

Some long-term impacts of ISEE on professional work in Germany

As a graduate student of the University of California at Berkeley, I joined ISEE in early 1989. When the 2nd Annual ISEE Conference took place in Berkeley in 1990, I had been back in Germany nearly for a year, and with my colleagues was working to assist local health departments to access current and reliable information on environment and health. Based on our poster on a review of databases for use in health departments, we received strong encouragement for our work, i.e., the then emerging Noxious Agents Information System (NIS).

An update, "Dedicated environmental health information workplaces and networking in the European Union," was presented at the 8th ISEE Conference in Edmonton (Alberta) 1996, again eliciting highly useful responses. The NIS system spread throughout Germany (implemented in 500+ institutions), being updated and in use still today.

Another example of long-lasting positive influence goes back to the 10th ISEE Conference in Boston in 1998, where I attended a preconference workshop on integrated multimedia exposure modeling with sensitivity and uncertainty analysis. The workshop, together with other learning exposures, inspired our work back home in Germany, such as the fledgling Working Group on Probabilistic Exposure and Risk Analysis, which we had initiated in 1997. This group later on developed and conducted a major project on exposure factors (Xprob), and is still up and running, providing a well-accepted forum for exchange and debate.

A third example refers to monitoring and surveillance. Inspired by, inter alia, discussions at ISEE, we held an Environmental Health Surveillance workshop in Germany in March 1997, co-sponsored by WHO's European Centre for Environment and Health (then in Bilthoven, NL). There was "very good input from CDC and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; ISEE contacts had helped to arrange for this," as I noted in the circular letter #3 of the Policy and Planning Working Group. Workshop results are reflected in a book publication of 1999.

My most intensive benefit from ISEE refers to the field of policy and planning. It was a challenging but rewarding experience to initiate in 1996, and for several years also to chair, the Policy and Planning Working Group as described in a separate essay.

The involvement in ISEE helped my former institute to refine the expertise in scientifically assisting health-policy making. This was useful throughout our institutional metamorphoses, and contributed to the institute being awarded the status of WHO Collaborating Centre for Regional Health Policy and Public Health in 2008. For my own professional development, I recognize the ISEE involvement as both rewarding and enjoyable.

Rainer Fehr, Dr.med., MPH, PhD

Emeritus co-director, Centre for Health North Rhine-Westphalia (LZG.NRW) Bielefeld – Bochum – Münster, Germany

*Formerly director of WHO Collaborating Centre for Regional Health Policy and Public Health
Professor of Public Health, Universität Bielefeld, Bielefeld, Germany*

rainer.fehr@uni-bielefeld.de

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