



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, La Isla Network, 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 27.01.2026)

Wednesday 15 April 2026

Throughout the entire conference @ Cuvreur Zaal

- **Exhibition** on Occupational Health in Belgian Museum Collections
- **Book table:** with recently published books + option for participants to display their publications
- **Posters**

12h15–12h45: **Registrations**

12h45–13h00: **Introduction** to the conference: Steven Ronsmans, Jason Glaser

13h00–13h50: **Keynote lecture 1:** Bernard Thomann (France)

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

13h50–14h50: **Plenary session 1:** Chairs: Bernard Thomann, Jason Glaser

Conflicting perspectives on toxic exposure and prevention in the 20th century

14h50–15h20: Break

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

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

16h10–17h10: **Plenary session 2:** Chairs: Judith Rainhorn, Robin Debo

Archives of work and health: Preserving and presenting occupational health heritage

17h10–17h20: Introduction to the exhibition: Robin Debo

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

Thursday 16 April 2026

09h00–09h50: **Keynote lecture 3:** Gregory Wilson (US)

The Kepone Disaster in Virginia and its Legacy

Chair: Alfredo Menéndez

09h50–10h15: Break

10h15–12h15: **Plenary session 3:** Chairs: Catherine Cavalin and Alfredo Menéndez

Mini-symposium — *Contested science, citizen and workers-driven movements in occupational health. The case of engineered stone*

This mini-symposium examines the role of historical and sociological research in engaging non-academic actors—particularly workers, trade unions and affected communities—in the co-production of knowledge on occupational health, drawing on traditions of action research and citizen science. It takes as its central case study the ongoing global epidemic of silicosis and systemic diseases associated with exposure to crystalline silica in the



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engineered stone (ES) industry, understood as a paradigmatic instance of contested occupational illness.

10h15—10h35: Alfredo Menéndez-Navarro

Action research and occupational health: a historical perspective

10h35—10h55: Catherine Cavalin

The IRP PIEDRA: an original format for shared knowledge production

10h55—11h15: Mari Carmen Macías and Francisco Aragón Velázquez (ANAES, Spanish National Association of People Suffering from Silicosis)

Experiencing contested illness and under-recognition

11h15—11h45: Liam O'Brian (Australian Council of Trade Unions), Tony Musu (European Trade Union Institute), and Oscar Bayona (Comisiones Obreras)

Organised action: science, labour and precaution

11h45—12h15: Conclusions and open debate

12h15—13h15: Lunch

13h15—14h05: **Keynote lecture 4:** Laurent Vogel (Belgium)

The history and present of the Italian workers' model

14h10—15h10: **Plenary session 4:** Chairs: Laurent Vogel, Rajen Naidoo

Worker participation in health and safety

15h10—15h30: Break

15h30—16h00: **Poster talks 1:** Chair: Kjell Torén

National perspectives on the history of occupational health and safety regulation

16h00—16h30: **Poster talks 2:** Chair: Paul Blanc

Historical perspectives of occupational health inequities

Occupational and environmental medicine as specialties

16h30—17h30: **Posters**

17h30—18h30: **ICOH Scientific Committee business meeting**

19h00: **Conference diner @** Veilingzaal Leuven



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Friday 17 April 2026:

09h00–09h50: **Keynote lecture 5:** Stefania Barca (Spain)

The invisible labours of the Great Acceleration (1950 to present): housework and the struggle against industrial toxicity

09h50–10h15: Break

10h15–12h15: **Plenary session 5:** Chairs: Stefania Barca and Benoit Nemery

Dangerous trades around the world

12h15–13h15: Lunch

13h15–14h05: **Keynote lecture 6:** Iva Peša (The Netherlands)

Pollution and Environmental Lifeworlds: Occupational Health and Environmental Wellbeing on the Zambian Copperbelt

14h05–15h05: **Plenary session 6:** Chairs: Iva Peša and Kristina Jakobsson

Beyond the factory door: from occupational exposure to environmental pollution

15h05–15h30: **Closing session and panel**

Jason Glaser (La Isla Network, US): *Extreme Heat and Kidney Disease: How LIN used history to help crack the case of CKDnt/CKDu and save lives*

Panel discussion: Benoit Nemery, Kristina Jakobson, Rajen Naidoo