



Awards highlight eco-tech measures that can save children's lives

Vienna, Wednesday 13 June 2007 – Fifteen top contestants have demonstrated here today what a combination of simple technologies and community organisation can do to protect the environment for the sake of children's health.

"These awards provide examples of simple measures to solving problems with a grassroots approach," says Génon Jensen, Executive Director, Health & Environment Alliance, a co-organiser of the award contest. (1) (2)

The overall winner in each category, who have won cash prizes, are as follows:

Category 1: Water and Sanitation

Women for a clean future, Romania took action to make drinking water safe.

Category 2: Protection from injuries

Climate Alliance Austria managed mobility to promote children's safety and health.

Category 3: Improving air quality

Paediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit, Spain encouraged doctors to help stop smoking before young people started.

Category 4: Protection from hazardous chemicals

West-Transdanubian Regional Institute of National Public Health, Hungary helps promote "sun-safety" to prevent skin cancer.

Category 5: Youth participation

The municipality of Aalesund, Norway

The prizes were presented during the first morning of the inter-governmental meeting in Vienna to assess progress in Children's Environment and Health Plans for Europe, known as CEHAPE. (3) The five categories for the awards were based on CEHAPE's four regional priority goals (4) plus a fifth category of "youth participation". The awards contest was financially supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management and organized by HEAL, WECF and ISDE Austria. (1)

Dr Roberto Bertollini, World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for Europe and a leading force behind CEHAPE, said he welcomed the contest. (5)

According to WHO, the effects of a degraded environment on health are still a major cause of deaths and suffering across Europe, especially for children. One in three child deaths in Europe is due to the environment.(6)

Dr Bertollini said that much remains to be done within all the priority goals to address exposure to both traditional and modern hazards. "For example, we still have over 35 children dying of diarrhoea each day in the European region for lack of access to safe water. This is unacceptable."

Award winners have helped provide many ideas for implementing solutions to children's environmental health. Several groups took advantage of a simple "ecosan" technology that can be used in areas without a central water supply or municipal sewerage facilities. "This is exciting because new, clean, ecological toilets are constructed to help promote health while improving sanitation and avoiding contamination of surrounding soil, groundwater and water

supplies,” says Sascha Gabizon, International Director of WECF, partner to three of the project winners. (7)

The top 15 contestants included a group of school children that have produced a video on waste in the Danube River. The video shows how they tested river water and soil samples, discussed them with the local medical and community leaders and suggested what other clean-up action was needed. (2)

Another project featured an association in Georgia that is “biomonitoring” blood for its lead content. The local authorities are currently stalling on the introduction of lead-free petrol. (2)

Contact:

Genon K. Jensen, Executive Director, Health & Environment Alliance, 28 Boulevard Charlemagne, B-1000 Brussels. Tel: +32 2 234 3641 (direct) Fax : +32 2 234 3649 E-mail: genon@env-health.org Mobile: +32 4 72 445 968
Website: www.env-health.org

Sascha Gabizon, International Director, Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), St. Jakobs-Pl. 10, 80331 Munchen, Germany. Tel: 49 89 23 23 9390. Mobile: +49 172 863 7586 (mobile). Email: sascha.gabizon@wecf.eu

Diana Smith, Communications, Health and Environment Alliance, Tel: +33 1 55 25 25 84, Mobile: +33 6 33 04 2943 E-mail: Diana@gsmith.com.fr Website: www.env-health.org

Notes for journalists

1. The contest was coordinated by Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL) www.env-health.org; Eco-Forum www.eco-forum.org; Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) www.wecf.eu and the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE) Austria <http://members.nexta.at/aegu/Eng/index.htm>.
2. A brochure containing the photographs and descriptions of the different projects from the posters is available at www.env-health.org
3. Details about the meeting and associated events are available at http://www.env-health.org/a/2517?var_recherche=Vienna
4. CEHAPE is explained in greater detail on the Health & Environment Alliance's "Healthier Environments for Children" website at <http://cehape.env-health.org/> and on WHO's website at http://www.euro.who.int/childhealthenv/policy/20020724_2
5. Dr Roberto Bertollini, Director of the Special Programme for Health and Environment of WHO's Regional Office for Europe. He can be contacted via Cristiana Salvi, Technical Officer for Communication and Advocacy, WHO European Office, Telephone: +39 06 487 7543, Mobile phone: +39 348 0192305
E-mail: csa@ecr.euro.who.int
6. Valent F et al. Burden of disease attributable to selected environmental factors and injury among children and adolescents in Europe. Lancet, 2004, 363: 2032–2039.
7. General “ecosan” website: www.ecosan.org

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.