



Putting health at the centre of environment issues

EPHA Environment Network

About EEN

Who we are:

An international non-governmental organisation providing a platform for representatives of networks and groups from the not-for-profit sector to share information and expertise, develop joint strategies, and advocate for environmental protection as a means to improving health and well being.

EEN was launched as an initiative of member organisations of the European Public Health Alliance, an umbrella organisation of more than 90 networks and organisations working to promote health at the European level. It has already attracted commitments from new members in the health and environment sector.

Policy priorities are decided at its annual meeting and implemented by the Executive Committee. EEN aims to harness the expertise needed to push health and environment policy up the political agenda.

What we aim to do:

- Make European citizens and NGOs more aware of policy changes that can help or hinder progress towards sustainable development.
- Support the participation of citizens in policy making at the European level and represent their concerns.
- Strengthen EU policies in favour of better protection of health and the environment.
- Link significant research findings to recommendations on policy action.

What we can do for you:

- Keep you informed about what the national and international agencies are doing to tackle environmental health issues.
- Ensure your organisation is part of the independent voice on health and environmental issues in Europe.
- Offer a platform in which you help to create the vision needed to achieve a safer environment for health, and to develop joint campaigns to achieve change.
- Create opportunities for your organisation to showcase its work.

What members say about us:

“As an independent health and environment network, EEN is a vital counterbalance to powerful industry lobbies in Brussels.”

Marie Kranendonk, Women in Europe for a Common Future

“EEN is helping us combine the messages of different health and environment groups to create a vision.”

Fiona Godfrey, European Respiratory Society

“Being a member of EEN gives us new arguments for advocacy.”

Paul de Raeve, Standing Committee of Nurses of the EU (PCN)

“EEN can help defeat the denial that health is linked to environmental factors.”

Maureen Butter, Dutch Monitoring Group for Health and Environment

Who can join us:

Two types of organisations:

- **Full members** are non-governmental organisations whether local (community, district, etc.), regional, national, European or international.
- **Associate members** are other not-for-profit organisations and professional bodies, such as academic institutions and professional associations, government authorities and non-statutory agencies.

To join immediately visit www.env-health.org

How we are financed:

The main sources of support are currently DG Environment of the European Commission, and membership fees.

A SAFER ENVIRONMENT MEANS BETTER HEALTH

What we eat, drink, the air we breathe, and the way we live are all inextricably linked to our environment and our health. By improving our environment we improve everyone's health.

• **EAT**

Overuse of pesticides and other toxics means we are exposed to traces of harmful chemicals in the food chain, some of which are accumulating in our bodies.

Health effects of these toxics include damage to the immune system, the reproductive organs and various forms of cancer. Chemicals can cause physical and mental development problems in children.

- *Phase out harmful chemicals and pesticides used to produce the food we eat.*
- *Adopt strong EU chemical safety legislation, known as REACH.*
- *Inform consumers of these health effects.*

• **BREATHE**

Smoke from tobacco and cooking and heating appliances, and from the dust created by

disintegrating building materials containing asbestos or lead, are the main causes of indoor air pollution, where people now spend 90% of their time. Clean air, both indoors and out, is vital to health.

Asbestos fibres and over 60 chemicals in tobacco smoke are known or suspected carcinogens. Lead and other heavy metals are known to affect children's mental development.

- *Develop guidelines on indoor air quality to reduce the levels of toxins.*
- *Ensure ratification of WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.*
- *Ban comprehensively the use of lead and asbestos in all building material.*

• **MOVE**

The primacy of the private car, combined with our modern inactive lifestyles, results in poor physical fitness, obesity, air pollution, and too many road accidents.

Up to 30% of the population in some member states of the EU is clinically obese leading to risks of heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Air pollution is also responsible for respiratory diseases and heart attacks, and may cause cancer. It also presents a major problem for asthmatics. Road traffic accidents in the 25 countries of the EU cause around 40,000 deaths a year and many more hospitalisations. Vulnerable groups, including children are disproportionately affected.

- *Prioritise and promote public transport, walking, and cycling as means of transport.*
- *Ensure adequate implementation of EU air quality legislation.*
- *Convert the EU Urban Strategy into concrete actions that prioritise health.*

• **PARTICIPATE**

To achieve a sustainable and just future for all, we must ensure that all Europe's citizens have an opportunity for informed involvement in EU environmental decision-making processes. The health of disadvantaged people and children, who face barriers in articulating their views, is more likely to improve if their perspectives and views become more widely heard.

- *Promote the Aarhus Convention on the right to information, effective participation in decision-making, and access to justice under the law.*
- *Ensure ratification and implementation of all international health and environment agreements.*
- *Join EEN for sources of information and opportunities to participate in campaigns.*

The mission of the EPHA Environment Network is to protect the European environment as a means to promoting the health of all people living in Europe and to ensure the participation of citizens in environment and health-related policy making at the European level.

Facts:

- Environmental factors contribute an estimated 30% to the total burden of disease.
- Europeans carry in their body fluids 500 chemicals that did not exist in people living before the 1920s.
- Allergies are increasingly prevalent. By 2015, half of all Europeans may be suffering from an allergy.
- The brain development of Europe's youth is being stunted by lead poisoning. A recent survey showed that up to 30% of urban children have elevated levels of lead in their blood.
- The combined costs to health of road traffic accidents and air pollution exceed 2% of GDP in EU countries.

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