

20-22  
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## EVOLUTION OF RESEARCH ON ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH IN EUROPE

Over recent decades, the European environment and health process has evolved along side research on the subject. Relevant studies have been carried out in a number of areas such as air quality, chemicals and emerging diseases, and have contributed to the development of related policies. In the WHO ministerial conferences on environment and health and the EC's framework programmes for research, European policy-makers have recognized the fundamental role of research.

The **First Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Frankfurt, 1989)** led to the establishment of the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, which produced a comprehensive review of environment and health in Europe entitled "Concern for Europe's Tomorrow". This provided the scientific basis for the **Second Ministerial Conference (Helsinki, 1994)**, which acknowledged the need for political commitment and action, set high-priority areas for science and recommended international collaboration to identify future research needs.

As a result, in 1998, policy-makers and scientists reached consensus on strategic and specific research needs, providing input to the **Third Ministerial Conference (London, 1999)**. That Conference recommended that research be done on the gap between health-environment knowledge and policy formulation, as well as on the behaviour of individuals.

In 2003, the Aarhus conference on "An environment for better health" reviewed progress and identified emerging issues for future research. It also stressed the need for long-term sustainability of funding and multidisciplinary approaches, training of environmental health specialists, development of risk perception and communication and strengthening of environmental health monitoring.

The **Fourth Ministerial Conference (Budapest, 2004)** recognized the need for high quality independent research as a precondition for evidence-based policy-making, and gave emphasis to research into methodologies for developing guidelines.

The EC framework programmes are key instruments for funding research in various fields, including environment and health.

On 1 January 2007, the new legislative package of the **EC Seventh Framework Programme** for research and Technological development (FP7) came into force, following on from the previous programmes. FP7 aims at helping to increase the potential for economic growth and to strengthen European competitiveness by investing in knowledge, innovation and human capital.

The Madrid Symposium will follow up on research developments to be discussed at the **Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, to be held in Italy in 2009**.



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EUROPE

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## INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH SYMPOSIUM ON ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH RESEARCH SCIENCE FOR POLICY, POLICY FOR SCIENCE: BRIDGING THE GAP



ORGANIZED BY THE WHO REGIONAL  
OFFICE FOR EUROPE AND THE  
INSTITUTE OF HEALTH CARLOS III  
OF THE SPANISH MINISTRY  
OF HEALTH AND CONSUMER  
AFFAIRS IN CO-OPERATION WITH  
THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL RESEARCH



EUROPE



GOBIERNO  
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## WHY AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM?

The International Public Health Symposium on Environment and Health is intended to provide a platform for collaboration in public health research with an emphasis on environment and health. Scientists, policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders will come together to review the most recent achievements in environment and health research and to discuss how scientific evidence and practice can form the basis for actions that address present and future environment and health concerns.

The specific objectives of the Symposium include:

- to review the achievements in research on environment and health over the past decade, with a focus on the years following the 2003 conference in Aarhus;
- to present research and lessons learnt on health aspects of environmental crises, such as the toxic oil syndrome, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and

dioxin crises, and of current issues, such as climate change;

- to evaluate information and knowledge gaps for policy development on environmental hazards, including risk communication and policy interventions in situations of scientific uncertainty and of high public concern;
- to identify public health priorities requiring further study and research for consideration by the Directorate-General for Research of the European Commission (EC) in its Seventh Framework Programme for research and technological development, 2007–2013.

The Symposium will also present the most recent evidence to policy-makers in preparation for the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, the next milestone in the European environment and health process.

### TOXIC OIL SYNDROME

Toxic oil syndrome (TOS) is the name given to a disease outbreak that hit Spain in 1981, affecting around 20 000 people and causing hundreds of deaths. The origin was traced to the consumption of rape-seed oil meant for industrial use, but sold illicitly for food use. Eventually a programme allowing users to exchange the oil for pure olive oil helped to control the outbreak.

The national health system was faced with one of the most critical public health challenges of the century. After the outbreak, the Spanish Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs and the WHO Regional Office for Europe set up a joint international working group to guide research on the new disease.

Building on this experience, the Public Health Symposium aims to help address and prevent similar emergencies and other types of environmental crisis.



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## ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

### WHERE

*Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs  
Ernest Lluch Hall*

*Paseo del Prado 18-20  
28014 Madrid (Spain)*

### WHEN

*20 - 22 October 2008*

### WHO

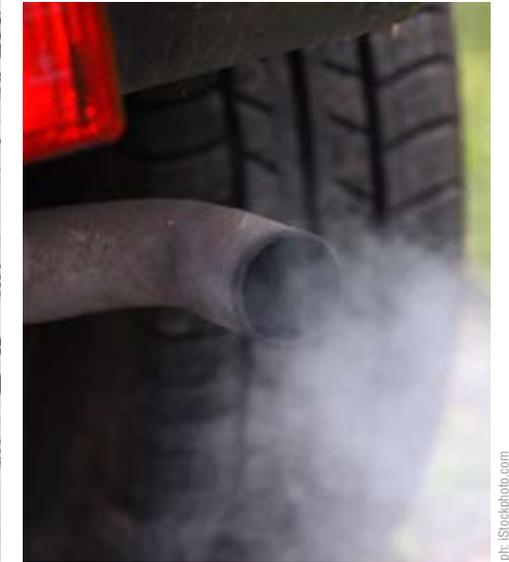
*Scientists from the fields of public health, epidemiology, environmental sciences, social sciences, etc, policy-makers, representatives of nongovernmental organizations, industry, other interest groups and relevant stakeholders.*

### WHAT

*A two-and-a-half-day event with scientific and policy-oriented presentations and discussions that is expected to result in a document for strategic planning in the field of research.*



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### Outline of the programme

- **The opening session** will review the progress made in environment and health research over the past decade, highlight existing gaps and needs, and focus on new research, including on emerging and cross-cutting issues relevant for environment and health policy-making.
- **The parallel thematic sessions** will address challenging and/or underexplored themes through interactive discussions and from a multidisciplinary perspective.
- **The closing session** will bring together policy-makers, scientists and other stakeholders, in a direct and solution-oriented dialogue, to address the challenges of bridging the gap between science and policy.
- **The media side event** will take place back-to-back with the Symposium. As the media play an important role in translating scientific information for the general public, the side event will provide an opportunity for journalists to gain a better understanding of environment and health research and the importance of communicating scientific data in an appropriate and effective manner.



ph: WHO, Vitali Shkaruba