



Geneva
Health
Forum



Project presentation

Improving indoor air quality: a public health issue

International Project

I. Who we are

Established in 2006 by Geneva University Hospitals (HUG) and the University of Geneva (UNIGE), the Geneva Health Forum (GHF) is a Swiss not-for-profit initiative that brings together a diverse range of stakeholders to discuss and address global health challenges. The GHF plays a pivotal role in the global health landscape, as a neutral and inclusive platform fostering exchanges and collaboration among key players in the field, including policymakers, academics, civil society actors, and the private sector..

Its core mission is to facilitate constructive dialogue among these global health actors. This in turn contributes to health policy improvements and healthcare access worldwide

For more information on our mission and governance, visit: <https://genevahealthforum.com>

II. What we do

The Geneva Health Forum, established in 2006 by the Geneva University Hospitals and the University of Geneva, is now a permanent platform dedicated to dialogue and action in global health. Initially created as a biennial conference, it has evolved since 2023 into a dynamic space for collaboration, developed in partnership with 24 international health organizations.

Its mission is to promote innovative practices and influence the public health agenda by fostering synergies among the many actors based in Geneva, beyond the World Health Organization. The Forum aims to highlight emerging challenges and innovative stakeholders, facilitate networking and collaboration, and develop concrete solutions while launching impactful initiatives.

Active throughout the year, the Forum organizes public events, leads thematic working groups, and takes part in major global gatherings such as the World Health Assembly, where it amplifies the voices of scientists and civil society actors. It also continues to host a thematic conference every two years.

Its work primarily focuses on health equity issues - particularly access to care and humanitarian challenges - as well as on the links between health and the environment. The Forum's ambition is to deliver tangible, measurable outcomes, going beyond being merely a platform for discussion

III. Our partners



IV. Improving Indoor Air Quality : A Public Health Issue

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of limiting the transmission of respiratory diseases. Airborne diseases, such as measles, COVID-19, and the flu, pose serious health threats. Understanding their transmission mechanisms and taking action on indoor air quality (IAQ) is essential to better protect ourselves.

We spend approximately 90% of our time breathing indoor air, which can be contaminated by various harmful substances such as mold, VOCs, or radon.

Numerous scientific studies have highlighted the impact of indoor air quality on health and productivity. Yet, many public spaces (schools, healthcare facilities, public transportation, gyms, and recreation centers) still fail to provide satisfactory air quality.

Just as the safety of drinking water and food is recognized as a public health priority, indoor air quality must receive the same attention. This issue deserves a central place on the global health agenda and should be included on the agenda of the World Health Assembly (WHA), the WHO's decision-making body that brings together 194 countries.

Technical solutions to measure and improve indoor air quality exist. It is our collective responsibility to promote their widespread implementation, notably through a WHA resolution dedicated to indoor air quality.

Project Objectives

- Demonstrate the importance of developing concrete public health strategies to combat airborne diseases and improve indoor air quality.
- Prepare plans for the adoption of a World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution to prioritize indoor air quality as a global public health issue. This Resolution can then guide evidence-based strategies and actions.

Key issues addressed in the collaboration

- Understanding the impact of exposure to indoor air pollutants
- Understanding the mechanisms of airborne diseases and their impact on health
- Highlighting the importance of improving indoor air quality to combat these diseases.
- Exploring innovations in source protection, such as recognizing viruses in the air or at the host.
- Identify solutions for air renewal, conditioning (humidification, dehumidification, Far-UVC, filtration) and indoor air quality monitoring.
- Developing a strategy for new construction and renovation of buildings that integrates indoor air quality, building temperature management (keeping out cold in winter and heat in summer), and building energy efficiency.
- Identifying Innovation in masks and facepiece respirators
- Determining what needs to be done for new buildings (state of the art), and for the refurbishment of old buildings, always with the aim of achieving climate targets.
- Identifying public health strategies to be implemented.

Planned activities

- Forming a multidisciplinary scientific committee with experts to define scientific issues, solution pathways and terms of reference
- Organizing international conferences on indoor air quality to mobilize stakeholders (academic, civil society, policymakers, media) and present scientific evidence supporting the development of a policy brief on improving indoor air
- Creating and disseminating a policy brief (5-page document based on arguments and recommendations identified by the International Scientific Committee on Indoor Air Quality and Public Health) to be promoted by Permanent Missions
- Identifying 3–5 Permanent Missions willing to carry the resolution and 10-15 Permanent Missions willing to support it, through advocacy and networking activities
- Support Permanent Missions in drawing up a first draft of the WHA Resolution, based on the policy brief on indoor air quality
- Support Permanent Missions in their campaign to convince the WHA Executive Board to put the resolution on the WHA agenda

Expected deliverables

- Establishment of European Conferences on Indoor Air Quality to promote Indoor Air awareness
- Development of a policy brief containing concrete recommendations for improving indoor air quality. A policy brief typically describes a public health problem, reviews the scientific evidence, and suggests action strategies. Its objective is to bridge the gap between research and policy, ensuring that public health decisions are evidence-based.
- Preparation of a World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution in favor of improving indoor air quality.

World Health Assembly Resolutions: A Powerful Instrument for Advancing Public Health

Resolutions presented by WHO Member States at the World Health Assembly are collective decisions that set priorities, provide guidance, and commit countries to action on public health issues.

They are not legally binding, but have strong political value.

These resolutions help coordinate international efforts, mobilize resources, and spur concrete action. They provide a platform to raise awareness of often-neglected health issues. As such, they are a key lever for concertedly advancing global health.

Partners



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First WHO Europe Conference on Indoor Air Quality

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023, BERN, SWITZERLAND

The First WHO Conference on Indoor Air Quality, held in Bern (Switzerland) in September 2023, addressed the pressing need to improve indoor environments for human health. This groundbreaking event brought together policymakers, scientists, and industry leaders to present evidence-based strategies for improving ventilation, reducing indoor pollutants, and achieving synergies between health, energy efficiency, and climate goals.

Discussions emphasized innovative solutions, regulatory frameworks, and actionable measures to create healthier indoor spaces. Supported by WHO Europe and featuring contributions from key figures such as WHO Regional Director for Europe Hans Kluge, the conference attracted over 1,000 participants (in-person and online). It marked a significant milestone in implementing science into policy dialogue on fostering resilient, sustainable, and health-focused indoor environments.

The conference highlighted five key points:

1. Indoor air quality (IAQ) is a major public health issue, far beyond the transmission of COVID-19.
2. Standards, ventilation strategies, and investments are essential to sustainably improve IAQ.
3. It is essential to translate scientific data into policies, based on evidence and transparency.
4. Cross-sectoral and international coordination is necessary to effectively address IAQ challenges.
5. Awareness-raising, occupant empowerment, and a flexible approach are key to successful implementation.

For more information: <https://improvingindoorairquality.genevahealthforum.com/first-who-europe-conference-on-indoor-air-quality/>



Second European Conference on Indoor Air Quality within French Schools

JUNE 20, 2025, PARIS, SWITZERLAND

The 2nd European Conference on Indoor Air Quality, held in Paris in June 2025, brought together experts in science, health, technology, economics, and policy, who concluded that improving air quality in schools is both a public health emergency and a strategic investment for the future.

Ten recommendations emerged from this conference, intended to guide action by the public and private sectors to make indoor air quality in schools an urgent national priority, to be implemented through a “Plan for Indoor Air Quality”:

1. Launch a multi-year national “Indoor Air” Plan with clear objectives, dedicated funding, and shared governance.
2. Deploy a national strategy for raising awareness and fostering citizen participation in IAQ in schools and educational institutions.
3. Train and support members of the educational community, elected officials, and local government staff on IAQ in schools and educational institutions.
4. Promote an integrated energy–climate–health approach to IAQ in schools and educational institutions.
5. Integrate indoor air quality into all projects for the maintenance, renovation, and construction of schools and educational institutions.
6. Make high-performance, energy-efficient ventilation systems standard in new construction and renovations.
7. Continuously monitor air quality in schools and educational institutions.
8. Update and harmonize ventilation standards by aligning them with European standards and requiring regular inspections.
9. Improve the outdoor environment around schools and reduce sources of pollution.
10. Launch an urgent parliamentary inquiry focused on indoor air quality in schools and educational institutions.

For more information: <https://improvingindoorairquality.genevahealthforum.com/2eme-conference-europeenne-sur-la-qualite-de-lair-interieur-les-ecoles-francaises/>



Upcoming European conferences on Indoor Air Quality (2026 – 2028)

- **October 30, 2026:** Third European conference on indoor air quality – Indoor Air Quality in Hospitals (Rome)
- **First quarter of 2027:** Fourth European conference on indoor air quality (Vienna)
- **October 2027:** Fifth European conference on indoor air quality (Geneva)
- **First quarter of 2028:** Sixth European conference on indoor air quality (Berlin)



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To learn more about how you can partner with us, please reach out to:

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