

European Environment and Health Process

Position Paper Eco Forum, WECF and HEAL

Mid-Term Review, Haifa/Israel, April 2015

The Environment and Health Process

The European Environment and Health Process (EEHP) was initiated by European countries in the early 1980s to eliminate the most significant environmental risks to human health. Progress towards this goal is driven by a series of ministerial conferences held every five years and coordinated by WHO Europe. The Parma Declaration, the result of the 5th Ministerial Conference which took place in 2010 in Parma/Italy, is the first time-bound outcome of the environment and health process. It builds on the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan (CEHAPE) adopted in 2004. Within the Parma declaration, governments of the 53 European Member States set clear-cut targets to reduce the adverse health impact of environmental threats in the next decade. On the way towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in 2017, the Mid-Term Review taking place in Haifa/Israel in April 2015 will set topics for the upcoming conference.

The Mid-Term review will look at progress for the existing Regional Priority Goals focused on child health, as well as emerging issues to be addressed in the future.

The Regional Priority Goals are:

Regional Priority Goal 1: Ensuring public health by improving access to safe water and sanitation

Regional Priority Goal 2: Addressing obesity and injuries through safe environments, physical activity and healthy diet

Regional Priority Goal 3: Preventing disease through improved outdoor and indoor air quality

Regional Priority Goal 4: Preventing disease arising from chemical, biological and physical environments



Where are we now?

Eco Forum, HEAL, WECF International and undersigned signatories see the EEH Process as being unique, bringing together different relevant actors, especially environment and health ministries, to shape European policies and actions on the increasing problems of environment and health. We can only solve the increasing problems we have today in our region on environmental health when both the environment and health sector work together. In the last years, achievements have been obtained, but much more effort is required:

- Thousands of schools in rural areas of the EECCA region continue to lack access to indoor hygienic toilets and often lack safe drinking water.
- In more than 15 countries from the EECCA region and South-Eastern European region, asbestos continues to be commercially promoted as building material.
- Children and pregnant women – who are the most vulnerable to environmental exposure and in particular hazardous chemicals – continue to lack sufficient protection and information on avoiding such exposures.
- Chronic Diseases, such as cancer and diabetes, linked to endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs), are on the rise throughout the entire European Region.

Future of the EEHP – Our recommendations

Urgent action of policy makers implementing all time bound targets and RPGs is needed. Make this a policy and budget priority till 2016. Commit to concrete actions to achieve in particular unfinished targets on:

- Fast action to legislate and inform on eliminating children's and pregnant women's exposures to harmful chemical substances by 2015, including:
 - Precautionary measures to halt exposure to Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals and Nano-materials
 - Outdoor air pollution from transport, industry including coal fired power plants
 - Effective implementation of the national plans to eliminate asbestos-related diseases
 - Achieving a healthy and tobacco smoke-free indoor air environment in settings for children by 2015
 - Creating healthy and safe environments for children, such as encouraging walking and biking to school and more green spaces to play and exercise, which will also help to prevent injuries by 2020
 - Achieving safe water and sanitation in schools and other children settings by 2015.
- Policy makers should use **the latest science, the estimates of costs of inaction and the potential health economic benefits to drive precautionary policies** in a more systematic way to reduce people's exposure to pollution across the range of Parma commitments and environmental health challenges.
 - **Informing and consulting with civil society on EHP.** National environment and health focal points should set up webpages, webinars, surveys and stakeholder consultations to inform and consult with a wide range of actors.
 - **Inclusion of environment and health NGOs as observers in the European Environment and Health Ministerial board**, as has been the case with youth representation, and provision of funding for their participation.
 - **New topics** should include the following areas:
 - energy and health; including fracking, coal power generation and energy efficiency
 - local, sustainable and nutritious agricultural and food production
 - urban environments
 - mechanisms for responses to early warnings
 - pesticides
 - prenatal and early exposure
 - **Reviewing and revising tax investment rulings** and trade agreements to ensure transparency, accountability, and to prevent any loss of tax revenue or weakening of Europe's laws protecting public health and environment.

Endorsing NGOs

Action for Breast Cancer Foundation, Malta
Alborada Foundation, Spain
Alliance for Cancer prevention, United Kingdom
Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment, AWHHE, Armenia
ÄrztInnen für eine gesunde Umwelt, AeGU, ISDE Austria, Austria
Association Internationale de la Mutualité (AIM), Belgium
Breast Cancer UK, United Kingdom
Center of Environmental Solutions, Belarus
Charitable Women, Armenia
Clean Air Action Group, Hungary
Danish Ecological Council, Denmark
Eco Accord, Russia
Ecolife, Azerbaijan
ECO-TIRAS International Association of River Keepers Chisinau, Moldova
EFA European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations, Belgium
Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), United Kingdom
European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Belgium
European Lung Foundation, United Kingdom
European Respiratory Society, ERS, Belgium
Fédération Inter-Environnement Wallonie, France
Health & Environment Alliance, HEAL, Belgium
"Jabagly Manas" Mountain Club, Kazakhstan
Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania
Kyrgyz Alliance for Water and Sanitation, Kyrgyzstan
Milieukontakt International, Albania
Quercus – National Association for Nature Conservation, Portugal
Women Against Nuclear Power, Finland
Women in Europe for a Common Future, WECF, France
Women in Europe for a Common Future, WECF, Germany
Women in Europe for a Common Future, WECF, Netherlands

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“ Without policy coherence the challenges of our times cannot be overcome, take the example of hazardous chemicals and its health impacts; we need the ministry of health to take preventive health measures in particular for children and pregnant women, we need the environment ministry to regulate harmful chemicals, ensuring mandatory substitution and transparent consumer information, and we need the ministries of economics and agriculture to align their policies for an overall reduction of toxics in processing. The EEHP process helps to set targets and ensure inter-ministerial cooperation. ”

Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director, Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF).

“ The European Environment and Health Process began by ensuring the integration of environment and health policies and is now promoting their integration into other sectors’ policies. This is vital for public health and sustainable development - but the problems faced in achieving this are very complex. By offering a unique platform for countries to share evidence, policies and experiences, EEHP ensures that „what works“ is promoted and the repetition of mistakes is avoided. It means that national ministries do not have to try and deal with these challenges on their own. It provides non-governmental organisations with an opportunity to challenge governments on commitments they have made, and to promote the progressive positions of national governments, such as those of Denmark, France, Sweden, Belgium and others on chemicals.”

Genon Jensen, Executive Director, Health and Environment (HEAL).

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