

Researchers from 9 countries involved in the project will meet tomorrow in Barcelona

A EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROJECT WILL ASSESS THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICIES ON HEALTH INEQUALITIES

Barcelona, September 26th. – Europe will assess the impact of social and economic policies on health inequalities through the SOPHIE project. Researchers from nine European countries will meet in Barcelona on 27 and 28 September in order to discuss and refine their plans for review and evaluation.

Health inequalities are avoidable and unfair differences determined by the circumstances in which people of different social groups are born, live, work and age. To give some examples, in the city of Glasgow the difference in life expectancy at birth of men between the areas of Calton (54 years) and Lenzie (82) is 28 years. And in Spain, a woman with an unskilled occupation has an almost four times higher risk of depression or anxiety compared to a managerial or professional man.



The aim of the SOPHIE project is to generate evidence on how structural policies such as housing, employment, macroeconomic planning and others impact on these inequalities in health. Thus, decisions on the welfare state, economics, labor market, etc. may have a direct impact on population health and inequalities in health levels according to gender, place of residence or socioeconomic status.

Urban renewal, housing, work subsidies...

The project, funded by the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) of the European Union, aims to develop innovative methodologies to identify and evaluate how structural policies impact on social inequalities in health at local, national and European level. In some cases, researchers will try to compare situations between countries (for instance, in gender, immigration or fiscal policies), or in other ones, they will focus on studying the impact of specific programs.

For example, researchers have started collecting information through documents, interviews and focus groups to evaluate the health effects of a subsidized voucher system to hire domestic workers in Belgium, the relocation of families with housing



problems by Caritas Barcelona, urban renewal plans such as the District Approach in the Netherlands, or the increases in duration of parental leave in Sweden.

An effort to involve affected stakeholders

SOPHIE is designed as a project that will act on the involvement of civil society to identify effective policies to reduce inequalities. Different organizations and vulnerable populations will be approached to incorporate their views on the design, enactment and evaluation of measures to reduce health inequalities, so that "*people most affected by the determinants of health are most actively involved*", says Carme Borrell, principal investigator of the project, "*thus, the results of the project may be an instrument in the hands of the people to advocate for fairer and healthier policies.*"

SOPHIE is a European research project coordinated by researchers at the *Agència de Salut Pública de Barcelona* (Public Health Agency of Barcelona) with the collaboration of *CIBERESP* (Centre for Biomedical Network Research on Epidemiology and Public Health), dependent on the Carlos III National Health Institute (ISCIII), involving a total of 13 institutions from 9 countries. The project began in November 2011 and is scheduled to be completed in October 2015.

The SOPHIE project is also member of a local communication network called CommHERE, an initiative funded by the European Commission. The goal of CommHERE is to disseminate among the society the health research results developed under the funding of the FP7. This action is led by the Karolinska Institute from Sweden and the ISCIII is member of the consortium.

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