RESEARCH

Joan Ballester Obtains a 'Proof of Concept' Grant from the European Research Council (ERC)

The ISGlobal researcher will develop an operational early warning system for the impact of environmental temperatures on human health

07.02.2022

SHARE

Joan Ballester has been one of the 166 researchers awarded by the European Research Council (ERC) with one of the 'Proof of Concept' grants. These grants are reserved for scientists with a current ERC project and are designed as complementary funding to transform the pioneering research of the parent project into innovation aimed at solving major societal challenges.

Joan Ballester applied for this call with the **Heat-Health-Social Early Warning System (HHS-EWS)** project, which aims to create a novel operational **early warning system for environmental temperatures that incorporates the real risks to**

people's health, especially that of the most vulnerable populations. The system aims to transform the predictability of atmospheric variables into health predictions using epidemiological models specifically designed for the most vulnerable social groups.

"Ambient temperatures are associated with **more than 5 million annual deaths globally, 300,000 of which in Western Europe** alone. Many European countries have implemented heat early warning systems, but they are generally based on temperature thresholds from weather forecasts that do not account for the inequalities in vulnerability of the exposed populations," explains Joan Ballester.

Along with the early warning system for potential health impacts of environmental temperatures, HHS-EWS plans to incorporate mechanisms to better inform end-users, including public health agencies, with the aim of **timely activation of emergency plans directly targeting vulnerable groups**.

The ERC Proof-of-Concept are €150,000 grants intended to transform the theoretical research of the parent project into high-risk but potentially high-benefit innovations. In this case, the innovation aims to increase society's resilience to climate change, building on the theoretical research in epidemiology and social sciences being carried out in the context of the ERC Consolidator Grant **EARLY-ADAPT** ("Signs of Early Adaptation to Climate Change", 2021-2026). This project aims to study how populations are adapting to the public health challenges triggered by climate change.

More information about the project, the group and the researcher can be found at **https://early-adapt.eu/**.