



**Fourth Plenary Conference COST Action IS1408
Industrially Contaminated Sites and Health Network (ICSHNet)**

WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH)
United Nations Campus, Bonn, Germany, 21- 22 February 2018

**Consensus Statement on
Industrially Contaminated Sites and Health**

Preamble

Waste and contaminated sites have been included as a priority in the Declaration of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Ostrava, Czech Republic 15 June 2017). The Ostrava Declaration includes a commitment towards

“preventing and eliminating the adverse environmental and health effects, costs and inequalities related to waste management and contaminated sites, by advancing towards the elimination of uncontrolled and illegal waste disposal and trafficking, and sound management of waste and contaminated sites in the context of transition to a circular economy”.

Interested Member States of the WHO Regional Office for Europe will address the topic in the coming years and consider it when developing their Portfolios for Action.

The COST Action IS1408 on Industrially Contaminated Sites and Health Network (ICSHNet)¹ brings together 33 of the 53 Member States and aims at establishing and consolidating a European Network of experts and relevant institutions, and developing a common framework for research to respond to the health implications of industrially contaminated sites. On occasion of the 4th Plenary Conference of the Action, its Members prepared a consensus statement intended to stimulate further progress on the issue, as follows.

Statement

Members of the COST Action IS1408 on Industrially Contaminated Sites and Health Network:

- Underline the importance and relevance of industrially contaminated sites for public health: notwithstanding important knowledge gaps, available evidence indicates that human and ecosystem health are adversely affected by contamination due to past and current industrial activities including waste disposal.
- Invite relevant environmental health (EH) agencies, EH scientists and the EH community at large to further engage in work contributing to the Ostrava agenda efforts, drawing on established methodologies and successful case studies, and promote stronger technical and scientific exchanges on good practices between countries.

¹ The ICSHNet COST Action runs from April 2015 to April 2019; Information on the Action at <https://www.icshnet.eu/>

- Propose that further work is undertaken, and offer support to its implementation, to pursue the following goals:
 - Identify priority sites for remediation in each country, by means of transparent and shared procedures, taking into account human health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, but also including environmental and occupational, and economic perspectives;
 - Promote collaborative initiatives, and develop guidance and resources through dedicated research, especially addressing the multi-dimensional nature of the issue, i.e. considering the multiple pathways of exposure (soil, water, air, food etc.), integrating relevant disciplines and methods (epidemiology, eco-toxicology, exposure assessment including biomonitoring, markers of early effects, etc.);
 - Promote the development of regulatory frameworks and policies to protect soil (thereby complementing existing legislation on air and water), also in line with the objective of the Seventh European Union Environment Action Programme and with the UN resolution ~~Managing~~ Soil pollution to achieve Sustainable Development adopted by the 2017 United Nations Environment Assembly [UNEP/EA.3/L.14];
 - Undertake a comprehensive assessment of the overall impact on health of contaminated sites in Europe;
 - Consider environmental justice a priority, as the uneven distribution of adverse health effects and impacts frequently affect disadvantaged and vulnerable people (like children) in a disproportionate way, often combined with unequal access to information and evidence, driven by unequal distribution of resources and capacity;
 - Stimulate development of harmonised approaches based on the best available and suitable strategies for research and response, which should be rigorous, open to stakeholders and mindful of local/country needs, priorities, preferences and values; International collaboration will ensure the identification of the most appropriate options for improving comparability between assessments and countries;
 - Ensure that building further evidence and refining it does not result in delaying remedial action where this is appropriate;
 - Undertake appropriate assessment to document public health benefits following remediation;
 - Increase public awareness of the importance of sustainable developments goals (SDGs) and circular economy;
 - Strengthen in-country capacity to face the environmental health challenges posed by contaminated sites, through ad hoc training activities, addressing in particular young generations of researchers, public health professionals, and decision makers;
 - Improve targeted communication initiatives addressing local populations, media and other stakeholders like children and youth; provide guidance on how to transfer scientific evidence into the policy making process.
- Offer a platform for collaboration between interested Member States of the European region and the expert members of the COST Action and the provision of technical assistance.

The COST Action Conference agrees on the opportunity that this document be taken to the meeting of the EH Task Force of the European Environment and Health Process (EEHP), scheduled for 20-21 March 2018 in Bonn.