

ZeroPM

WEBINAR ANNOUNCEMENT

Environmental psychology perspective on mitigating environmental pollution: from perceptions to behavioural outcomes

Date: 22nd October 2025

Time: 14.00 – 15.00 CET

Zoom link: https://us05web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_GPD0H7piRRaaBUdGOjpN8g

Prevent



Policy



Chemicals



Products
and uses

This webinar

Societal perceptions and behaviours contribute in different ways to both environmental pollution and mitigation. Public risk perception, for example, plays a role in consumer decisions and public support of alternative products, measures and policies. Understanding these societal processes has implications for risk management, communication and ultimately trust and reputation regarding diverse actors in the system, such as governments and industry.

In this webinar we report insights from the SOSZERO-POL2030 project (<https://soszeropol2030.eu/>), which takes a comparative approach by studying microplastics (MP), per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), excess nutrients and underwater noise as pollutants of European seas. We conducted a large-scale quantitative survey across five European countries (N = 5,206; Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland and the Netherlands) to assess citizens' perceptions and behavioral intentions regarding these different environmental pollutants. For the present webinar we will focus on MP and PFAS as the more relevant pollutants for the ZeroPM project audience.

First, we report perceived levels of risk across the five countries, determine the relative importance of different socio-psychological factors in risk perception of the pollutants, and identify both differences and similarities across pollutants with respect to associations with socio-psychological factors. Second, we will introduce and explore how psychological theories can enhance our interpretation of environmental risk perception and behavioral intentions. In particular, we will present an extended application of the Value-Belief-Norm theory (VBN). According to VBN, personal values – biospheric, altruistic, and egoistic – shape environmental beliefs and perceptions, which in turn activate personal norms, or a sense of moral responsibility to take action, that consequently triggers behaviors. Further, we will test additional factors not included in the original model, specifically the role of emotions and personal experiences that are increasingly recognised as key drivers of information processing and behaviour in the context of environmental risks.

To conclude, we will discuss the pros and cons of our methodologies and draw out implications for interdisciplinary research as well as for risk communication and public engagement in a fast-moving evidence landscape. We will end with a summary of key behavioural drivers and pathways for environmental pollution and mitigation and highlight research gaps.

The speakers

Nina Vaupotic is a postdoctoral researcher in the Environmental Psychology Group at the University of Vienna specializing in science and risk communication, with a particular focus on how people perceive the risks of various environmental pollutants—ranging from PFAS and microplastics to 5G technologies. Her research combines large-scale cross-country surveys, experimental designs, and qualitative methods to better understand public attitudes and beliefs.

Valeria Vitale is a postdoctoral researcher in the Environmental Psychology Group at the University of Vienna. She contributes to two Horizon Europe projects investigating public perceptions of environmental risks. Her research focuses on the predictors of behavioral mitigation strategies for environmental pollution, on misperceptions and factors influencing the perceived sensitivity to electromagnetic fields from 5G technology, as well as emotion regulation strategies in different contexts.

Sabine Pahl is Professor of Environmental Psychology and Co-Director of the Environment and Climate Research Hub at the University of Vienna. She investigates risk perceptions, communication and behaviour change, particularly in the context of environmental pollutants and the science-policy interface. She also works on the restorative effects of natural environments including the use of natural environments in healthcare.

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