



ECEHH Research Insight: BlueHealth Project

A bite size summary of research <https://bluehealth2020.eu>

The BlueHealth Project has increased the understanding of how urban blue spaces can affect people's wellbeing.



Who is this relevant to?

Public health and medical professionals, policy makers, NGOs, health and environment research bodies.

Background

Funded by European Horizon 2020, researchers from the University of Exeter Medical School led the interdisciplinary international BlueHealth Project with 8 other European Institutions.

The majority of Europe's population live in urban areas characterised by inland waterways and coastal margins. Our interdisciplinary research has combined large-scale survey data with localised interventions to understand the effects these environments might have on human health and wellbeing.

We have worked with communities, private sector organisations and policymakers to ensure our findings are focused and relevant.

Our recommendations will help decision makers and communities promote health through access to good quality blue spaces, informing the development of towns and cities fit for the future.

Findings

Our team co-designed and implemented interventions with communities in Spain, Italy, Estonia, Portugal, and the UK. We created the BlueHealth Tools (<https://bluehealth.tools>) to assess these initiatives.

We surveyed over 18,000 people across Europe and beyond to uncover population-level relationships between blue spaces and health.

Our researchers used virtual reality (VR) to bring blue space experiences to those who cannot access them. We conducted workshops across Europe to develop future scenarios.

We worked with communities, met with policy makers, and broadcast our messages across the globe.

We are still publishing peer-reviewed papers and supporting our amazing network of early career researchers:

<https://bluehealth2020.eu/publications/>



Recommendations

BlueHealth has helped to inform the decision-making process for urban blue infrastructure across Europe by combining science with insights from policy makers.

It has designed policies, tools and recommendations to maximise the benefits of blue environments in the context of ongoing environmental and climatic change to be used by communities, planners and policy makers

<https://bluehealth2020.eu/news/bluehealth-tools/>



Selected References

Elliott et al. 2023. *Nature contact and general health: testing multiple serial mediation pathways with data from adults in 18 countries* *Env Int* 2023;178:108077, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2023.108077>

Mishra HS et al 2023. *Theory-based design for promoting positive behaviours in an urban blue space: Landscape Urban Planning* 233, 104708. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2023.104708>

Garrett J et al. 2023. *Applying an ecosystem services framework on nature and mental health to recreational blue space visits across 18 countries.* *Sci Rep* 13, 2209. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-28544-w>

<https://bluehealth2020.eu/publications/>

BlueHealth has completed large scale data analyses to develop a clear picture of existing research into urban blue spaces and health promotion. Full List of ongoing Publications: <https://bluehealth2020.eu/publications/>

What is The European Centre for Environment & Human Health? ECEHH is a world leading, transdisciplinary research and education Centre informing the future health of the planet and people. As part of the University of Exeter Medical School, our research falls into two major areas: emerging threats to health and wellbeing posed by the environment, and the health and wellbeing benefits the natural environment can provide. We aim to break down boundaries separating human and planetary health, pioneering research to ensure local, national and global actions and policies are better informed by the needs of both. ecehh.com

Institutions involved



National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM)



WHO Regional Office for Europe



University of Exeter



Lund University



National Institute of Health (ISS)



Estonian University of Life Sciences



The Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal)



Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change (CMCC)



Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Funder



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 666773.