



ALBANIA

Albania is a mountainous country in the Mediterranean region with about 70% of the land above 300m. Its over 3 million inhabitants are on average younger than the population of other European countries.

Projected climate changes include higher air temperature; increased frequency of extreme weather events; and a 20% decrease in water runoff with a reduction of up to 60% of power generation. A small increase in the absolute highest air temperature and decrease in the absolute lowest temperature have been observed from 1951–1990.¹ Air pollution episodes are expected to become more frequent in major cities.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

The consequences of heat-waves, floods, air pollution and changes in infectious diseases are the main health effects expected from climate change.

- A preliminary health impact assessment has shown that additional cardiovascular and respiratory deaths are expected from heat-waves during summer.
- An increase in extreme precipitations is aggravating water-related diseases, damage to health services, accidents and injuries.

- Affecting concentration and dispersion of pollutants, heat-waves frequency and intensity and an earlier onset of pollen seasons, climate change will further worsen air-related health problems in major cities. In the capital of Tirana, particulate matter concentrations are already much higher (348 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ as a 24-hour average) than the WHO air quality guideline values, and the prevalence of respiratory diseases is increasing (between 10% and 30% increase from 2001 to 2007). This may be a consequence of traffic increase and the use of small power generators.
- Albania is subject to disease outbreaks of tropical origin such as Chikungunya and dengue. Vectors transmitting these diseases are already present in some areas. Mosquito and rodent mapping is ongoing in the country.

PROTECTING HEALTH FROM CLIMATE CHANGE IN ALBANIA

To address and prevent potential health threats from climate change, the project *Protecting health from climate change in Albania* undertakes an assessment of the health impact, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change, as a basis for the development of a national health adaptation strategy.

Capacity-building activities, at national and sub-national level, are carried out to help improve the early identification of potential infectious disease risks and outbreaks and contribute to improve disease surveillance systems.

A leaflet developed by young journalists is disseminated among school children to increase awareness of climate change and health.



Specific national action aims at making hospitals safe in emergencies, in particular by strengthening emergency medical services, building further emergency management capacity, and providing guidance for a disaster-proofed health care infrastructure.

Activities also include improving air quality monitoring and reducing air pollution in Tirana, as well as contributing to WHO information platforms by sharing data, tools, results and lessons learnt.

This project fills an important gap in knowledge about the health effects of climate change and adaptation mechanisms. The first workshop on developing a climate change health protection strategy in Albania gave direction to policy action and strengthened the responsibilities of decision-makers and key technical experts.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH'S INCREASING AWARENESS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

Albanians are increasingly aware of the damage that climate change is doing to their health. National and local authorities, experts, civil society and the media are partners in the project to involve citizens in tackling climate change for the protection of their health and welfare. Children and youth are the key target audiences of this project, which aims at:

- training university students on climate change and health;
- carrying out school campaigns with dissemination of child-friendly leaflets;
- developing a children's game on climate change and health;
- launching an award for schoolchildren entitled "environmentally-friendly Tirana".

STRENGTHENING EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES: A TOOL FOR HEALTH ADAPTATION

For the first time, the medical management of health emergencies from extreme weather events is being addressed at the root level: 173 hospital and primary health care doctors and nurses were trained in emergency management. The trainees came from 12 of 36 districts.

They are now able to manage the health crises and consequences of extreme weather events by identifying and treating patients early to avoid deaths and severe health problems from heat-waves, floods, air pollution and infectious diseases; and using tools to make early and accurate decisions on diagnosis and treatment. In this way, they will make an important contribution to the implementation of Albania's national disaster plan.