



HEAL Newsletter Editorials

March 2009 - March 2010

Monthly updates for the health and environment community in Europe

March 2009

Voting for "healthy people and a healthy planet" in the European elections, June 4-7

Would you like to know the position of different candidate European Parliamentarians (MEPs) on promoting health through strong environmental policy? Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) hopes to be able to provide this information to you in time for voting in the June elections.

Candidates will be scored on responses to eight questions. They will be asked to commit on: investing in precautionary environmental health policies; putting children and vulnerable groups first; and, the crucial challenge for health and the health sector of global climate change. A further five questions are about chemicals policy (REACH), air quality standards, nano materials, electromagnetic field technology, and noise. [Download the questionnaire.](#)

The survey provides an opportunity not only to gauge candidate MEP positions but also to inform them of what HEAL believes are key policy opportunities to improve people's environmental health. It will also help identify the most active and supportive and those willing to champion particular health and environmental concerns in the future. For example, one question relates to our recommendation for a stronger climate change package in the lead up to the Copenhagen negotiations in December. An ambitious and visionary EU position on substantial greenhouse emission cuts would bring major health benefits, especially for those with heart and breathing problems through energy policy changes that result in improved air quality.

As the Executive Director of the World Health Organisation Dr Chan stated recently *"Health had no say in the policies that led to the financial crisis or made climate change inevitable. But the health sector will bear the brunt of the consequences."* HEAL and its members are committed to promoting the democratic process to achieve a healthier and more sustainable Europe. Making the effort both to vote and to identify in advance which candidates to vote for, can make a major contribution to achieving this vision, which is shared by other environmental groups ([read the Green 10 roadmap](#)).

Approximately 90% of all environmental policy is now created at the European level. Over the next five-year European Parliament, crucial decisions affecting the quality of our health, our lives and the planet will be made. Already on the agenda are climate change, agricultural reform, and the implementation of chemical regulation known as REACH. HEAL and its members are not alone in promoting "quality of life" issues. According to official European surveys, the proportion of Europeans concerned about the state of the environment is almost as high as the percentage worried about the economic situation.

HEAL members and staff have already started asking some candidates the survey questions with the help of the kit. We hope to have scores on candidate MEPs in all 27 countries of the EU to share with you in May. We would welcome your help in this task. Please visit [HEAL related article](#) for background information and/or contact [Monica Guarinoni](#), Deputy Director, for further help.

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April 2009

Spring is in the air - and so are pesticides...

Now that the weather is warming up, we are all spending more time outside - walking and taking the children to public playgrounds. Unfortunately, many of us are worried about the regular pesticide spraying that takes place in parks, public gardens, schools and even on pavements to stop the weeds growing in the cracks between paving stones.

The results of [our recent poll in the UK](#) shows that 48% of those interviewed believe that pesticide use in parks, sports grounds and playgrounds may pose a risk to people's health, and 65% support a ban or reduction in the use of pesticides in public places as soon as possible (read our [press release-link](#)). In France, public sentiment is even more determinedly anti-pesticide use. In a poll there, 95% of respondents said they would welcome a 50% reduction in all pesticide use and 80% would want pesticide-free parks (read our [press release](#)).

These concerns are backed up by the scientific evidence. The UK Pesticides Action Network (PAN) has produced a "[List of lists](#)" showing how different pesticides are defined in terms of toxicity, and has a special section on pesticides and cancer. In 1993, it listed 70 possible carcinogens – now the list has grown to over 240.

Health authorities are also taking health concerns about pesticides seriously, and in some countries like France, are proactively linking national cancer plans with reduced exposure to carcinogens, including pesticides. HEAL welcomes this emphasis on prevention, and hopes that the European Commission will include environmental factors within its work on a European Cancer platform in 2009.

Our [Sick of Pesticides' campaign](#) activities in France have been particularly successful. A [printed postcard](#) calling for the protection of children's health through the creation of pesticide-free cities has been distributed to thousands of individuals throughout France. They, in turn, send them to their local authority asking for a ban. Several major cities, such as Rennes and Grenoble, are already taking action on reducing pesticides. Paris has announced its commitment to reducing pesticide spraying, and many public parks are already pesticides free.

The medical and scientific community is also speaking up on cancer and pesticides. ASEF, a French association of doctors recently held a [conference on environment and health in Aix en Provence](#) attracting around 1,000 participants, and several EU funded scientific networks are organising a similar one in Italy (see [ECNIS website](#)).

But will these concerns translate into real public health advances and reduced exposure to pesticides, and consequently less ill health? At the national level, EU member states are currently drafting National Action Plans on pesticides, and this is where the real difference to health will take place, and where more public interest involvement is crucial. HEAL hopes to influence the process by promoting our campaign messages (see [our campaign asks](#)).

Coming soon in our work on pesticides is a new activity with people whose health has been affected by pesticides. Starting in France, this work will contribute to our objective of bringing citizens' environmental health concerns to national and European policy making.

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May - June 2009

EU urged to take health delegation to climate change talks

Less than 1% of the official participants in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are from the health sector. Yet national health leaders and officials will be in the front line in dealing with future health crises associated with climate change.

Pendo Maro, our new climate change and energy policy advisor for both the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and Health Care Without Harm Europe (HCWH), is in Bonn this week (10-11 June 2009). She will urge the EU to take a lead in making health representation considerably more prominent in future climate change talks. In an [Open Letter](#) to the Commission, we have asked the EU to include a health delegation at the important COP 15 meeting in Copenhagen in December 2009, where a new agreement on climate change is anticipated.

The World Health Organization is concerned that health is being marginalized in the discussions on climate change. At a recent High Level Meeting on Environment and Health in Bonn (27-29 April), Dr Roberto Bertollini stressed the need to give more attention to the health sector in the talks.

In May, HEAL and HCWH Europe put their policy position to some key health policy makers taking part in the EU Health Policy Forum. We officially launched our [collaboration on health and climate change](#) shortly afterwards.

The health community in Europe has already shown a strong and convincing commitment on climate change. In the UK, the [Climate and Health Council](#) is mobilising health professionals around the world. So far, doctors and health professionals in 106 countries have signed up to a "Pledge" that commits signatories to support for a meaningful deal being struck in Copenhagen. In the past few weeks, the Council has made it possible for all staff in the National Health Service (NHS) in England to view the "Age of Stupid", a film about climate change, for free at work.

In September, the World Medical Association is planning a seminar in Copenhagen on climate change and health. The [Standing Committee of Doctors in Europe \(CPME\)](#) has already developed its response, including encouraging members to inform patients of the "doubled positive" effects that small changes in exercise and diet can have for health and the environment.

HEAL member, the European Respiratory Society will be one of the first specialist medical society to publish recommendations on climate change and respiratory disease this August. It defines how those suffering from respiratory diseases will be affected, and highlights how respiratory doctors can become leaders in bringing the message home on the health benefits of tackling climate change.

Last year, **HEAL jointly co-produced an important research report on the [co-benefits](#) to health of a strong EU climate change policy.** In May, HealthCare without Harm published a joint report with the World Health Organization on addressing climate change in the health sector. HEAL and the European Lung Foundation have also joined forces to develop a new [fact sheet](#) on climate change and respiratory health.

HEAL's vision on climate change goes well beyond both "health" and "Europe". In an article published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health earlier this year, Genon Jensen, HEAL's Executive Director describes the need for health and well-being to be addressed via the so-called "health equity filter" approach. HEAL believes that any long-lasting, just, fair and equitable solution must be based on health equity and security.

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July - August 2009

Inside the new Parliament

How different will the atmosphere for health and environment be in the new European Parliament now that the composition is conservative-led and made up of significantly more Eurosceptics?

Firstly, **the European Parliament has always shown support for environmental health issues across all political parties.** Irish conservative Avril Doyle was among our staunchest supporters in the last parliament. This parliament sees the re-election of [Frédérique Ries](#) (ALDE, BE) who was the biggest campaigner for environment health issues as the reporter for many key files.

In addition, the new President of the European Parliament, [Jerzy Buzek](#) (EPP) of Poland is environment-friendly. He was formerly a member of Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, (ENVI).

Behind the four leading EP political groups – European People’s Party (EPP), Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), and the Greens European Free Alliance (Greens EFA) - come the new European Conservative & Reformist (ECR) group in fifth place. The ECR is the group of 25 UK, 15 Polish, 9 Czech MEPs and one representative from each of Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Netherlands. A second party of sceptics, known as the Freedom and Democracy party has 32 members, including 13 from the strongly-anti EU UK Independent Party.

It is encouraging to see that the new chair of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety committee is [Joe Leinen](#), who is strongly committed to environmental concerns, a heavyweight politician, and a firm believer in support for civil society in European dialogue.

Among his first tasks in his new role as ENVI Chair, **Joe Leinen will give the keynote address to a reception organised by the Green 10** coalition of environmental non-governmental organisations (of which HEAL is a member) on 1 September.

As always, HEAL will be relying on its members and other health stakeholders at the European level to bring health and environment concerns to MEPs at all possible opportunities. As a first step, **we are holding this year’s Annual General Meeting to coincide with an important "Civil Society Contact Group Event" in the parliament where advocacy work with the many MEPs who plan to attend can begin in earnest.**

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September-October 2009

Climate change: European health strategy makes rapid progress

The first few days of October have seen an explosion of activity aimed at making health more central to talks on climate change.

HEAL and its coalition partner [Health Care Without Harm Europe](#) have backed targets of 40% reductions in carbon emissions and an EU contribution of 35 billion Euros per year to finance global action on climate change. Read our - [briefing and recommendations](#) concerning the Commission Communication - a European blueprint for the Copenhagen deal.

We have also launched a "[Prescription for a Healthy Planet](#)" which outlines key strategy objectives and policy recommendations for climate talks.

At a reception at HEAL on 6 October, the Prescription was welcomed by EU Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou who saw it as a reflection of the high level of concern within the European health and medical community.

She told the meeting that climate change was "a major issue for all EU policy areas" and said that "its impact on human, animal and plant health would be of massive importance to citizens in years to come." Read Commissioner Vassiliou's speech [here](#).

The [Climate and Health Council](#) in the UK is a founding signatory to the Prescription. Other key health and medical groups which endorsed the Prescription include the European Respiratory Society; International Society of Doctors for the Environment, Europe; Chartered Institute for Environmental Health (CIEH), and several national medical associations.



► Speakers from the launch of the Prescription. From left - Anja Leetz (HCWH), Dr. Michael Gill, Climate and Health Council, Genon Jensen (HEAL), Androulla Vassiliou (EU Health Commissioner), Dr. Peter Liese (MEP), Dr. Michael Wilks (President, Standing Committee of European Doctors), Dr. Isabella Annesi-Maesano (European Respiratory Society).

In a parallel development, **amendments about health concerns have been tabled on the Resolution on climate change to be debated in the European Parliament in mid-October.** The amendments are supported by MEP Frederique Ries. MEPs Jo Leinen, chair of the European parliament committee and Dr Peter Liese, a committee member have also shown commitment to this issue during the past few weeks. Both spoke at the launch of the Prescription at the HEAL offices.

Next steps in our advocacy efforts include reaching policy makers prior to high level meetings later this month: EU Finance Ministers (20 October), Environment Ministers (21 October) and the EU Heads of States (29 – 30 October). Our aim is to work with our members to positively influence the final negotiating position adopted by the EU for the crucial UNFCCC climate talks in Copenhagen.

Both the Prescription launch and HEAL targets on climate change have featured in the [European policy press](#)

Next month, the leading worldwide medical journal, The Lancet, will release a report in London on the health impact of climate change. We hope that new evidence will help show how adaptation within the health sector can benefit health but also reduce greenhouse gases and energy consumption. In addition, the findings may also help define simple, health and equity-friendly policy interventions for many other EU policy sectors in the post Copenhagen era.

▶ **Are you making the environment healthier for children and young people?** If you are, we strongly urge you to apply to our [good practice competition](#). Awards will be handed out (with a cheque for 1,000 Euros for the winner in each section) at the World Health Organization meeting in Parma, Italy in March 2010.

▶ **Read all the online articles of the [Health and Environment Alliance News - September/ October 2009](#)**

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November 2009

Environment and health action in Europe – is it making a difference?

When the Commission adopted its first strategy on environment and health in 2003, also known as SCALE, the vision was far reaching – to reduce ill health caused by environmental factors in Europe. It put a special focus on vulnerable groups, such as children, and pledged to identify emerging health threats linked to the environment, such as endocrine disrupters.

In 2004 this strategy was translated into an EU Environment and Health Action Plan (EHAP), and the HEAL secretariat and many of our members took part in many of its implementation meetings. In 2010, EHAP comes to an end; during early December this year a [series of meetings](#) will take place in Brussels to discuss its achievements. A draft report reviewing the Plan's track record is already available and an important objective of the talks will be to identify future priorities. The HEAL secretariat will again take part in these meetings organised by DG Environment, DG SANCO and DG Research, along with many of its members.

HEAL believes that there should be a second action plan, and that the original overarching SCALE vision be re-established as a basis for future work. Although the current action plan is not legally-binding, nor well-resourced, it does create international visibility for "environment and health" as an important theme in European policy.

Moreover, the EHAP process has contributed to creating more health protecting EU environmental policies, such as those on pesticides and air quality. In practical terms, it offers opportunities for HEAL members to advocate on their priorities and for the HEAL secretariat to bring the health arguments to the "[Green 10](#)" environmental groups and policy-makers working at EU level.

Having an EU action plan has also created an important forum for stakeholder discussion on key environmental health issues, and policy responses. It has helped raise the profile of some emerging issues, such as electromagnetic fields, and has laid the foundations for a future EU biomonitoring programme. Biomonitoring in Europe should substantially increase public awareness of and responses to how chemicals are contaminating our bodies while providing relevant information for EU policy makers on reducing exposure.

► Children's environmental health action plans

In parallel, the World Health Organisation (WHO) discussions are continuing to assess the added-value of environment and health policies in the wider Pan European region of 53 countries ([Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health](#)), particularly on how children's environmental health action plans ([CEHAPE](#)) are making a difference. HEAL members and other NGOs have an opportunity to bring their achievements to this review process.

Three weeks remain until the deadline for entries to our good practice competition. Applications for the second CEHAPE - Children's Environmental Health Award must be received by December 7. **If you are involved in a project that you believe to be making the environment healthier for children and young people, we strongly urge you to apply** (read more [here](#)). Awards will be presented at a ceremony (with 1,000 Euros for the winning entry in each section) during the WHO meeting in Parma, Italy in March 2010.

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December 2009 - January 2010

World leaders failed climate and people's health

The UN negotiations in December 2009 did not deliver the agreement so badly needed by the world.

The Copenhagen Accord is a non-binding declaration without clear commitments from any government. While it recommends specific amounts for funding for developing countries, the voluntary Accord does not stipulate how the money will be spent nor are the amounts adequate. Governments must turn this into a more ambitious and binding agreement in 2010. Read our [Post-Copenhagen Position Statement](#).

European civil society groups were especially disappointed that the EU did not show more leadership. If Europe had put at least a 30% emissions reduction target on the table at the right moment, some real progress might have been achieved.

From the European health and environment community's perspective, the aim pushing health considerations higher up the agenda was already starting to happen before Copenhagen began. In September, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso speaking in the US had said that climate change was no longer "the reserved province of the environmental community" but also an economic, development and "health issue". A few weeks later, the European Parliament voted in references to health as amendments to its Resolution on Climate Change. Read our [press release](#).

At the Copenhagen talks, the high-powered health delegation led by HEAL and HCWH met for regular organised briefings and helped make the Prescription for a Healthy Planet more widely known. Our giant "Prescription" was handed to World Health Organization's Dr Maria Neira during an original and lively event organised by medical students. Read the [press release](#). Dr Robin Stott of Climate and Health Council created hilarity by conducting a "ward round" visit to an ailing patient, the planet, himself dressed as a polar bear.

At the WHO "side event" event in Copenhagen, Professor Andrew Haines of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine described major new research published in the leading medical publication The Lancet on the global co-benefits that can accrue as a direct result of many mitigation activities for greenhouse-gas emissions. (Reference: [Lancet Series report on Health and Climate Change, 25 November 2009](#)).

As a result of HEAL and HCWH taking a delegation to Copenhagen, the global health community has become a constituent part of the civil society movement on climate change. HEAL is now taking part in strategic discussions, and articles on the health perspective have been published in both the Copenhagen civil society publication and the newsletter of the European Climate Action Network (CAN E).

Our activities are strongly within the medical sector in Europe. The President of the Standing Committee on European Doctors (CPME), Dr Michael Wilks took a leading role in Copenhagen as part of the HEAL delegation. On his return to Brussels, his [editorial](#) was published in the British Medical Journal and for the 27 European medical association membership on the [CPME website](#).

The European Respiratory Society, a HEAL member that represents respiratory experts in 100 countries, is publishing an advertisement about the Prescription for a Healthy Planet in its leading magazine "Breathe". ERS has produced a brochure on climate change and respiratory disease, which was shared widely in Copenhagen and is available [here](#).

► **Looking ahead,** HEAL will be taking part in discussions with WHO Europe and countries in the European region this month on an action plan for health and climate change. Thanks to strong support from members and partners, we are in a very strong position to contribute effectively.

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February 2010

Making waves on pesticides in France and UK

2010 will be a decisive year for our [Sick of Pesticides Campaign](#), which aims to highlight the adverse health effects of pesticides and provide educational, advocacy and legal tools for local groups, schools and farmers to become involved in policy change.

The new [EU pesticides package](#) (for authorisation and use of pesticides) has great potential for better health protection, yet it really depends on how governments will develop and follow-through on **national pesticide reduction action plans**. First steps will be setting up plans by 2012, and making sure that they include quantitative objectives, targets, measures and timetables to reduce risks and impacts of pesticide use, and to ensure public participation. We are urging all Member States to report on how they are minimizing or completely banning pesticide use in areas used by the public or vulnerable groups.

The UK is one of the countries soon to launch its public consultation on the National Action Plan. The results of our [UK School Survey as part of HEAL's Sick of Pesticides Campaign](#) underline the need to phase out the use of pesticides in schools as a priority issue. Responses to the HEAL and PAN UK survey from local authorities are quite alarming: Children may be exposed to at least four potentially cancer causing pesticides in their schools (the final report is available [here](#)). We encourage individuals and organisations to use the survey to find out which pesticides are being used in their local schools (for more information please contact [Anne Stauffer](#)).

The survey also highlights the use of hazardous biocides and the need for more control. **The EU Biocides Law is now being revised with important discussions in the European Parliament** (and the Council of Environment Ministers). HEAL is working together with partners PAN Europe, Women in Europe for a Common Future and others to ensure that there are strict exclusion criteria for hazardous biocides, that the specific needs of vulnerable groups are recognised and that biocidal products with nano-silver are subject to a health-check before being allowed onto the market (read more [here](#)).

As part of our French Sick of Pesticides Activities, HEAL together with our member organisation "Mouvement pour le droit et le respect des generations futures" (MDRGF) launched what is probably **Europe's first network for people with health problems related to pesticide exposure**, [Victimes des Pesticides](#). At a recent meeting, French pesticide victims joined forces for better legal recognition and compensation and to highlight the need for better protection against hazardous pesticides (Read more [here](#))

This year, HEAL will be extending the Sick of Pesticides Campaign to three further countries – the Netherlands, Belgium and Hungary – to bring health concerns and expertise to the National Action Plans, and to advocate for ambitious reduction targets and pesticide-free zones. We want to ensure that patient and health groups are included in all discussions and decisions on pesticide reduction measures. A variety of activities are planned through a coalition of our members and groups. Please let us know if you're interested in working together with us.

This year's **"Week without Pesticides" from 20 – 30 March** offers the perfect opportunity to become involved in the call to reduce pesticide use for better health protection.

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March 2010

Parma ministerial: positive discussions but little sense of urgency

The Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, which took place in Parma, Italy, 10-12 March 2010 created a major opportunity for policy makers from the 53 Member States of the WHO Regional Office for Europe to discuss how environmental factors are affecting health. Zsuzsanna Jakab, the new Regional Director for WHO Europe told the meeting that environment and health would be one of her priorities, and that bringing environmental factors to the public health agenda could help re-invigorate it. She stressed that it was now time to stop talking and to move to action.

The Pan European process on Environment and Health began in 1989, and is credited with putting environment and health on the national agendas of many WHO member states as well as spearheading international discussions and agreements in other regions, such as the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan CEHAPE. The Fifth Ministerial meeting agreed a new institutional framework for the process, from 2010 until the Sixth Ministerial in 2016, including a mid-term review and a new ministerial board which will meet annually. This has the potential to bring more political weight to pressing environment and health issues. In addition, some targets and timelines for achievements have been set on the regional priority goals for children's environmental health, and the health impact of climate change and environmental inequalities are also now firmly on the agenda.

But what was missing in Parma was any strong sense of urgency about deteriorating public health in Europe as a result of environmental conditions. Children's health is under serious threat: child cancer rates are increasing by more than one per cent each year, and climate change will push up rates of the traditional child killers - respiratory and diarrhoeal diseases (see press release for the [CEHAPE good practice awards](#)). Yet few ministers spoke with real recognition that we are facing a crisis in public health.



The winners of the CEHAPE Awards for good practice in Environment and Health. Find out more about the winning projects [here](#)

Chronic diseases, such as cancer, diabetes, obesity and long-term respiratory diseases, are rising in both children and adults in Europe; environmental factors contribute significantly to all these conditions. Chronic illness now represents more than 80% of the overall health burden in Europe and is a huge factor in national health spending. Yet serious attention is still not being given to the known opportunities for reducing chronic conditions through policies addressing air and chemical pollution as a minimum. (See the intervention by [André Cicolella](#))

HEAL and other health and medical organisations recognise their own need to strengthen advocacy and communication work to further support the Environment and Health process. We, as the health community, especially want to promote our capacity to monitor how environmental laws, such as air quality or pesticides, are made and implemented – at EU, national and local levels. The necessary political will to tackle the environmental causes of chronic diseases and to promote sustainable development can only be achieved by building voices, especially among medical professionals, youth and other non-governmental groups, who can

share their messages with politicians and policy makers. It is also vital that the public become fully awareness about failures in meeting targets on reducing harmful environmental exposures and how this is linked to their own health so that the resulting public concerns are brought to governments. For example, politicians need to act on concerns over Bisphenol A (BPA), an endocrine disruptor. The [youth delegation](#) in Parma have asked governments to remove BPA from baby bottles.

The crisis in children's health on the one hand and the positive health benefits to be reaped by reducing environmental pollution on the other is such that the Parma meeting should have attracted as much attention as the Copenhagen talks on climate change in December last year.

In reality, most people outside Italy did not even hear about it. Although media coverage of the meeting was strong in Parma and nationally, it was patchy in other European countries. Nevertheless, the ministerial did provide an excellent opportunity for policy makers to discuss how environmental change could improve health - and it did spotlight the new WHO Europe Regional Director Zsuzsanna Jakab as a committed and determined champion.

In the final [press release](#), Dr Jakab said she felt that Parma had "opened an exciting new chapter" on environment and health. The closing message quoted EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, John Dalli recognising both the problem and identifying those likely to be most harmed. "A significant proportion of Europeans suffers from health problems linked to environmental conditions. Vulnerable groups, such as children, pregnant women and socially disadvantaged people are particularly affected," he said.

Follow up documents from Parma

[Parma Declaration on Environment and Health](#)

WHO Press release 12 March 2010 [European governments adopt comprehensive plan to reduce environmental risks to health by 2020](#). Governments from across Europe signed a declaration today at the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, pledging to reduce the adverse health impact of environmental threats in the next decade.

["Protecting health in an environment challenged by climate change: European Regional Framework for Action"](#) which was developed by the Climate change and health task force of the WHO European Region in which HEAL participated, with input from national experts.

Speeches:

Closing address: [Ms Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe](#)

[Dr. Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General-<http://www.euro.who.int/parma2010/videos/day-1/video-01>]

European Commissioner Dalli's [speech](#). The Health Commissioner's review post Parma [Developing healthy environments for all our citizens - a major challenge](#)

[Speech by Jacqueline McGlade](#) Executive Director, European Environment Agency (EEA) [Photographs from Parma](#)

[Video Clips](#) from all speakers.

• Youth Participation

[Youth Declaration 2010](#)

[Youth participation in the environment and health process](#)

• CEHAPE Awards

[Video of the awards ceremony](#)

[Press release](#)

• ***HEAL and other NGOs***

[HEAL daily updates page from Parma](#)

[Media coverage from Parma](#)

[NGO Interventions](#)

[Interventions from the floor](#)

[Year of the Lung Symposium – children’s respiratory health and the environment](#)

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April 2010

EU's opportunities for preventing cancer from environmental causes

One in three people in the European Union will develop some form of cancer during their lifetime.

Even more shocking is the fact that cancers in children are increasing by at least 1% every year. A growing body of science shows that some of these cancers can be prevented by environmental policy, which provides the EU with an important role.

► **What is the European Union doing about the environmental dimension of cancer?** In June last year, the European Commission issued an official 'Communication' on Action against Cancer, in which it acknowledged that cancer prevention should address environmental and occupational causes on an equal footing with lifestyle considerations, such as smoking.

In the past month, **the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) Committee of the European Parliament unanimously passed a report on the Commission's Cancer Communication.** It clearly recognises the overall importance of the environmental dimension.

Specifically, the ENVI report on cancer:

► *Defines 'environmental factors' beyond the standard tobacco smoke, excess UV rays and radon to note the role of hazardous chemicals in outdoor and indoor environments, including occupational settings;*

► *Distinguishes between primary prevention of incidence and secondary prevention, such as screening programmes; and,*

► *Calls for research on environmental factors, and resources on environmental prevention.*

HEAL would like to thank the 22 organisations that signed our letter that recommended these precisions to Members of the European Parliament.

The European Commission has also launched a Partnership for Action Against Cancer, bringing together Member States and a wide variety of stakeholders to coordinate actions in a structured way on a voluntary basis. Specific workgroups exist on research, healthcare, comparable data, and prevention and health promotion. Work group participants have formulated a 'joint action' programme that will be competing with other projects for EU funding.

Unfortunately, the prevention and health promotion workgroup has confined itself to screening and early detection work. However, we are hoping that opportunities to take up and integrate environmental issues may still arise in the coming year.

As well as the cancer communication and partnership, **the EU is funding research projects that investigate cancer and environmental issues in its Research Framework Programme** Some of these may provide compelling evidence for policy, such as the cancer-specific [ECNIS](#), [NEW GENERIS](#), and COGS. Other past projects with relevance are the CREDO cluster projects and [CASCADE](#) on endocrine disruptors. There are also coordination projects, such as [HENVINET](#), which seek to bridge the gaps between the environment and health research and policy communities.

HEAL strongly believes that resources and a mechanism, such as a second EU Action Plan on Environment and Health, are needed to ensure research findings are swiftly and coherently used to guide policy for better health.

During the coming year, a number of policies pertaining to cancer will also be addressed by other EU institutions, including reporting on an ongoing Community Strategy for Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (now in its 10th year); ongoing implementation of the EU chemicals law REACH, where hundreds of cancer causing or cancer-related chemicals await listing on the EU's most harmful list prior to undergoing a strict permission procedure; the revision of the EU law on biocides; and hopefully the launch of a second Environment and Health Action Plan. HEAL will be active in all these policy areas to try to strengthen the way the EU addresses the environmental dimension of preventing cancer incidence.

Useful resources on environment and cancer:

- ▶ [Pesticides and Cancer](#)
- ▶ [Canadian Cancer Society](#)
- ▶ [Breast Cancer UK](#)
- ▶ [Cancer Prevention and Education Society](#)
- ▶ [CHE Cancer and Environmental Resources](#)

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