

This year the ISES-ISEE 2010 Joint Conference of International Society of Exposure Science & International Society for Environmental Epidemiology took place in Seoul from 28 August - 1 September 2010. The theme of the conference was 'Technology, Environmental Sustainability and Health'. Anne Knol (RIVM) and Eva Kunseler (PBL), both working on the Intarese project, organised a symposium to disseminate the Intarese/Heimtsa progress on integrated environmental health impact assessment (IEHIA). At the symposium, named "**Science as support for EU policy development in environmental health**", three work package leaders presented the projects' activities, methodologies and case examples, and placed them in the context of science as support for policy. The symposium aimed at bringing together developments in this important field and to discuss them within a wider scientific community. The symposium was well attended by an interested audience.



An introduction was given by the symposium organisers on the use of environmental health risk and impact assessment for policy evaluation on uncertain and complex problems. Environmental health issues are getting increasingly complex, wide-spread and uncertain, with climate change as the most well-known example. Traditional methods for risk assessment and management of these so-called 'systemic risks' often don't do justice to these uncertainties and the wide-ranging types of effects that may be involved. The contributions of Intarese and Heimtsa to assess systemic risks using IEHIA were introduced.

The first speaker was Prof. Rainer Friedrich (IER Stuttgart), who presented the Heimtsa/Intarese joint case study on Environmental Health Impacts of European Policies for Mitigation of and Adaptation to Climate Change. The central question in this case study is: "What is the (negative or positive) environmental health impact of EU mitigation options (policies and resulting measures) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and of EU adaptation options (policies and resulting measures) to reduce impacts of climate change on human health worldwide?" Health impacts in scenarios with and without climate policies are estimated using the full chain or impact pathway approach and then compared. Results show that in general climate policies reduce significantly the population's exposure to environmental pollutants and their associated health impacts. It is shown that, in monetary terms, the 'ordinary' environmental health benefits of many mitigation measures are about as important as or sometimes more important than the climate effects. However, some mitigation or adaptation measures cause significant negative environmental health impacts, e.g. the burning of wood in smaller stoves, increased air conditioning or the insulation of houses without taking care of sufficient ventilation. Such measures should be ranked lower than they currently are in the order of priority of climate change policies and they should be accompanied by measures (e.g. obligatory dust filters) to reduce the negative environmental health impacts.

Dr. Jouni Tuomisto (THL Kuopio) discussed how several actors are involved in making important decisions relevant to environment and health. Participation of all stakeholders is needed to enhance the quality of the assessment process and public support of its results. Open assessment

(http://en.opasnet.org/w/Open_assessment) is a method for open collaboration in environment and health policy support. Opasnet (<http://en.opasnet.org>) is a web workspace for carrying out open assessments. Open collaboration has been successfully performed in several environmental health assessments and research projects. It has been functional in organising scientific information. However, one of the fallacies of this approach is that researchers have been reluctant to participate. Experience on open collaboration among policy-makers is limited. Therefore, practical experience from different users is urgently needed. In the audience the presentation led to a discussion on the role of the media and how to deal with extreme viewpoints of e.g. 'angry citizens'.

Dr. Marco Martuzzi (WHO Rome) presented the outcomes of the 5th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. The Ministerial Declaration, signed by all Ministers of Health and of Environment, reaffirmed the most urgent priorities for action in the European Region of WHO. These priorities include water and sanitation, air quality, accidents and physical activity, chemical contamination and other physical agents. The declaration identifies the key environmental health challenges: climate change, amplification of risks by socioeconomic inequalities, chronic disease burden due to urban environment and lifestyle, persistent chemicals and nanoparticles, lack of resources in parts of the Region. The outcome of the Ministerial Conference, once again, underlined the need for resources and instruments suitable for addressing real-life policy questions, such as health impact assessment, integrated assessment, management of systemic uncertainty and the precautionary principle.

The symposium ended with a plenary discussion to reflect on the opportunities and limitations of integrated environmental health impact assessment. The audience raised questions on the use of the method in public and media-sensitive settings.