The accident which occurred in the night of 25 to 26 April 1986 in reactor 4 of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Ukraine released considerable amounts of radioactive substances in the environment. Outside of the former USSR, the highest levels of contamination were recorded in Austria, Greece and Romania, followed by other countries of Central and Southeast Europe.

Studies of the health consequences of the accident have been carried out in these countries as well as in other countries in Europe. This paper presents the results of a systematic and critical review of studies of the general population in Europe, carried out on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl accident. The primary focus of this paper is cancer, the major long term consequence of radiation exposure expected, although studies of pregnancy outcome in these countries are briefly outlined. Overall, there is little evidence of a major public health impact of the accident in countries of Europe outside the former USSR.