



FINAL REPORT

CAPACITY-BUILDING AND ADVOCACY SEMINAR

ZAGREB, CROATIA – 3-4 MARCH 2006

I. Background

As part of its work programme for 2005-2006, the EPHA Environment Network aims to help develop the capacity of Eastern and Central European NGOs and other not-for-profit organisations on environment and health issues. It conceived its workshops on the grounds that many of the countries in this region are still young democracies, in which the participatory processes of civil society are struggling.

Croatia was of particular interest because it presented a unique set of socio-political circumstances in the light of the forthcoming negotiations for its accession to the EU. Its environmental legislation will need to be adapted to incorporate the *acquis communautaire*¹ of the EU. Possibly, new laws will be passed. This is a period when local civil society stakeholders are presented with opportunities to exercise their influence and bring about shifts in the environmental assessment and decision-making to better protect public and children's health. Besides providing training, EPHA Environment Network aimed to stimulate skill-sharing and solidarity among the local organisations, and invite them to collaborate more with one another by encouraging the formation of coalitions. The capacity building and advocacy seminar in Zagreb was primarily open to local NGOs and community groups working on health and environment issues. A prerequisite for participation was also interest in Croatia's pre-accession process and priorities. The workshop was organised in partnership with the Croatian Nurses Association, PIN for Health and Zelena Akcija².

EPHA Environment Network applied a wider definition of civil society, including not only well organised and large non-governmental organisations, but also other formal and informal organisations, community groups, coalitions, movements, representatives of the media and academia. This has determined the combined nature of its seminars as training, networking and

¹ The Community *acquis* is the body of common rights and obligations, which bind all the Member States together within the EU. Applicant countries have to accept the Community *acquis* before they can join the Union.

² "Zelena Akcija" means "green action" in English.

platform-building fora. EPHA Environment Network has brought a European dimension to the seminars by ensuring interventions from the EC Delegation to the respective host country, the sectoral institutional perspective of the local Ministries of Health and/or Environment, and that of the national environment and health focal points. The logic for that was to lay the groundwork of the current local conditions and circumstances that constitute opportunities for civil society involvement and influence.

II. Methodology

EPHA Environment Network identified two fundamental areas of the work of environment, health and health and environment NGOs: advocacy and media relations, as ones needing particular attention in terms of skills and approach.

The training sessions were dedicated to advocacy and work with the media. The advocacy workshop took participants through the stages of the advocacy campaign cycle: from the conception of an advocacy strategy, through the identification of the stakeholders, building of the coalition to the action plan, its implementation and interaction with the media. The media training focused on the ways to structure a successful media campaign and developing skills for effectively working with the media. Both sessions offered participants practical group work on case-studies.

One of the key problems for small organisations is the lack of knowledge of environmental law and how this should be translated into national legislation and local implementation activities. EPHA Environment Network's capacity-building seminars aim to facilitate advocacy and monitoring skills in smaller local and regional associations. A section of the programme of these events is devoted to examining regional/local problems of participants in relation to applying the *acquis communautaire*, which is then shared with other EEN members and stakeholders through the Network's newsletter and website coverage.

The EPHA Environment Network secretariat collected preliminary information on the participants' organisations through questionnaires about their activities, knowledge of EU institutions, environment and health issues, and their needs for advocacy and media resources. The objective was to better tailor the presentations and interventions to the participants' needs, and thus maximise the outcome of the seminar.

II. Expectations

The event brought together 30 participants primarily from Croatian NGOs but also from the Czech Republic, which provided a different angle to the discussion from the point of view of a new member state. The EPHA Environment Network secretariat worked closely with local partners and stakeholders in order to ensure that local experience and ideas are included and valorised in the programme. Interesting case studies had been surveyed in advance and presented to the participants during the training sessions as good practice examples.

At the beginning of the event, participants wrote down their expectations for the two days ahead of them. Most of them expected to have the possibility to network, develop common positions and activities at national and local level, share experiences and establish partnerships. Some

hoped to crystallise Croatia's environmental and health problems in the process and specify their prioritization. In terms of content, participants hoped to learn more about environment and health issues, and how these would be tackled during Croatia's pre-accession process, get training on how to plan advocacy and media campaigns, learn more about media interest and constraints as well as skills to liaise with journalists and decision-makers. The issues they expected the workshop to cover were mainly related to environment and health in general, but also to water, waste as well as to EU funding opportunities.

III. Presentations

1. *Antoniette Kaic-Rak on "The WHO Pan-European environment and health process and opportunities for civil society"*

Ms Kaic-Rak defined environment and health as the direct pathological effects of chemicals, radiation and biological agents and the often indirect effects on health of the broad physical, psycho-social, social and aesthetic environment, which includes housing, urban development, land use and transport. She gave statistical data emphasizing the vulnerability of children under the age of 5 to exposure to environmental stressors, and clarified the main links between environmental factors such as air pollution, chemicals and heavy metals, physical agents and their health effects.

Ms Kaic-Rak touched upon the European Environment and Health process triggered in 1989 by a WHO Initiative in environment and health where ministers of health and environment met in a pan-European forum and endorsed a European Charter on Environment and Health and on establishing the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health. This was followed by the second ministerial conference in Helsinki in 1994, which adopted a Declaration for Action on Environment and Health in Europe and initiated EHAP for Europe, committing countries to develop national action plans (NEHAPs). The first European Environment and Health Committee was established.

The findings of the WHO study on the environmental burden of disease on children aged 0-19 years indicate high death rates linked to selected environmental exposures such as outdoor and indoor air pollution, water and sanitation, lead and injuries. The 2004 Budapest ministerial conference reviewed progress made in environment and health in Europe and put children on top of political agenda by setting 4 regional priority goals. Countries committed to develop and begin implementing their Children's Environment and Health Action Plans for Europe by 2007.

2. *Dr Krunoslav Capak, Croatian National Institute of Public Health, on "What is the government doing to implement the Budapest commitments? Towards a Croatian Children's Environment and Health Action Plan (CEHAP)"*

Dr Capak first made an overview of Croatia's legislative and institutional framework, and the cardinal policy documents regarding environmental health, pointing out that Croatia is one of the few countries, which has environment and health included in its Constitution. One of the main outcomes of the 1994 Helsinki Conference was the National Environment and Health Action Plan (NEHAP), which the National Health Council adopted. It has not yet been ratified.

He then focused on the Croatian National Institute of Public Health, which boasts 113 years of tradition. Its mission being to promote the health of Croatia's population, it coordinates and provides guidance on public health activities to the country's 20 public health institutes spread around the counties. The environmental health service is one of the departments in the institute's

organisational chart. It monitors the health safety of foods, consumer goods and drinking water, and collects and analyses data from the county institutes.

With regard to Croatia's activities following the Budapest Declaration, Dr Capak enumerated the ratification of the Protocol on Water and Health and participation in WHO's Environment and Health Information System. As far as CEHAPE is concerned, he distinguished between CEHAPE I and II. A Steering Committee for CEHAPE I was established within the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The country's environment and health status profile is still to be prepared together with the drafting of the Action Plan. It is due to be presented in May 2007 at a mid-term Pan-European evaluation conference. The National Institute of Public Health is involved in CEHAPE II activities. It has prepared the translation of the Budapest Declaration and of the CEHAPE and established a department for the prevention of injuries. Together with WHO, it has prepared a project dealing with situation analysis in school establishments regarding drinking water and hygienic sanitation as part of the Bilateral Collective Agreement.

3. *Asja Dalalič, Croatian Nurses Association (CNA) on "Civil society involvement in the development of a Croatian environment and health strategy"*

The concept of "civil society" in political philosophy is understood as a mobilised forum to protect and educate citizens on how to defend themselves from the unjust practices of the State. It is an antithesis of the State implying opposition and control functions from the different organisations in a society. Croatian nurses organised themselves following the establishment of the first school for nurses in 1926 to achieve their collective goals. Nurses quickly grasped the link between environment and health. The nursing process in environmental health turned to assessing the environmental health history of individuals and making environmental assessments of the home, school, workplace and community. The future strategy is to develop a group for environment within the CAN, participate actively in the work of the Croatian environmental organisations and contribute to correcting waste disposal management in the working environment, promote non-smoking, etc, as well as implementing EEN policy platforms being a member of the network.

4. *Mojka Starc, Delegation of the European Commission in Croatia on "Opportunities and challenges for environment and health policies in the EU accession process"*

Ms Starc gave the general outlines of the EU's environment policy: the Sixth Environment Action Programme, the seven Thematic Strategies (air, marine, waste, urban, resources, soil and pesticides), and the emphasis on sustainable behaviour. She then related the stages of the negotiation process, focusing on Chapter 27, the chapter dealing with environment. The screening for Croatia will start in April 2006 with the presentation of the *acquis communautaire*. The programme for the approximation of the legislation will come out in May, followed by a common position and, finally by a decision to open negotiations by the government. Transition periods are expected for the implementation of the key directives on wastewater, drinking water, the water framework, air pollution, solid and hazardous waste, etc. The EU finances projects during the pre-accession process through programmes such as CARDS, PHARE, ISPA, LIFE-Third Countries. A new pre-accession instrument, IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance) is under way starting from 2007-2013, which will finance environmental projects under its third component on regional development. The main actors at national level are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, responsible for the coordination of all financial assistance programmes insofar as programming and monitoring are concerned; and the Ministry

of Finance responsible for the National Fund – the only channel through which Community pre-accession funds flow. A Central Financing and Contracting Unit will be set up in the future within the Ministry of Finance that will be dealing with the implementation of the programmes.

5. *Tomislav Tomasevic, Zelena Akcija on “The civil society perspective on EU accession”*

Environment comes second on Croatia’s priority list in terms of work to be done, with waste, waste water and drinking water requiring the most funds. These three areas have already seen some progress. The Ministry of Environmental Protection, Physical Planning and Construction and the Fund for Environment Protection and Energy Efficiency invested lot of resources into sanitation and closing of illegal waste dumping sites (e.g. Jakuševac). A Strategy for Waste Management was developed in 2005.

Environment is also an area, in which a great deal of approximation of laws will have to take place, or transposition of EU legislation into the national legal framework. At present, approximation of laws is done almost automatically. Laws related to approximation are given an “EU label” and thus enter the parliamentary legislation process under urgent procedures, which are not in line with constitutional law. The result is low participation of civil society. Croatia’s civil society is not sufficiently involved or represented in the 35 working groups preparing the negotiations. The process is considered to be non-transparent and uncoordinated by the Green Forum – a network of 35 environmental organisations. Yet, the need for regular monitoring is increasing due to the pressures on environment and health because of industrial development, urbanisation and transport.

IV. The training sessions

1. *Hands-on Media Training, facilitated by D. Smith and G. Jensen, EPHA Environment Network*

This session consisted of an introduction to the guide “Working with the Media”, followed by a presentation and overview of the environment and health process in the press. The facilitator and the participants answered questions such as how does one know that a certain topic may be of interest to the press or what should one bring out when writing a press release. A local journalist gave recommendations on how to effectively approach and relate to local media (see recommendations below), and participants shared their personal experience and examples of their media work.

The general opinion was that specific media training was necessary. Emphasis was placed on building up a network of media and press contacts and gaining credibility in order for NGO representatives to be contacted as reliable sources of information. Zelena Akcija for example, disposes of contacts which signal the adoption of controversial legislation without adequate consultation. Some participants shared negative experience with the local media and expressed their belief that journalists should have some basic training on the various subjects they deal with.

The session was rounded up with tips from the facilitator on how to structure and write an effective press release. Participants were then divided into two groups. Each group was given a different written task to complete: a press release or open letter on CEHAPE or the EU accession priorities for environment and health NGOs. In conclusion, the groups had to decide on an effective sound bite that would best convey their message in a concentrated form.

1.1. Recommendations of Croatian national radio/TV journalist Mladen Iličković

- ⇒ **Timing matters** - choose your timing carefully making sure that it is not linked to any other major event that might obscure yours
- ⇒ **Informal contacts** - maintain informal contacts with journalists without necessarily asking them to cover anything for you, to help you become a trusted source
- ⇒ **Inform yourself** - as journalists are often specialised in a certain field, make sure you know who their replacement is in the case of absence
- ⇒ **Power of conviction** – convince the journalist of the importance and uniqueness of your event/issue, as something that concerns many people, as something close to the community yet different
- ⇒ **Keep it short and clear** - facts must be presented in an exhaustive yet concise, well structured and interesting way expressing clear-cut ideas to quickly capture readers’ attention and transmit a simple message;
- ⇒ **Answer the 5 Ws + How** – your message should clearly answer the questions who, what, where, when, why and how.
- ⇒ **Put it on paper** – journalists appreciate receiving a written statement or a speech
- ⇒ **Visuals** – sending photos together with your written material will visualise the content and will be appreciated
- ⇒ **Offer a “shelf package”** – prepare reference materials on environment and health (in this case) for the journalist to give him/her the background (especially useful for young journalists)
- ⇒ **Do not call** journalists between 10–13 o’clock. They will not be available to listen.
- ⇒ **Send** in your materials 2 days in advance
- ⇒ **Press-conferences** - *it is advisable to keep those for the weekend.*
- ⇒ **Be proactive**- NGOs must not be passive after bad coverage but must expose inadequate editor decisions.
- ⇒ **Party** – invite journalists to a social event, Christmas party, etc. together with your donors to help them get an understanding as to why exactly your organisation is receiving funds (not for the purposes of coverage).

2. *Hands-on Advocacy Training, facilitated by G. Jensen and V. Karloukovska, EPHA Environment Network*

The training began by defining the terms of “lobbying” and “advocacy”, and pointing out the differences between them. This was followed by an input session which demonstrated the stages of building an advocacy campaign. These were exemplified by using EPHA Environment Network’s own campaign on REACH. Participants were then divided into two groups and were given a practical exercise to structure an advocacy campaign around a specific objective linked to the CEHAPE or Croatia’s EU accession. Both groups came together in a plenary session to present their results.

Three NGO representatives were then given the floor to present their best practice of successful advocacy campaigns:

(1) *Campaign against PVC toys in the Czech Republic by the Society for Sustainable Living*
Miroslav Suta explained how back in 1996-97 his organisation initially began its campaign by making a study and disseminating the information to the authorities – the producers and the Ministry of Health. This went unnoticed. In 1999, when the EU introduced a proposal for an emergency ban on 6 phthalates in toys for children under 3 years of age, they again informed both the producer and the health ministry but without effect. At this stage, they decided to change strategy and initiated a market campaign directed at retailers. This was accompanied by a press conference and fact sheets, including materials published in the “Dnes” newspaper, which had a section on testing consumer goods. The newspaper paid half of the testing costs – toys were purchased, tested and the results were published and publicised at a press conference. An info point was set up; post cards with signatures were sent to the producer; posters and toy bears were paraded in front of the shops selling such toys. Finally, Kotva, the producer withdrew its PVC toys following 3 weeks of campaigning pressure. Tesco and other retailers followed suit. In February 2000, the Czech Republic banned PVC toys.

(2) *Campaign for “Environmental Monitoring, Impact Assessment, and Awareness-Raising on the European enlargement process in Croatia: capacity-building for more efficient stakeholder participation in the process” by Zelena Akcija, FoE Croatia and Hnuti Duha, Czech Republic*

The second case study had been financed by the EU to support the EU integration process of Croatia through an increase and improvement in the information and public participation. Its objective was to monitor and assess the impact of the process of harmonising Croatia's environmental and other sectoral policies and legislation with that of the EU, and to raise awareness of the likely impacts among stakeholders such as other NGOs, the general public and decision-makers. The methodology used was that of monitoring policies and legislation, publishing of an information bulletin, collecting case studies and organising round tables. Focus was placed on two areas – waste management and environmental impact assessment (EIA) studies. The outcomes were a round table on waste management. Zelena Akcija's comments were published in a case study (waste strategy & packaging ordinance). It was established that unlike in the Czech Republic, Croatian NGOs do not participate in legislation drafting and public participation occurs too late in the process. Regarding the EIA, Zelena Akcija's comments influenced the rejection of the EIA study on a municipal waste incinerator in Zagreb and the Druzba Adria project (used case studies as lobbying tools).

The results were increased and improved information on the development of environmental legislation development in Croatia; Zelena Akcija increased its capacity for active lobbying and campaigning; created a framework for the exchange of expert knowledge between the Czech Republic and Croatia.

(3) *Campaign for promoting the use of reusable diapers by RODA – Parents in Action, Croatia*

In the third case study on promoting the use of disposable baby diapers, RODA had published leaflets explaining in detail the use of alternative cotton nappies. On earth day in 2005, they initiated an action on demonstrating the enormous quantity of waste generated by disposable nappies. They brought the 3 main issues to the public's attention – health, environment and cost. The organisation encounters quite a lot of resistance on the part of parents because cotton nappies are considered to be old fashioned and exotic. People are not aware of their new design, which makes them not only healthier but incomparably more cost-effective than their disposable alternative.

V. Evaluation

Participants' response was overwhelmingly positive. They pointed out that the seminar had given them new knowledge about Croatia's EU accession, the EU's environment and health policy, children's environment and health and other environmentally specific matters that impacted human health such as mercury, chemicals, urban environment etc. All participants who submitted their evaluation forms estimated that the event had given them new networking possibilities and insight into working with policy-makers, the media and other stakeholders. A number of the participants provided concrete examples of partnership-building that they had secured at the workshop.

All participants highly appreciated the practical part of the programme, and shared that their favourite sessions had been the practical exercises, the group work and the case studies. They confirmed that they would want to take part in future EEN seminar, especially ones focusing on media work. This is clear indication that NGOs need specific training with applied skills assignments.

VI. Outcomes and ideas

- The event was an opportunity for a “cross fertilisation” exchange between environment, health and environment and health NGOs. Health NGOs intervened for the first time on issues that are considered strictly “environmental”. Environmental NGO had the possibility to discuss “waste” with the health professionals.
- Nurses expressed strong interest in promoting non-disposable nappies to reduce waste. They committed to developing activities that would reduce toxic chemicals in hospital cleaning detergents and in promoting the concept and practice of mercury-free hospitals.
- CEHAPE – advocate for the renovation of the existing recreational space for children and the creation of more playgrounds.
- The event yielded concrete proposals for future collaborative activities between several of the participating NGOs;
- Organisations expressed their will to form platforms, networks and alliances in order to advocate for transparent law-making through effective consultations of civil society.

- The seminar received considerable media coverage: a workshop report was posted on the www.alertonline.org website, and was then picked up by the “Monitor” web www.monitor.hr.
- An article about the workshop was published in Croatian on the Internet http://www.zamirzine.net/article.php3?id_article=3216. It was featured on three different web pages. The radio station Radio 101 (<http://www.radio101.hr/>) emitted a 40-minute programme on it at.
- EEN's Executive Director was interviewed during the event, and her interview featured on: http://www.alertonline.org/full.php?aj_go=more&id=1142285387&archive=&start_from=&u_cat=7&do=interview
- EEN's member organisations and other national policy makers were also interviewed during the event.

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