

[PRESS RELEASE] Launch of new European research project on the cost of air and noise pollution

9th February 2023 – BEST-COST, which holds its kick-off meeting today, is a new Horizon Europe research project that aims to improve our understanding of the socioeconomic cost of environmental stressors in Europe. It will focus on air and noise pollution and their impact on health equity and wellbeing. The four-year project is led by Sciensano, and brings together a consortium of 17 partners from 10 European countries and the United States.

The socioeconomic impact of environmental stressors is significant, yet there exists a gap in policy initiatives. Air pollution leads to an estimated 400,000 premature deaths in Europe alone¹ and noise pollution leads to approximately 12,000 premature deaths in Europe². Currently, evidence-based policymaking on environmental stressors faces methodological challenges to quantify the socioeconomic costs of such stressors and the unequal distribution across different communities.

To address this, BEST-COST will develop a novel methodological framework to quantify the burden, cost and social and health inequalities caused by air and noise pollution. The BEST-COST framework will enable researchers and policymakers to adopt a harmonised approach, and to make use of improved economic and health modelling in policy impact assessments. This will ultimately contribute to improved policies and practices that reduce the burden of disease, and to living and working environments that are more health-promoting, equitable and sustainable.

“While there is increasing concern around the implication of environmental stressors on human health, the incomplete methodology for concrete evidence of the socioeconomic cost is limiting policymakers’ ability to act. BEST-COST will help us to identify and understand the impact, leading to stronger policy initiatives to better protect our health,” said Brecht Devleesschauwer, BEST-COST Project Coordinator and Head of Health information at Sciensano.

EuroHealthNet's role in the project will include communicating outcomes and engaging with policymakers at local, national and EU level through a series of capacity-building workshops and policy roundtables, and developing policy recommendations and an action framework.

“EuroHealthNet is excited to get started with the BEST-COST consortium, as progress made in measuring the health impacts of environmental stressors will also reveal the health inequities at play,” said Caroline Costongs, Director of EuroHealthNet. *“BEST-COST outputs will equip policymakers with the tools and knowledge to address the worrying levels of pollution across Europe and promote a fair and green transition.”*

BEST-COST results will be made available as open-access tools and trialled in five European countries (Belgium, Estonia, France, Norway and Portugal) before becoming transferable on a larger scale across Europe. Following this, research into their adaptability for other environmental stressors will be explored in a hackathon with key stakeholders.

To keep in touch with project outputs, sign up to our mailing list [here](#). Follow us on Twitter [@BestCostEU](#) and on [LinkedIn](#).

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For more information, please contact Brecht Devleesschauwer, best-cost@sciensano.be

¹ EEA Report No 9/2020 <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/air-quality-in-europe-2020-report>

² EEA Report No 22/2019 <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/environmental-noise-in-europe>



Funded by the European Union

BEST-COST is funded by the the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HADEA) under the powers delegated by the European Commission. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



