



**EU ENVIRONMENT & HEALTH ACTION PLAN 2004-2010: IMPLEMENTATION.
CONFERENCE EGMOND AAN ZEE, 2 - 3 DECEMBER 2004**

Conference conclusions

June 2003 the Commission adopted a Communication on an European Environmental and Health Strategy. The strategy is intended to reduce the burden of disease caused by environmental factors in the EU, to identify and prevent health threats caused by environmental factors, and to strengthen EU capacity for policymaking in this area, followed by Council conclusions of 27 October 2003.

Based upon the Strategy the Commission adopted in June 2004 a Communication on the Environment and Health Action Plan 2004 - 2010.

The Dutch Presidency in cooperation with the Commission organized a conference on 2 and 3 December 2004 in Egmond aan Zee to develop the themes and actions of the Plan: The European Environment & Health Action Plan 2004-2010: Implementation.

The discussions during the conference focused on themes which were indicated by Member States as priority action. On the basis of the stimulating discussions the Presidency and the Commission conclude that there are common views on the following:

1. Environment and Health Information

An effective environment and health information system is needed to identify the scale and trends of environmental impacts on health as well as emerging issues in order to underpin decision-making in the field of environment and public health. In this context, an environment and health information system is a network of health and environment communities, data, processes, communication and information technology which interacts to support problem-solving and decision-making. One way to go about it is exposure assessment or health impact assessment, being aware of methodological limitations.

-The information system should link existing networks rather than create a new structure. EU-datasources will provide the basis for the information requests of the WHO Environmental Health Information System.

- Member States and the Commission will define EU priorities based on local, regional and national needs (early 2005). As the next step a review of ongoing monitoring activities will then be carried out by the Commission. On the basis of this review, modifications will be proposed, e.g. improvement of existing data sets, accessibility, and shift of priorities towards identified gaps, Geographical Information System approaches, and taking into account citizens concerns.

This review, accompanied by an implementation plan, will form the basis for the further official EU decision-making process. The European information efforts should reinforce and support national information systems and viceversa.

2. Human Biomonitoring (HBM)

HBM is a powerful tool to assess human exposure to environmental stressors and potential health effects. Integration of biomonitoring data with environmental monitoring and health

monitoring data and efficient communication strategies are essential to allow policy responses. Possible objectives for an EU HBM approach are (1) To support design and evaluate an environment and health policy; (2) To establish a database of current values which may lead to setting EU reference values; (3) To set up a network to establish an early warning system for unknown pollution sources based on biomarker measurements.

Action 3 of the Action Plan has a clear mandate and a tight time schedule. Launching the Pilot Project by 2006 will require cooperation with and participation of member states, full transparency of the process during the upcoming 2 years and clarity about funding.

3. Research

Environment and Health should be a well established domain in the Seventh Framework Programme and receive funding. In this area we need improvement of coordination, communication, harmonization, cross-fertilisation and prioritization. Furthermore, knowledge networks focused on policy driven research should be established or continued.

- Science must be translated all along the process into layperson's and policy maker's language to make it quickly and broadly available and to promote continuously communication between the different stakeholders, including the public.

- Prioritization of environmental risk factors and public health targets should also take into account those aspects that are of concern to the general public.

4. Indoor Air

The Action Plan stresses the importance of good quality of indoor air depending on outdoor air quality, indoor sources, ventilation and personal behaviour. Indoor pollution sources which cause risks to human health must be addressed by source control, ventilation and awareness raising. Guideline values may be a helpful tool to guarantee good indoor air quality.

An European initiative should be launched to address indoor air pollution from the various indoor sources starting with emphasis on the improvement of building products and ventilation systems.

- Across Europe smoking bans and other policies should be put in place to protect the general public from any exposure to tobacco smoke in public places, also protect employees at workplaces and particularly the unborn and children.

- With the aim of reducing emissions of hazardous substances from building products, testing and labeling procedures for building construction products should be further developed and harmonized at European level. This would enable people to identify low-emitting products.

- Adequate elimination of combustion products generated indoors, and good functioning of ventilation is essential for good indoor air quality. Measures to improve the design, maintenance and operation of ventilation systems should be promoted. Attention should be paid to ensure that ventilation systems themselves do not become a source of indoor air pollution.

5. Training and education

Promoting training of professionals and other stakeholders and improve organizational capacity in environment and health is of key importance.

- In 2005 an inventory of existing courses/training on Environmental and Health, should be made.

- International cooperation should be established to set up training programmes (with special focus on children) and stimulate professional development to increase the capacity (and number) of environmental health specialists at a national level.

- (Paediatric) environmental health speciality units should be supporting.

- Local environment and health networks should be established to assist local communities in coping with their surroundings.

6. Communication

- Citizens need to be taken seriously; information should be adequate to enable citizens to make well-informed decisions.

- The factors effecting people's perception of risks should be identified and consecutively taken into account to allow better targeted risk communication. Attention should also be given to positive behaviours.

-In addressing risks communication should be systematically taken into account and in more situations two-way interaction ensuring participation is called for.

- Citizens should have access to all available information in line with the Aarhus Convention.

7. Traffic pollution and the impact on health

Traffic and noise pollution have a severe impact on health. Mobility management, speed limits and control, advanced technology and stringent emissions standards, as well as stimulating sustainable mobility, in particular by physical activity such as cycling and walking are key elements to reduce mobility by transport. In order to ensure proper implementation these measures have to be undertaken and coordinated at different levels (EU, national and local). The vulnerability of children and their specific needs should be particularly taken in to account.

With these conference conclusions the ministers involved will be informed during the Health Council on 6 December and the Environment Council on 20 December. The Commission and the Member States will take this constructive contribution further in the putting into places of the actions which fall in the scope of the Action Plan.

Therefore Member States encourage the international organizations and bodies involved as well as the future Presidencies to keep the issue high on the agenda.
