

Action Plan ISEE Europe

Approved by the Executive Council, European Chapter on 14 October 2013

According to the bylaws, the mission of the European Chapter within ISEE is to promote contact between and action by European members of ISEE on matters related to environmental health research, education in environmental epidemiology and the improvement of public health in Europe.

To support the Mission, the aims of the European Chapter include promoting:

- scientific research on environmental health;
- the mobility of researchers and the funding of education and training in environmental health and environmental epidemiology in Europe; and
- the translation of research findings into timely and effective policy. Emphasis will be on policy at the European Union or wider European level as defined herein but may also include national issues.

We should try to move forward in each of the above areas. The Executive Council of the European Chapter therefore wishes to engage in the following areas and develop specific actions in each of these areas:

1. Education and training

1.1. Education and training in environmental health in Europe

In several centres within Europe, different possibilities and programs for education and training in the area of environmental health and environmental epidemiology are being offered. These possibilities range in scope and extent from unstructured informal internships, one- or two-week summer schools to full master programs and postdoctoral fellowships. In order to promote education and training in this field and encourage mobility of young researchers, we suggest identifying and listing these possibilities and making this list available to ISEE members. We will further explore possibilities for increasing collaboration, exchange of information and mobility (lecturers and students) between ongoing educational programs in environmental health. To this end, an inventory of existing programs is a necessary requirement as well. Special emphasis will be put on promotion of collaboration in education between the most and the least developed countries in Europe. Local meetings are valuable. One webpage to highlight education and training resources is desirable.

1.2. Funding

We plan to identify and make known existing funding opportunities at the EU level (e.g. Marie Curie fellowship programs), but also locally through input from members, and evaluate possibilities for funding of new initiatives. We propose to make the information available on the pages of the European Chapter of the ISEE website, thereby offering a forum for exchange of information among our members. Links with EU and other funded projects in this field should be sought.

1.3. E-learning

Another line of promotion will consist of the evaluation of e-learning possibilities.

Since this is topic is not restricted to Europe, but concerns ISEE in general, we plan to discuss with the ISEE Council possibilities for e-learning in our field, identify existing opportunities, and evaluate whether and how elements of e-learning could be used to promote education and training within ISEE.

2. Research

2.1. Organize presence in decision making on priorities

The main activity on research by the European Chapter should be to promote research in environmental health e.g. Horizon 2020. This will require a series of actions within the ISEE, a continuous contact with the European Commission and others and stakeholders relevant for setting priorities and securing funding on environmental health, and finally wider dissemination activities. This effort should extend beyond European Commission funding to ensure relevance to all European Chapter members. Continuity of contact with key stakeholders is needed to ensure lobbying is effective.

Within the ISEE:

- organize discussion within the European Chapter on a plan for action and also on ways through which ISEE can suggest priorities for research; we have never had a formal discussion within ISEE on priorities and usually proposals for research originated from specific centres or consortia; it is not proposed to have ISEE making specific proposals but we could identify wider areas of research. Some complex and challenging topics such as climate change, loss of biodiversity and continuing urbanization cover in any case most areas of environmental health research.
- prepare material to be provided to the European Commission and other stakeholders. This will probably have to refer to wider areas of research and have examples of specific priorities but it would be difficult to prioritize.

Contact with European Commission, national representatives and other stakeholders:

- Among the main contacts we should maintain are the European Commission (leading persons and officers responsible for environmental health), the committee of experts in the area of research on health (committee not yet made public), European Parliament committees, specific MEPs and national representatives.
- The Executive Council could coordinate this effort and provide information on specific deadlines, meetings etc. The Executive Council could provide information on key contact persons, some of whom are central but many are in the country level.

It is not evident with what means we will achieve all this. At present the only feasible option is that 2 or 3 of the main centres in environmental Epidemiology in Europe provide some administrative assistance.

Dissemination. Again it is not clear how can we achieve this, although clearly it is needed. Some very limited dissemination activities can be achieved through the ISEE pages in the journals and the web. WHO Europe, and non-governmental patient and environmental organizations can be asked to back up dissemination in some cases.

2.2. Other actions to promote research, local conferences/workshops including European Science Foundation

There has been an initial consensus that we will not be organizing general "local" European ISEE conferences because this could undermine the annual ISEE conference. However we can promote local workshops/conferences similar to what the Eastern European Chapter was doing

and also promote other opportunities such as ESF conferences. We should encourage ISEE to web-stream its annual conference as a way to allow people who cannot afford to take part in a remote conference to benefit from the event. If possible, some means of keeping systematic reviews updated could be found.

2.3. Focus groups (i.e. methods development, other specific issues)

This is an initiative to be discussed also with ISEE. There are several issues, methodological or other, that the ISEE could provide a network for discussion. Normally this is done to a small extent in our annual conferences but it could also be promoted as a normal activity. The proposal is that if there is interest on specific topics, to set-up some of these focus discussion groups.

2.4. Networking (funding proposals, Eastern Europe)

ISEE Europe website and meetings will be used to facilitate networking between European researchers. European funding possibilities, such as ERA-NET, for networking will be explored. Local meetings and networking can be very important in regions building capacity e.g. Eastern Europe.

2.5. Ethics

Most of the issues on ethics are covered by the ISEE ethics committee. A specific and important issue in Europe is the proposed new and very restrictive regulation for data protection in the EU that main pose serious problems for population based research. There is input from several scientific organizations on this and ISEE should also participate. We recognise ISEE ethics committee's lead role on ethical issues.

3. Policy

3.1. Why?

The aims of the European Chapter include promoting the translation of research findings into timely and effective policy with an emphasis on policy at the European Union or wider European level and occasionally national issues.

3.2. What and when?

The Executive Council of the European Chapter seeks to be aware of research by ISEE members and other scientists that is likely to be particularly relevant to public policy and vice versa. This is a demanding task so European Chapter members and others are encouraged to highlight topically relevant research or policies to the European Chapter. This can be done via the ISEE website or by contacting a member of the European Chapter. Please bear in mind it is usually easier to influence policy at an early stage than at the last minute.

3.3. Where and how?

The Executive Council may decide to promote the translation of research results into policy through direct (e.g. writing to the European Commission, European Parliament or Council of Ministers) or indirect approaches (e.g. by speaking at conferences or briefing the media or non-governmental organisations). Continuity of contact with key stakeholders is needed to ensure action is effective.

3.4. Who?

The Executive Council will usually seek to promote chosen research or policy areas to the most relevant or influential individuals or organisations. It will do so on behalf of ISEE Europe (i.e. not just members of the European Chapter) and may do so in Europe on behalf of ISEE as a whole subject to the approval of ISEE Council. When appropriate, such as on policy matters of global significance, the Executive Council will liaise with ISEE's Policy Committee to seek a consistent position for ISEE and may be a joint signatory with it. The Executive Council respectfully requests that others within ISEE consult it, when appropriate, on European matters. When likely to be more effective or appropriate, ISEE European Chapter will ask ISEE's global committees to take a lead.

4. **Organizational issues**

4.1. Web ISEE Europe

At present we will use ISEE's website.

4.2. Membership, contact

At present contact with all ISEE members in Europe will be done via the ISEE secretariat. Contact of specific working groups will be done directly via email or other electronic means. Some means of enabling contact and networking between European Chapter members is desirable. An online diary for the European Chapter to promote events and share travel details of those willing to speak at events is desirable. Consider whether we can manage our own membership list i.e. separately to ISEE globally.

4.3. Funding

There is no obvious solution to this. Lack of funding limits the capacity of ISEE Europe to act and follow actions in a continuous way, e.g. contacts with the European Commission, travel to meetings in Brussels etc. At present some of the Institutes of the members of the Executive Council have dedicated funds to ISEE Europe.

4.4. Contact and coordination with other epidemiological and public health associations in Europe

Contacts have been initiated with IEA Europe and Epicoh (Epidemiology in Occupational Health) e.g. to coordinate actions for research in Horizon 2020. It would be advisable to promote a more formal contact with IEA, EPICOH and perhaps other scientific associations and public health schools. There is a particular need to educate physicians about public and environmental health e.g. Uppsala University School of Medicine. Special emphasis should be given to our association with WHO Europe.

Members offering to get involved with specific activities in the action plan:

Gerard Hoek	Education and training
Michal K and Klea K	Policy, Horizon 2020, research
Vlasta Svecova	e-learning
Mustafa Babayigit	Communication among members
Jeni Staykova	e-learning

Other offers of support:

Hans-Guido Mücke, German Environmental Protection Agency (UBA), offered that we could use the regular publication by the WHO collaborating centre, published by the UBA (2 per year) to reach out to other individuals and organisations in the field within Europe (published in English, we could have 1-3 pages).

Lisette van Vliet, Heal: support with Horizon 2020 and influencing politics