

Kick off meeting  
24 June 2011

## Climate Change and Public Health

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Climate change is the major environmental problem facing the world, and is characterized by large temperature fluctuations, resulting in heat waves and cold spells. Cyprus is well known for extreme thermal stress during summer time, but the adverse health effects of this extreme weather has not yet been characterized.

We all know that children, sick people, the elderly, pregnant women are more sensitive to these large temperature fluctuations, but do we know to which extent this is true for the Cypriot reality? Are those groups adapted to the extreme weather in Cyprus? In this present project we will first study the association of climate-change-driven extreme weather and acute health effects.

How will we do this? By assessing daily death rates and hospital admissions and compare the data with those of temperature, humidity, and pollutants and particles that are present in the air. The second step will be to develop prevention and mitigation strategies to reduce the impact of thermal stress on public health. And how do we propose to do this:

By creating a HHWWS (heat-health-watch-warning-system) that will allow us to predict in advance and alert the urban population about potentially dangerous extreme weather conditions that could negatively affect health, and at the same time allow for rapid decision-making systems (for example the health authorities) to intervene and protect public health effectively and efficiently by promoting behavioral changes in the population (clothing, to limit time spent outdoors, adequate drink/food), social measures (home insulation, adequate domestic heating/air conditioning) and sanitary measures (advice to prepare emergency services, hospitals, and general practitioners for an increase in demand for services).

So, from this project, we would expect:

- To improve relevant health services in Cyprus
- To build the necessary infrastructure that would allow us to implement European HHWWS
- Harmonization with relevant EU guidelines and directives
- Allow for rapid-decision making systems to intervene and protect public health in an effective and efficient manner
- Networking with European researches for exchange of expertise in the area of climatic change and human health

The consortium is formed by the University of Nicosia Research Foundation (HO), the Environmental Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, the Department of

Environmental Engineering at The Democritus University of Thrace, the Laboratory of Meteorology at the University of Ioannina, and the Health Protection Agency, Center for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards, with specialists in the fields of environment, pollution, meteorology, climatology, statistics and medicine.

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Project Kick Off Meeting. From right to left: Sotiris Vardoulakis, Kyriakos Georgiou, Maria Hadjimichael, Kyriaki Ioannou, Anastasia Paschalidou, Pavlos Kassomenos, Haritini Tsangari, Edna Yamasaki Patrikiou .