

Environment and health



Given the strategic discussions on setting EU environment and health priorities until 2020, HEAL worked to ensure environmental health prevention and measures were firmly embedded in the 7th Environment Action Programme (7EAP).

We also helped bring the health impacts of noise levels to EU discussions, and started the first-ever health and environment film prize at the 30th International Film Festival in Paris.

7EAP - health becomes a priority

Timeline

• April 2012

HEAL initiates joint open letter from a health coalition to EU environmental ministers.

• May 2012

HEAL's toolkit for the Commission's 7EAP public consultation achieves record input from public interest groups including the Standing Committee of European Doctors, asthma, allergy and cancer groups, as well as consumers and trade unions.

• June 2012

HEAL congratulates environment ministers for their Council conclusions which include health priorities.

The June 2012 Environment Council conclusions include a call to the Commission for the following priorities to be included in the 7EAP

- Reduce exposure to EDCs, especially for children

- Assess how combination effects of hazardous chemicals may be harming us
- Reduce peoples' exposure to chemicals in daily products
- Reduce noise
- Improve air quality
- Monitor the pollutants in our body.

• December 2012

HEAL reacts to Commission's 7EAP proposal – environmental health could do better.

• January – March 2013

HEAL and members meet with MEPs and Member States' representatives to provide expertise for European Parliament and Council responses to 7EAP.

Health and environment film prize launched

As part of its 10th year anniversary celebration, HEAL initiated the health and environment prize at the 30th International Environmental Film Festival (FIFE) in Paris, which reached out to over 14,000 viewers through the films and information provided by HEAL's grassroots French members, including a dedicated brochure (below).



The jury for the health and environment film prize included a film maker, two leading international health and environment scientists, the leaders of two major European networks and representatives of two leading French non-governmental organisations addressing health and environmental issues.



Winning US film maker Ed Brown (above) receiving the award for his documentary film "Unacceptable levels", which addresses the theme of chemicals that are invading our environment and puts practical questions to the audience about these substances and where they are found.



Judges from left to right: Yannick Vicaire, Réseau Environnement Santé (RES); Nadine Lauverjat, Générations Futures; Sylvie Gilman, Independent documentary film director; Sascha Gabizon, Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF); Sylvia Medina, French Institute for Public Health Surveillance (InVS); Monika Kosinska, European Public Health Alliance (EPHA); and, Robert Barouki, French National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM). Judges participated in their personal capacity.

Croatia's EU accession – capacity building

In July 2013, Croatia became the 28th member of the European Union (EU). Throughout 2012, HEAL worked with Croatian NGO, Zelena akcija, a member of Friends of the Earth Europe (FoEE), to build up a rich exchange to highlight the benefits of EU membership for people's health.

This project drew on HEAL's networks and resources developed at a capacity building workshop for the Croatian health and medical community in 2006, and particularly involved HEAL members: the Croatian Nurses Association and PIN for Health.

Prevention of chronic disease highlighted in EU public consultation

In April 2012 HEAL and many public health and medical groups responded to the EU Commission (DG SANCO) public consultation on the future of EU and national measures to tackle chronic diseases.



Loukas Georgiou, representing the Cyprus EU Presidency, informs on EU health ministers work on chronic diseases, including prevention measures that address protection at early stages of life. (HEAL Annual General Assembly 2012).

Do EU noise laws go far enough?

As discussions on new EU vehicle noise standards were heating up in the European Parliament, HEAL made significant contributions to the discussions both directly to policy makers through personal contact and during a meeting organised in the European Parliament, as part of its partnership with Transport and Environment (T&E). This partnership also developed a briefing, a joint statement on traffic noise signed by 16 NGOs, and a video (above) to raise policy makers' and public awareness on the issue.



For International Noise Awareness Day, HEAL jointly promoted a video with T&E and EEB on what citizens think about noise. The video is available on YouTube.

EFSA should reform

On the 10th anniversary of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), HEAL joined a platform of civil society groups led by Corporate Europe Observatory to present EFSA with ideas for reforming the agency. These included preventing conflicts of interest, improving its transparency and accountability, and ensuring wider scientific participation in its work.



Brussels journalist asks an EFSA official whether the time for reform is ripe.

MEDIA COVERAGE

The European example: What have we learned about Health and the Environment?, San Francisco Medical Journal, June 2012

Disappointment over EP vote on noise limits, Europolitics , 7 February 2013

Film showing effects of chemicals on human health wins award, Chemical Watch, 27 February 2013

"This excellent report shows that the application of the precautionary principle can be an engine for innovation in Europe,"

said Lisette van Vliet, Senior Policy Officer at HEAL. Translation from French article, 'Europe needs to pay greater heed to warnings according to a report from the European Environmental Agency (EEA)', La Gazette Santé-Social, 25 January 2013.