

Climate Change and Health Impacts Workshop: Integrated Urban Management Approaches

Scott Randall, 23.02.2010

Part of the HENVINET Expert Workshop series
EUROCITIES, Brussels
Friday February 19th, 2010

City representatives from across Europe and H&E researchers gathered at the EUROCITIES office in Brussels February 19th 2010 to share integrated management approaches to



David Ludlow (left) addressing the workshop participants

addressing health impacts from climate change. The workshop was organized by HENVINET (EU FP6 project) to bring various cities together to openly discuss their experiences in adapting to present and future climate changes; where an integral aspect of this dialog was to also include research and science aspects in these policy-based topics. The structural framework of the workshop was unique in that it employed the back-casting approach to first envision the final goals, and work backwards to identify the potential barriers and opportunities to reaching the stated goals. The point of this approach is to encourage the process of altering management strategies based on a prioritization of the threats and strengths discovered when envisioning the future.

Before the back-casting exercise began, it was necessary to establish the specific strategies and actions that the cities were utilizing. Presentations were given by the cities of Bristol, Prague, Bologna, Ancona, Tilburg, and Frankfurt. It is evident that the cities are using a wide range of integrated management strategies, as well as focusing on different environmental topics which are based on the varying geographical and historical conditions of each city. It was important also to understand that most of the cities



Pieter Biemans presenting the city of Tilburg.

embraced adaptation strategies in coordination with ongoing mitigation measures, and that there are strong efforts underway at the local level to embrace new alliances, especially targeted at bridging the science-policy gaps. A common message resulting from the city presentations was the caution of borrowing strategies from cities with different structures (ie. most strategies are custom tailored to the specific region they were developed for, and it may be inappropriate to simply export these strategies to new areas of different qualities).

Common Target Statement for year 2030

By 2030, urban areas will be able to have/maintain a healthy population (independent of climate change related diseases) expressed in a public health indicator, by forming a strong alliance of parties that build on a full responsive urban planning system and fully qualified health services, and cooperation at all levels.

- *Opportunities:* climate change as an agenda driver, alliances with private sector, new economic patterns/directions, increases local tasks for mitigation/adaptation, less health care costs/absences, more productivity, integrated mgt on adaptation cycles, a strategic value to focus on health, increased urban quality of life.
- *Barriers:* public acceptance, lack of willingness to change behaviour, local politics, too generic/non-specialized mitigation policies, lack of cooperation at practitioner level and with stakeholders, over-regulation, policies need initial investments, uncertainties with science, lack of possibility to intervene, lack of integration between the Health and the Environment sector.
- *Issues:* lack of knowledge on connection between climate change and specific health effects, but enough knowledge to perform some actions; new ways of communicating messages for public acceptance; setting targets.

The back-casting exercise resulted in the agreement of a common target statement for the year 2030 – the statement stresses the importance of a healthy population and cooperation towards this goal. The numerous opportunities and barriers to reaching this goal were discussed, where many of these issues included factors such as economics, communication, public involvement, policy, and alliances. A major recurring issue was also heavily discussed when developing the common targets – *the lack of specific knowledge regarding the connection between climate change and specific health effects*. There is enough knowledge to realize some actions, but this could become a bottle-neck in the future when more concrete measures will need to be implemented.

The workshop was appreciated by all participants, and it can be seen as a valuable exercise for cities to share their experiences in formulating integrated management approaches for addressing climate change and health issues. It is hoped that permanent expert groups can evolve from these workshops HENVINET is facilitating, to bridge science and policy for better knowledge generation between H&E.