



# CHEMICALS HEALTH MONITOR PROJECT

*Scientific evidence and policy opportunities to address the link between chemicals, health and disease*

## BACKGROUND

We are seeing rising rates of diseases: from asthma and allergies, to cancers, reproductive disorders and neurological illnesses. The number of children and the total number of people with asthma has more than doubled since 1980. The percentage of women developing breast cancer and men being diagnosed with prostate cancer is rising up every year. Infertility rates in some parts of Europe are now verging on 15%. Against this backdrop, the role of peoples' exposure to widespread environmental contaminants is coming under increasing scrutiny. And alongside the scientific research for answers, the immediate challenges for the political management of chemicals and protection of public health are growing.

The European Union plays a key role in setting standards for the safety of chemicals which we encounter in everyday life. The recent historic adoption of the new European chemicals legislation REACH<sup>1</sup> has increased public awareness of and interest in the thousands of potentially hazardous chemicals used in common household products and materials. It has also raised awareness of the legitimate concerns about the links between chemicals and diseases such as cancer, infertility and reproductive disorders, asthma and other chronic illnesses. The vast uncertainties about the health impact of the mixture of synthetic chemicals accumulating in people's bodies are a genuine and urgent cause for proactive public policy.

The Chemicals Health Monitor Project is a new project of the Health and Environment Alliance in collaboration with other partner organisations across Europe.

The project will contribute to the tools and structures necessary so that important health stakeholders can understand the REACH labyrinth and have their views about key decisions voiced. The project will also provide authoritative information (in a form accessible to the non-specialist public) to support measures to reduce harmful effects of hazardous chemicals on human health and the environment, and to choose safer alternatives.

### **Diseases and the role of environmental contaminants**

In the first year, the project will provide links and resources on the following diseases:

CANCER: initially Breast and Testicular cancer

REPRODUCTIVE PROBLEMS: Testicular Dysgenesis; Endometriosis; Reduced Fertility

NEUROLOGICAL DEFICITS AND DISEASES: including mental illness and developmental diseases such as autism, schizophrenia and mature-onset diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

METABOLIC DISORDERS: including Diabetes and Obesity

IMMUNOLOGICAL IMPAIREMENTS: effects and deficits in immune system function

<sup>1</sup> REACH – Registration, Evaluation and Authorization of Chemicals. More information can be found at: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/reach/r\\_in\\_reach.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/reach/r_in_reach.htm)

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## PROJECT GOALS

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- Ensure a more rapid translation of the latest research into a strong and effective implementation of EU chemicals policy, known as REACH, to protect human health;
- Support and increase NGO and wider public interest in, and knowledge of REACH implementation decisions relating to health issues;
- Channel society's concerns into the priorities adopted for the implementation of REACH;
- Promote the precautionary principle and right to know in chemical policy; support substitution of hazardous chemicals in REACH procedures;
- Facilitate greater collaboration between environmental groups and the health and scientific communities.

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## PROJECT WORK

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The key activities of the *Chemicals Health Monitor Project* are:

### 1. REACH Implementation Monitoring

- Monitor developments in how chemicals are registered, evaluated and authorized or banned, the performance of the European Chemicals Agency and EU institutions involved in implementation, and provide the relevant civil society and health expertise input to the procedures;
- Work with national NGOs or health professional partners in selected EU member countries to improve national input into REACH implementation;
- Compile health evidence for selected diseases and chemicals, monitor and advocate for specific handling within REACH procedures.

### 2. Communicating with and linking Health Stakeholders

- Consult and exchange views with health professionals, medical and research scientists, affected health groups, NGOs and other representatives of the health and environmental communities. Collaborate with stakeholders to contribute health expertise and represent stakeholder needs. We want to help ensure, for example, that very important hazardous chemicals are first in line to be regulated in the REACH process;
- Ascertain and develop areas of scientific consensus with stakeholders on links between chemicals and diseases relevant to REACH implementation e.g. carcinogens, endocrine disrupters, reproductive toxins, etc;
- Disseminate information on chemicals and health via a new Chemicals Health (web) portal including news summaries; fact sheets on the links between specific diseases and chemicals; research findings from the scientific press and EU research projects; human biomonitoring updates; and health, patients, civil society and research group activities.

### 3. Making known the links between chemical use, actual human exposure and disease through the results of human biomonitoring

- Draw attention to the relationship between chemicals, environmental conditions and human health;
- Track and publicize results from biomonitoring programs that are relevant to chemicals regulated in REACH.

#### How our project can help your work and vice versa for better REACH implementation

- Provide a roadmap to key REACH milestones and opportunities for consultation on testing protocols, chemical dossiers for evaluation, authorization, etc.
- Identify and/or disseminate chemical and health relevant, independent research on a dedicated disease and chemicals list serve
- Share knowledge, expertise and other relevant information at EU technical meetings, member state competent authority or other stakeholder meetings
- Identify at national level key researchers, health professionals or scientists working on the health effects of chemicals, including research with animals.

#### How can you contribute to the project?

We seek to collaborate with and commission work from:

- academic institutions and scientific associations;
- medical and research specialists and students
- health professional bodies representative of doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers;
- health affected groups, disease prevention and health advocacy groups;
- women's and community groups;
- non-governmental organisations (NGOs);
- other not-for-profit organizations;

**For further information, please contact Ms. Hana Kuncova, Chemicals Health Monitor Project Coordinator** (full contact information for the Health & Environment Alliance below):  
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#### ABOUT Steering Committee members

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The project's Steering Committee members provide general guidance and oversight on the development and implementation of the project activities, objectives and goals.

Patricia Cameron, BUND/Friends of Earth Germany, <http://www.bund.net/>

Lillian Corra, International Society of Doctors for the Environment, <http://201.216.215.170/isde.org/>

Maryse Lehnert-Arendt, Initiativ Liewensufank,  
<http://www.liewensufank.lu/english/aboutus/we.htm>

Gwynne Lyons, CHEM Trust

Peter Ohnsorge, European Academy of Environmental Medicine; HEAL Executive, German Doctors Federation, <http://www.europaem.org>

Jamie Page, Cancer Prevention and Education Society,  
<http://www.cancerpreventionsociety.org/>

Sharyle Patton, The Collaborative on the Health and the Environment,  
<http://www.healthandenvironment.org/>

Ninja Reineke, WWF European Policy Office, [www.panda.org](http://www.panda.org)

Gavin ten Tuscher, Pediatric Specialist, Health care Without Harm,  
<http://www.hcwh.org/europe>

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## ABOUT HEAL

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The Health and Environment Alliance aims to raise awareness of how environmental protection improves health. It achieves this by creating opportunities for better representation of citizens' and health experts' perspectives in the environment and health-related European policy-making. Our membership includes a diverse network of more than 50 citizens', patients', women's, health professionals' and environmental organisations across Europe and has a strong track record in increasing public and expert engagement in both EU debates and the decision-making process.

**Health & Environment Alliance**

*Formerly EPHA Environment Network (EEN)*

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