

Report on the Activities of ISEE European Chapter

Period December 2019 - February 2020

Organization

The European Chapter have continued their work with monthly conference calls and committee interactions.

We have changed some roles and people on our Chapter as we continue to bring a fresh perspective to our Chapter. At the moment, the Committee consists of 7 elected members and 7 associate members. The following associate member has stepped down recently: we would like to express our gratitude to James Grellier for all his contributions. We are actively looking for new members, in particular from Eastern European countries, members with ties to the cardiovascular medical community, already eyeing towards the 2020 election.

Conferences

We have started to prepare for the 4th ISEE Young Conference, which will be held in Basel on February 17-19, 2021. We follow the model of the Munich conference, with a separate local organizing (LOC) and scientific organizing committees (SOC). Danielle Vienneau is chair of the LOC. Benedicte Jacquemin and Massimo Stafoggia are the co-chairs of the SOC.

We have shared a draft conference timeline recently. The plan is to announce the Basel conference on July 1, 2020, after the closing date for the Washington conference. Please see below the provisional timeline:

1 July 2020 | Conference announcement and call for abstracts and conference registration opens
16 October 2020 | Submission Deadline for Scientific Abstracts (there will be no extension of this deadline)
16 November 2020 | Abstract acceptance notification
15 January 2021 | Final conference programme published
30 January 2021 | Conference registration deadline
17 February 2021 | Pre-conference workshops
18 February 2021 | Conference opens

The Basel organizers have decided that it will be a poster-free conference, which would give space to something new: speed talks and ‘tweeters’ (tweeter slide + two slides without text). More news will be shared in due course.

For the Washington conference, ISEE Europe and the Health Effects Institute (HEI) has proposed a half-day Pre-Conference Workshop entitled ‘Communicating about Clean Air at the Science-Policy-People Interface’. The workshop would be led jointly for ISEE Europe by Simon Birkett, Founder and Director of Clean Air in London, and Pallavi Pant of the Health Effects Institute. If approved, it will be an interactive hands-on workshop that will equip participants with tools and approaches for effective communication of scientific evidence to policy makers and the general public through traditional and social media platforms.

Education and communication

In an earlier activities report we have summarized a very [well-received masterclass](#) in Warsaw, Poland on air pollution and health, which was held in November 2019, together the European Respiratory Society, the Polish Respiratory Society and the National Institute of Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases.

We will continue to collaborate with the ERS to evaluate the feasibility of future Masterclasses. One potential Masterclass we are currently considering is one on Climate Change and Health in Bern, Switzerland in Fall 2020. Ana Vicedo-Cabrera is spearheading this initiative, and more news will be shared in due course.

We have issued a [2019 ISEE Europe newsletter](#) early December and distributed it to all ISEE members based in Europe. In addition, we keep revamping our website and we see an uptick in visitors as we strive to keep it up to date and lively. For example, we regularly update the news and events page, and we have redesigned the blog to encourage wider engagement. We have a new webmaster now – Elaine Fuertes, and we thank Danielle Vienneau for all her contributions to the website. Lastly, after a successful pilot using Basecamp for internal communications within the ISEE Europe chapter, we adopted this channel as the main form of communications going forward.

Policy

We had a successful joint meeting, Air pollution and health: Recent advances to inform the European Green deal, on January 21-22, 2020 in Brussels. This was a joint meeting, together with HEI, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the European Respiratory Society (ERS). The joint meeting was also supported by the European Commission. The aims were to review the latest science on major pollutants, such as PM_{2.5} and NO₂, as a key step in evaluating whether to update Europe's air quality policies. We thank all of those involved in making it happen, specifically Barbara Hoffmann (ERS), Hanna Boogaard (ISEE Europe, and HEI) and Nathalie Roebel (WHO). We had an impressive line-up of speakers, including Thomas Henrichs, from DG environment, Dorota Jarosinska, WHO Regional Office For Europe, Hans Bruyninckx, European Environment Agency, and many ISEE members (e.g., Bert Brunekreef, Annette Peters, Mark Nieuwenhuijsen).

This high-level meeting targeted European and national policy makers and regulators, as well as representatives from societal bodies that are engaged and active in the area of air pollution and health effects. The meeting was well attended with about 150 people in total.

We also had a small subgroup going to the European Parliament on the afternoon of the second day – we met with some Members of the European Parliament, specifically Bas Eickhout and Jutta Paulus from the Greens.

The [agenda and slides](#) are available online. We are developing a one page summary with key bullet points – see below a draft. In addition, we are preparing a workshop summary which will be published in the journal from the European Respiratory Society. We are considering a follow-up meeting in Brussels once the new WHO Air Quality Guidelines are finalized, probably somewhere in 2021; also in 2021, the European Commission will announce their “Zero pollution action plan for water, air and soil”.

Other activities

ISEE Europe is looking actively for ways to get more involved in the Horizon Europe (in the past we have provided comments on drafts of earlier program calls). To this end, we work activity with members from the HERA project. In addition, we will approach DG Research directly. Marie Pedersen is spearheading this opportunity.

Key messages from joint conference „Air pollution and Health: Recent Advances to Inform the European Green Deal“

January 21-22, 2020, Brussels

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Ambient air pollution continues to be a major public health risk in Europe, leading to increased hospitalizations for many diseases, reduced birth weight, and early death. Although air pollution levels are declining in most European countries, new studies have reported strong associations with health effects at levels below current standards, with no observable thresholds. New studies also strengthen the evidence on the health effects of nitrogen dioxide. This updated evidence raises questions about the need for lower standards to improve public health even further.

Regular assessments of the latest science as well as accountability studies on air pollution and health effects are crucial to inform Europe’s air quality policies. The WHO air quality guidelines, and its current update - play an important role when Europe further develops the European Green deal. Current air quality standards are instrumental, but only partially effective in curbing air pollution levels. As recently mentioned by Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevicius, the Commission considers to revise air quality standards to align them more closely with the WHO guidelines.

To maximize health benefits, it is important to implement measures that would both reduce peak exposures in specific hotspots as well as the average exposure of all EU citizens. To tackle the health effects of air pollution, bold air quality actions are needed at all levels (international, national, local) and across all sectors (e.g., transport, energy, agriculture).

The estimated health benefits outweigh by far the implementation costs of air quality actions. As there are key co-benefits between air quality and climate actions, a systemic approach, which also takes equity issues into account, will be needed to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

The European Green Deal and the Commission’s pollution action plan for air, water and soil to be adopted by 2021, will provide a unique opportunity to operationalise the fundamental changes and build upon the synergies between air quality and climate actions.