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Waste management is a complex process, ranging from formation of waste to its collection and transport and to its processing and disposal. There are thousands of workers and diverse populations involved;

chemicals that are generated by waste disposal can contaminate the environment, and many of the substances are toxic to humans.

The results of epidemiological studies, however, are often used in an instrumental way to support different thesis, since the waste sector is at the center of big controversy and strong economic interests, often in contradiction. Furthermore, waste treatment facilities are located in a particularly complex geographical and environmental context, in close proximity to urban and industrial centers, fact that further complicates the assessment of the real contribution of these facilities on the quality of air, soil, water and, consequently, of possible effects on the health of the concerned population - workers and residents.

The ERAS Lazio program was created because of the awareness that scientific evidence concerning the health effects of waste treatment plants is still inadequate. Another fact is that information about the quality and quantity of substances emitted, the technology used and the type of the treated waste is not yet exhaustive.

As planned by the Regional Directorate for Energy and Waste, ERAS Lazio is a program of environmental epidemiology, coordinated by the Department of Epidemiology of the Regional Health Service in collaboration with the Regional Agency for Environmental Protection (ARPA) of the Lazio Region. The program is aided by the collaboration with the ARPA of the Emilia-Romagna Region with the experience gained by the latter in the project Monitor (<http://www.arpa.emr.it/monitor/>). The program ERAS Lazio has been set up under the Regional Law DGR n. 929/08 and article 34 of the Regional Budget Law n.31/2008.

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