



UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 10.00 CET THURSDAY 11 MARCH 2010

Press release

Competition rewards environmental projects that save children's lives

Parma, Italy 11 March 2010 – Eight winning projects have received Children's Environment and Health Plan for Europe (CEHAPE) Awards at the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the WHO European Region on Environment and Health today. (1)

Each project represents "good practice" in improving the environment for children's health(2), according to the leading international non-governmental organisations responsible for managing the competition. They are Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), EcoForum, and International Society of Doctors for the Environment Austria.

"Children's health in Europe is under threat," says Genon Jensen, Executive Director, Health and Environment Alliance. "Rates of some serious health conditions, such as cancer, are increasing year by year and the traditional killers - respiratory and diarrhoeal disease - are likely to be exacerbated by climate change.(3) Endocrine disrupting chemicals - known as EDCs - are identified as a key environment and health challenge(4) and as an area where priority needs to be given to identifying safer alternatives(5)."

"Each winner in the CEHAPE Awards has shown how children's health can be protected through low-cost, low technology interventions that involve local people. We would like to see these projects copied as widely as possible in communities in the European Union and across the WHO Europe region."

Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director, Women in Europe for a Common Future says: "Many of the countries in the European region invest little money in measures to improve children's health, which is difficult to understand, given that children are our future. Damage to health during childhood can have life-long negative effects."

"The CEHAPE awards show how local initiatives can be key to improving children's health, in particular in schools and kindergartens. In 2010, each child should have access to safe water and sanitation - Why is it that 13,000 children are still dying of water borne diseases in our region?"(6) asks Ms Gabizon.

Other major problems for children's health are indoor air quality, exposure to harmful chemicals and a lack of opportunity for physical activity.(7) "Each child should be able to attend a school where he or she is not exposed to asbestos dust or other indoor air contaminants. Unfortunately, half the countries represented here in Parma continue to build their schools using asbestos. Each child should also be protected from harmful chemicals, in their toys, clothes and living environments and be able to benefit from safe physical activity and from green, natural areas. There is still a long way to go, but the CEHAPE awards show that support for local initiatives really pays off," Sascha Gabizon says.

The overall winner in each category of the CEHAPE Awards will receive a cheque for 1,000 Euros. The eight award categories are based on the four priority goals of CEHAPE (Water

and sanitation; Accident prevention and physical activity; Air quality; and Hazardous chemicals and radiation); two key challenges for children's health and the environment: mobility and climate change, and two inspirational settings: youth participation and schools.

(2)

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THE WINNERS

Category 1: Water and Sanitation

Winner: Arūnas Balsevičius, Station of Nature Research and Environmental Education, **Lithuania**.

Voluntary monitoring of drinking water wells by local citizens keeps the water supply safe for children in Marijampolė County. In Lithuania, more than one in four of the country's population relies on drinking water from wells.

Category 2: Accident Prevention and Physical Activity

Winner: Katrina Phillips, Child Accident Prevention Trust, **United Kingdom**

The organisers of Child Safety Week 2009 say 6.5 million people were reached through mail-outs and participation in local events. A total of 70,000 booklets containing simple ideas on how to improve child safety were distributed and downloaded from the website.

Category 3: Air Quality

Winner: Sara Reekmans, The Flemish Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, the Flemish Agency for Care and Health, and the Flemish Local Health Networks, **Belgium**

This educational project helps provide fresh and healthy air for classrooms in primary schools. It has been so successful that the organisers are working on a request to extend the scheme to secondary schools.

Category 4: Hazardous Chemicals and Radiation

Winner: Petr Sharov, Far Eastern Environmental Health Fund, **Russia**

By changing the contaminated soil in playgrounds, this project has substantially reduced children's risks of lead exposure. The number of children with lead in their blood above internationally-recommended safety levels has been halved.

Category 5: Mobility

Winner: Franz Leeb, PORG Volders grammar school, **Austria**

School children are promoting public transport and cycling to school as a way to reduce noise and air pollution around their school. Coverage of the project in newspapers and on the radio has allowed discussion of the high cost of travel on public transport.

Category 6: Climate Protection

Winner: Elena Manvelyan, Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment, **Armenia**

A kindergarten in Armenia now has solar powered, low-cost, hot water supply, thanks to this successful project. Some of the children's parents are so impressed that they are having their own solar plants installed at home.

Category 7: Youth Participation

Winner: Irina Fedorenko, Green Light Youth Organization, **Russia**

The organisers have provided young people with an inspiring computer-based interactive environmental education and action programme about the environment and health. An estimated 2,000 young people have taken part in environmental measures associated with the project.

Category 8: Schools

Winner: Umidjon Ulugov, Youth of the 21st Century, **Tajikistan**

This project creates "Green schools" with the help of student environmental management programmes. Classrooms involved in the project are warmer, tidier and boiled drinking water is available. Student health has improved with fewer absences due to upset stomachs and flu. Funds have been created by selling plastic and waste paper to recycling companies.

The CEHAPE competition and award ceremony was sponsored by the following Ministries and Agencies:

- Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management - Division on Transport, Mobility, Human Settlement and Noise, Austria

- Joint-Interministerial Conference on Environment and Health in charge of NEHAP, Belgium
- Ministry of the Environment, Denmark
- Federal Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt)
- Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany
- Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, the Netherlands
- Ministry of the Environment, Norway
- Ministry of Health and Care Services, Norway
- Ministry of the Environment, Sweden

Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) thank the European Commission for its financial support.

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Notes for journalists

1. Press conference: 10.00-10.30, the Media Centre, Auditorium Niccolo Paganini, Parma Municipality Congress Centre, Viale Barilla 29/a, 43100 Parma. Website: www.euro.who.int/parma2010 CEHAPE is under discussion at the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health organised by the World Health Organization (WHO) European Region in Parma, 10-12 March 2010.
2. A fuller description of each project is available in the brochure, "CEHAPE Awards, Second competition on good practice in children's health and the environment", which also features the work of HEAL and WECF on children's health. It is available at www.env-health.org or www.wecf.eu on 11 March 2010 after the announcement of the winners.
3. Parma Declaration on Environment and Health , para 3.b – key environment and health challenges of our time. Conference documents not publicly available.
4. Parma Declaration on Environment and Health, para 3.e – one of the key environment and health challenges identified by ministers are "concerns raised by emerging issues such as persistent, endocrine-disrupting and bio-accumulating harmful chemicals and [nano]" (as above)
5. Commitment to Act, Chapter A, RPGIV, para iv (page 3) calls for more research on endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) and safer alternatives.
6. In the WHO European Region, this risk factor causes over 13,000 deaths from diarrhoea among children aged 0-14 years (5.3% of all deaths in this age group) each year, WHO press release www.euro.who.int/mediacentre/PR/2005/20050729_1
7. Commitment to Act, Protecting children's health, Chapter A calls on countries to work toward targets to improve access to safe water and sanitation, address obesity and injuries through safe environments and providing healthy indoor environments in child specific settings.

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) aims to promote a healthy environment for healthy people. It represents a diverse network of more than 60 groups representing citizens, patients, women's groups, health professionals, and environmental advocates across Europe. Working at the European level, HEAL focuses on chemicals, pesticides, climate change, air quality, mercury, children's vulnerabilities and many other aspects of EU policy that are relevant to people's health and the environment.

Women in Europe for a Common Future – WECF – is a network of over 100 women and environment organisations in over 40 countries, created in 1994 following the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, to give women a stronger voice in sustainable development and environmental policy, with the aim of balancing environmental, health and economic perspectives. WECF strives for a Healthy Environment for All. WECF implements sustainable development projects at local level and promotes policies for a healthy environment at global level.