and strategic environment and health issues across the partners. Secondly to use horizon scanning to identify emerging issues in the environment and health area.

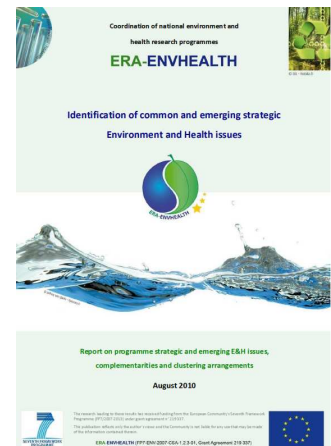
The starting point for the identification of strategic and common issues was the database developed in Workpackage 1. The database, at present (August 2010), consists of 464 projects. In considering the strategic and common issues in E&H research, eleven themes related to human health were identified as being suitable for joint activities. This was based on the number of projects in the database relating to these themes and the number of partners involved in these areas. The eleven areas are:

- Outdoor air quality
- Local/living environment
- Water quality and supply
- Indoor air quality
- Soil contamination
- Climate change
- Chemical agents
- Biological agents and microorganisms
- Particulates
- Pesticides and Biocides
- Nanomaterials

Within each of these themes more detailed areas of work have been identified. To identify emerging issues a futures technique called horizon scanning has been used. A monthly horizon scan in this area was generated with a total of twelve

scans completed between July 2009 and June 2010. On average each monthly scan contained about 20 articles. All of the articles collected over the 12 month period were referenced to the same categories and sub-categories used in the database on projects. In terms of emerging issues, the horizon scanning has identified a number of broad areas and more detailed topics for possible future calls. These broad areas are:

- Nanomaterials
- Particulates
- Chemicals agents
- Water quality and supply
- Outdoor air quality
- Indoor air quality
- Climate change
- Monitoring



In comparing current issues with emerging issues there are a number of overlaps at the theme and sub-theme level as shown below:

- Outdoor air quality : Ozone pollution
- Indoor air quality: Indoor air quality in schools
- Climate change: Changes in pathogens and tropical diseases
- Water : Pharmaceuticals in water; Perchlorates in water
- Nanomaterials: Exposure data; Safety of nanomaterials and physic-chemical determinants of toxicity; Genotoxicity of nanomaterials
- Particulates: Linking sources and fractions responsible for toxic effects
- Chemical agents: Exposure to flame retardants

These research areas will be considered by the ERA-ENVHEALTH partners for collaborative activities including as issues for a joint call.

Furthermore, to maximize the potential for joint funding of common strategic E&H issues across member states, prioritisation criteria are needed, not only at the international level, but also at the national level. In ERA-ENVHEALTH, RIVM together with the ERA-ENVHEALTH partners, has developed such criteria. These will be applied to the environment and health issues identified in task 2.1 to provide an initial list of prioritised topics.

WORK SESSION 2 ON THE DESIGN OF THE SECOND CALL (TASK 4.2)

The aim of this **work session is to discuss and start designing the second call for research projects**. A questionnaire to orient the discussions with regards to funding possibilities and specific rules has been sent ahead of the work session. Please make sure you complete it before the work session.

In order to start the discussion and to define the objectives and framework of the call, the evaluation of the first call will be presented and the recommendations discussed, in particular the "a la carte" suggestion for the overall framework of the call which allows the matching of several dimensions related to the call:

- Choice of the research topic
- Number of partners financing a selected research area
- Financing approach (call for proposals or tendering)

The strategic plan or an umbrella action plan is to be

elaborated jointly with all the involved stakeholders, defining the main research fields, and indicating, as much as possible, a schedule related to the different research areas or axes. Based on this action plan, specific targeted calls can be launched for one of the axes depending on: the interested partners, the budget they can make available, and the objectives they express relating to the research results. The financing approach for the call can follow either the tendering type, or the call for proposals type, depending on the urgency and the specificity of the research results needed. The scheme has the advantage of providing a well elaborated framework, established by all the ERA-ENVHEALTH partners, and allows for a maximum of flexibility.

The suggested governance and content of the Memorandum of Understanding will be discussed and a calendar and the roles of the different actors will be validated.

WORK SESSION 3 ON PLANNING TRANSNATIONAL E&H RESEARCH ACTIVITIES WITH POTENTIAL NEW PARTNERS (TASK 5.2)

The aim of the **workshop for potential new partners** is to launch the first pilot study activities involving interested potential new partners. These activities are to be accomplished by a network of potential new partners relying on own capacities, with the support of ERA-ENVHEALTH experts and dissemination tools. Three emerging issues were selected on the basis of knowledge on the future of the European E&H Action plan, themes that are interesting for the ERA-ENVHEALTH partners based on a first draft of the analysis of the database information, information on a UK document analysing indoor air quality research, the results of the Parma conference:

1. Housing and health: Evidence collection of health benefits from housing intervention to foster recommendations at country level.

2. Climate change and E&H issues (focusing on mitigation and adaptation strategies): Research scope and needs with regards to E&H impacts of mitigation and adaptation measures in the urban environment. Identification of E&H priorities in sectorial mitigation and adaptation plan (e.g. environment, transport,

energy, etc). The aim is to provide knowledge to address integrated E&H issues in policy measures. This work will facilitate the policy aspect of research needs in the field of climate change and final results will be integrated within the current ERA-ENVHEALTH consortium research activities to allow planning of research activities.

3. Endocrine disruptors and health effects: review of existing data on major health effects (such as obesity and metabolic syndromes, infertility and miscarriages).

The workshop will be the opportunity to discuss with invited experts the overall vision and key issues of the selected E&H areas, including on-going policy and scientific activities, knowledge gaps and institutional barriers for focused policy-making. Furthermore, collaborations with other EU projects will be explored with a presentation of ENRIECO, HEIMSTA/INTARESE and HENVINET.

VENUE AND HOST

The meeting is to take place in the **Hotel Mercure Den Haag Centraal** – Spui 180, 2511 BW Den Haag
Tel: +31 (0) 70 361 15 04

And is kindly hosted by
VROM



Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting,
Ruimtelijke Ordening en
Milieubeheer

UPCOMING MEETINGS

13-15 SEPTEMBER 2010: GA MEETING IN THE NETHERLANDS INCLUDING WORK SESSIONS

21-22 OCTOBRE 2010: "ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL VULNERABILITIES " CONGRESS IN NAMUR, BELGIUM

9 NOVEMBER 2010: ERA-NET FUTURE WORKSHOP IN BRUSSELS

7-10 NOVEMBER 2010: "ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT" CONFERENCE IN FES, MAROCCO

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT: TIME TO ACT – BETTER HEALTH THROUGH A BETTER ENVIRONMENT - IT'S UP TO EVERYONE

Context: The environment is increasingly involved as a factor to be taken into consideration in health matters and the World Health Organisation reminds us that almost a quarter of all illnesses in the world are caused by environmental exposure which could be avoided. It is the reason why the International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies (AIM) in partnership with the Belgian Mutualité Libérale, held an international conference on the subject of "Environment and Health" in Brussels on 4th June. Throughout this conference, the experts showed many examples of the links between environment and health. The Benelux countries for instance constitute the area of Europe where the concentration of particulate matter is the biggest, making it the most polluted region in Europe with cardiovascular and pulmonary effects having an impact on the life expectancy, said Dr Benoît Nemery de Bellevaux from the KUL. The members of the AIM, as not for profit health insurers, are particularly concerned by this subject, with all the affiliates they cover. At the end of the conference, the AIM members agreed on a declaration "health environment: time to act", whose contents are clarified below.

It's up to everyone: The AIM and the participants believe that "promoting better health through a better environment is up to everyone". Indeed, it is a shared responsibility. We need to take the right decisions today so that we can protect our environment and promote a healthy, sustainable global environment for the sake of future generations and their health. Solidarity between generations lies at the heart of the concept of sustainable development and health.

Role of the mutual benefit societies: The mutual benefit societies should make a more visible, clearer commitment to the understanding and prevention of the environmental effects on health. They are in a completely credible position in terms of taking action and they have a responsibility towards their members and patients to do so. It is recommended that they incorporate the education and prevention on environmental health aspect into all awareness-raising and information activities in which they engage with their members and also with regard to chronic disease management initiatives. The mutual benefit societies should take part in the establishment, monitoring and assessment of environmental health policies with the concerned national authorities and bodies.

Better training of the health professionals in environmental health: Health professionals are also affected. In most cases they are not given enough adequate training on health questions relating to the environment and feel poorly equipped to deal with the diversity and complexity of the questions they face. The AIM recommends both

offering better basic and continuing training on these questions for health staff and training more environmental health specialists. In order to act and take preventive actions, first of all we need to understand environmental health questions. In order to do so, the AIM stresses that these concepts must be made an integral part of all levels of education offered to children and students.

From promises to actions and better coordination: The AIM and its members welcome of course the commitment made by European governments to reduce the effects on health by environmental threats, in the declaration made by the 5th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health held in Parma on 10th-12th March 2010. As for the national, European and international authorities, we stress that the promises of commitment made in Parma must be translated into real actions. The social and economic crisis must not slow down greater prevention, education, and integration of environmental health into all policies. On the contrary, a genuine implementation of environmental health activities is an investment which may improve people's health, which is a key factor in improving the economy and creating jobs. In addition, the AIM emphasizes that the coordination of activities at national level must be strengthened, along with the institutional coordination framework within the European environment and health Ministerial Board and the monitoring of implementation through the Environment and Health Task Force in order to be genuinely effective.

More research: In order to persuade the decision-makers and assess the importance of these questions and the programmes developed, the AIM recommends investing more in research into environmental health, as the study of environmental factors likely to have an impact on health, along with the fight against them and the development of health impact studies in the policies of the various sectors which have an effect on the environment.

Conclusion: Promoting better health through a better environment is up to everyone and is a matter of solidarity with all generations. One should take the opportunity of this difficult economical and financial situation to strengthen measures in favour of a better environmental health. The coordination among all levels is crucial to reinforce the commitments of actions by the European, national and regional authorities and stakeholders.

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