

Global network of science academies launches new project on ‘Climate Change and Health’

The German National Academy of Sciences, Leopoldina, and the global network The InterAcademy Partnership (IAP) are undertaking a new project on ‘Climate Change and Health’.

Climate change is already affecting human health and health systems, and projected changes in climate are expected to increase the burden of a variety of climate-sensitive health outcomes. Research has done much to contribute to past improvements in health in many countries but, in terms of understanding the effects of climate on health, the evidence base is fragmented. Health effects of climate change have been relatively neglected by policy makers until recently, but that is beginning to change – and requires increasingly robust scientific evidence to guide policy options and assess current commitments. The threats to health must drive decisive action by the scientific and health communities and by public policy makers, to protect the health of future as well as current generations, as a critical contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

In light of these developments the new project will produce three regional reports for Africa, Asia and the Americas (the [regional report for Europe](#) is already available), which will analyse the respective situation on Climate Change and Health and produce science-based recommendations for the region. Furthermore, a global synthesis which will be based on the regional results will highlight the similarities and differences, providing advice on ‘Climate Change and Health’ for implementation at global, regional and national levels – customized according to local circumstances and strategic needs, with particular regard to adaptation and mitigation solutions.

The German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina is leading this project with support from the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), which will provide the funding for the activity that is scheduled to run from October 2019 to March 2022. The project is co-chaired by Prof. Volker ter Meulen, Past President of the Leopoldina and current President of IAP, and Prof. Sir Andy Haines of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and leading expert on the issue.

The global network of over 140 National Academies of Science worldwide, IAP, is structured according to four regional networks, which comprise the science academies of Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. Experts and representatives of these four regional networks – AASSA (Asia), EASAC (Europe), IANAS (the Americas) and NASAC (Africa) – convened in Halle, Germany, on 4-5 November 2019 for a first project meeting.

During the meeting, the participants contributed their regional science-based perspectives and starting points for a global project on Climate Change and Health. They also discussed the project design and roadmap in greater detail. The proposed focus of the project is on measures of climate change mitigation where that also brings co-benefits for health.

Following the kick-off meeting, the next phase will focus on the creation of regional expert groups of outstanding scientists who can contribute to the academies’ study on Climate Change and Health. Each regional network will organise its own workshop, which will draw together a wide scientific expertise and help to clarify the particular regional focus for each study. Subsequent to the foundations laid through the workshop, there will be two working group meetings during which scientists will agree on a regional analysis for Climate Change and Health and formulate their science-based recommendations.

The regional reports from NASAC, AASSA and IANAS (together with any updated EASAC material) will be published and launched in 2021 and will then be used to engage with regional policy makers, the scientific community and other stakeholders. In parallel, the global synthesis report will be compiled, which will be ready by the end of 2021 for communication to the WHO and other global stakeholders.