
RESEARCH, URBAN PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Joan Ballester Awarded European Research Council Grant for Outstanding Researcher

The ERC grant money will be used to fund EARLY-ADAPT, an investigation of the impact of climate change adaptation on human health

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Photo: ISGlobal

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The European Research Council (ERC), a body created to encourage quality research throughout Europe based on scientific excellence, has **awarded a Consolidator Grant to Joan Ballester**, a researcher at the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal), a centre supported by "la Caixa". Worth **two million euro**, the grant will fund the **EARLY ADAPT (Signs of Early Adaptation to Climate Change)** project over the coming five years. This

study was designed to investigate how the European population is adapting to the public health challenges triggered by climate change.

The primary purpose of ERC Consolidator Grants is to support excellent researchers at a point in their professional careers when they are building up their own teams or research programmes. Applicants must demonstrate that their **scientific proposal is groundbreaking, ambitious and daring**, as well as viable. Ballester's project, notable because of its transdisciplinary nature, was one of the 78 proposals **selected from 670 applications submitted in the domain of Social Sciences and Humanities**.

Unravelling Human Adaptation to Climate Change

“Our societies are starting to adapt to climate change,” Ballester explains, “but the effectiveness of these early adaptations varies from place to place and over time”. EARLY-ADAPT will take the form of a single, **integrated analysis** of a wide range of **different factors (climate, environmental, social, economic and demographic)**. The aim is to identify the populations that are already adapting to climate change, the extent of that adaptation and the factors that explain the variations observed. The analysis will be based on data collected since 1980 at different levels, ranging from country level to municipal districts, and each factor will be analysed at its respective level of influence. “By studying all this information,” he adds, “we will be able to detect, understand and identify variations in vulnerability and adaptation to climate change across the countries, regions, cities, districts and social groups studied”.

The project will consist of four phases: data collection; an analysis of the associations between health and environmental factors, **such as climate and air pollution**; a study of how social, economic and demographic factors affect these associations; and, finally, the development of **realistic future projections** based on the findings of the analysis.

“Our overarching goal is to produce realistic estimates of the impact of each one of the factors analysed on climate change adaptation,” explains Ballester. “The only way we can do that is through a comprehensive **analysis including all of the factors**. But we won't stop there. If we can achieve a good understanding of the mechanisms responsible for adaptation, we will be able to predict **how changes in environmental, socioeconomic and demographic factors will affect future populations**. A better understanding of the mechanisms of climate change adaptation will allow us to create future projections of current trends and this will, in turn, afford us an advance preview of the real impact of these adaptations and an

insight into how vulnerable we will be in the coming decades.

Joan Ballester received a PhD. in Climate and Health from the University of Barcelona in 2011. His doctoral thesis focused on the study of climate variability and predictability on human health in the current context of climate change. He has since obtained three Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral fellowships for work undertaken in the United States and Europe and has received two grants from the European Commission's **Horizon 2020 programme**. He is currently a Ramón y Cajal researcher.

More information about this researcher and his project: <http://www.joanballester.eu>

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