



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
Scientific Committee on History of Prevention of Occupational and Environmental Diseases

8th International Conference on the History of Occupational and Environmental Health
Wednesday 15th - Friday 17th of April 2026, Leuven, Belgium

Introduction

Recognizing the rich history of occupational and environmental health

The Scientific Committee on the History of Prevention of Occupational and Environmental Diseases, part of the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH), is pleased to welcome you to the 8th International Conference on the History of Occupational and Environmental Health. The conference is arranged by the Centre for Environment and Health, KU Leuven, Belgium and the Research group of Social Epidemiology & Health Policy, UAntwerpen, Belgium.

The scientific program focuses on the importance of taking into account the history of occupational and environmental health. Throughout history, occupational and environmental health has been influenced by a wide range of factors. Technological advances and socio-economic changes have introduced new hazards, altered the patterns of established diseases, and given rise to entirely novel conditions. Occupational health practitioners, researchers, workers' and other social movements have been instrumental in recognizing sentinel health events, identifying disease causes, and advancing prevention efforts. However, progress has often faced delays due to vested interests. Historical insights might play an important role in shaping current and future practices in occupational and environmental health.

The conference intends to promote interconnections among historians, social scientists and occupational and environmental practitioners/researchers.

The conference is supported by the Collegium Ramazzini, KU Leuven, the City of Leuven, ICOH and the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO).

This will be the 8th edition of the conference with previous meetings held in Rome (Italy) 1998, Norrköping (Sweden) 2001, Birmingham (UK) 2007, San Francisco (US) 2010, Rotterdam (The Netherlands) 2014, Gothenburg (Sweden) 2017, and Durban (South Africa) 2023.

Email: info@icohhistory2026.org

Website: <https://laislanetwork.org/events/icoh-history-2026/>

Scientific Organising Committee

- Steven Ronsmans (KU Leuven; University of Leuven, Belgium), conference chair
- Jason Glaser (La Isla Network), chair of the ICOH History Scientific Committee
- Rajen Naidoo (University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa), secretary of the ICOH History Scientific Committee
- Paul Blanc (University of California - San Francisco, US)
- Michele Riva (University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy)
- Robin Debo (ETWIE, Expertise Center for Technical, Scientific and Industrial Heritage, Ghent, Belgium)
- Catherine Cavalin (CNRS, France)
- Alfredo Menéndez Navarro (University of Granada, Spain)
- Ben Nemery (KU Leuven, Belgium)
- Kjell Torén (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)
- Kristina Jakobson (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)
- Julia Moses (University of Sheffield, UK)
- Lidia Casas (UAntwerpen, University of Antwerp, Belgium)



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Preliminary Conference programme (version 07.11.2025)

Wednesday 15 April 2026

Pre-conference programme: Exhibition, movie or historical library collection visit

Start of the conference

12h45 – 13h00 **Introduction** to the conference

13h00 – 13h50: **Keynote lecture 1:** Bernard Thomann

- Title: "Mine worker studies of silicosis by medical and social experts in Japan from the 1920s through the 1960s"

13h50 – 14h50: **Plenary Session:** thematic session with oral presentations

14h50 – 15h20: Break

15h20 – 16h10: **Keynote lecture 2:** Judith Rainhorn

- Title: "How Industrial Work Democratized Beauty and Its Toxic Burden. A Tale of Colour and Poison in 19th-Century European Cities"

16h10 – 17h10: **Plenary Session:** thematic session with oral presentations

18h00: **Opening reception @ Jubileumzaal KU Leuven**

Thursday 16 April 2026

09h00 – 09h50: **Keynote lecture 4:** Gregory Wilson

Preliminary title: "The History and Legacy of Virginia's Kepone Disaster"

09h50 – 10h15: Break

10h15 – 12h15: **Mini-symposium:**

- Theme: "Citizen Science and the History of Occupational Health"
- Chairs: Catherine Cavalin and Alfredo Menéndez
- This mini-symposium will explore how historical research can engage non-academic audiences, including workers and trade unions, through citizen science models. Recent examples will be provided, such as the involvement of Spanish trade unions and victim associations in the struggle for compensation and recognition, and against industrial interests.

12h15 – 13h15: Lunch

13h15 – 14h05: **Keynote lecture 3:** Laurent Vogel

- Preliminary title: "The history and present of the Italian workers' model"

14h10 – 16h00: **Poster session** (with walkthrough + presentations)

16h00 – 16h30: Break

16h30 – 17h15: **Parallel or Plenary session:** presentation related to the theme of the mini-symposium



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17h30 – 18h30: **ICOH Scientific Committee business meeting**
19h00: **Conference diner @ Veilingzaal Leuven**

Friday 17 April 2026:

09h00 – 09h50: **Keynote lecture 5:** Stefania Barca
○ Title: The invisible labours of the Great Acceleration (1950 to present):
housework and the struggle against industrial toxicity

09h50 – 10h15: Break

10h15 – 12h15: **Parallel or plenary sessions**

12h15 – 13h15: Lunch

13h00 – 13h50: **Keynote lecture 6:** Iva Peša
○ Title: "Pollution and Environmental Lifeworlds: Occupational Health and
Environmental Wellbeing on the Zambian Copperbelt"

13h50 – 14h50: **Parallel or plenary sessions**

14h50 – 15h30: **Closing panel**