



Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of Health in Greenland and the European Environment Agency

With this agreement, the Ministry of Health in Greenland and the European Environment Agency (EEA) are establishing the first step towards a closer cooperation. The objective is to improve the sharing of data and information and the quality and timeliness of assessments and outlooks of the European region as a whole and the Arctic region in particular related to the environmental impacts on human health.

The further objective is to support sustainable development, integrate health and environmental related considerations with economic policies, and to protect and improve the health of the European and Arctic populations by providing targeted, relevant and reliable information to policy makers as well as information to the general public in Greenland and in Europe regarding impacts on human health in the Arctic of global environmental issues.

Establishing closer cooperation on monitoring and data sharing between the Ministry of Health and the EEA further strengthens common efforts towards providing policy makers with robust, timely and comprehensive assessments and knowledge on the environmental impacts on health. The Ministry of Health and the EEA have a common interest in strengthening the knowledge base on the state and trends of public health related aspects of environmental issues, recognizing that Europe leaves a footprint in the Greenlandic and Arctic environment with known, as well as suspected, effects on human health. Greenland and Europe can not tackle these challenges without understanding the regional and global context, and the exchange of relevant data and information between Greenland and EEA is a step in this direction.

The EEA is an independent EU Agency that has 32 member countries, including five Arctic states, namely Norway, Iceland, Denmark, Finland and Sweden. In addition six further EEA member countries are permanent observers in the Arctic Council. Since 2010, Greenland has also cooperated with the EEA. The Agency therefore has a responsibility to ensure that there is a good understanding amongst Europeans of the environmental changes occurring in the Arctic, the underlying causes and the policy changes needed to address them. This also applies to environment and health issues arising from European sources and affecting the Arctic population and environment.

The EEA is active in environment and health initiatives in Europe, with a dedicated Eionet group (NRC Environment and Health). It also cooperates with other relevant partners, including the Commission services, other EU agencies, WHO, NGOs, professional communities, etc. In the framework of the WHO-led pan-European Environment and Health process, the EEA is committed to contributing to the implementation of the Declaration of the Fifth Ministerial Conference (Parma, 2010). Several issues are of immediate relevance for the Arctic, such as health impacts of climate change, reducing burdens and health impacts of hazardous chemicals in children, or reducing health inequalities. This agreement between the Ministry of Health and the EEA further enhances the ability of both parties to provide relevant and accurate assessments and outlooks for the Arctic region which can guide policy makers towards sustainable solutions.

The following initial areas of priority have been identified for inclusion in this agreement:

- A liaison agreement on exchange of personnel in order to improve capacity building and to coordinate the flow of information between the Government of Greenland and the EEA on areas of common concern and interest
- Exchange of knowledge, to the widest extent possible, on environmental related health issues, including cooperation on:
 - Monitoring and assessment of health issues related to chemicals and hazardous substances, including substances causing bioaccumulation or endocrine disruption, in particular via dietary uptake
 - Human consequences of waste management
 - Health impacts due to climate change
- Exchange of data and information from operational monitoring, research communities and community-based local and traditional sources.
- Exchange of information and sharing of knowledge with regard to the development of indicators and improving existing assessments and outlooks
- Sharing of relevant data and information from the respective parties from, for example, the Greenlandic public health surveys and bioaccumulation assessments in humans
- Strengthening network cooperation through Greenland's participation as observer in the Eionet meetings of the National Reference Centers for Environment and Health (NRC EH) once a year
- Assistance in translating relevant EEA reports and documents into Greenlandic with particular benefit to the public in Greenland, as well as translating Greenlandic reports into English

The objectives and priorities outlined above, on which cooperation between the Ministry of Health and the EEA is based, imply a free flow of mutually useful information between both parties, without accompanying financial implications. The EEA will contribute financially with regard to exchange of personnel in order to improve coordination. Furthermore, the EEA will provide technical assistance and tools with regard to the exchange of data and information, as appropriate.

The above-mentioned list is not exhaustive and can be expanded if both parties agree in writing. An amendment shall come into force on the date it is signed by the two parties. Either party may terminate this agreement by giving written notice to the other party. The present agreement shall come into effect upon signature by both parties.

Signed in Copenhagen, 13 January 2012

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