

Environment and health



Highlights include a new roadmap for environmental protection that prioritises health; opportunities emerging from trade discussions and from the threat on fracking; and the risk of harmful chemical exposures explained by a celebrity at the Paris film festival.

Strengthening EU's new environmental programme

The new 7th EU Environment Action Programme (EAP) is a clear step forward. The legally-binding programme sets the strategy and goals for environmental action to the year 2020. HEAL helped achieve a stronger focus on chemicals, including a mention of EDCs, and earlier deadlines on targets. Other welcome elements were the "Toxics Free Strategy", recognition of indoor air pollution as a problem to be tackled, and support promised for EU human biomonitoring.

How was this achieved?

HEAL and its members have provided regular expert input over the past two to three years. In April 2013, HEAL published a position paper (below) with public health priorities, which was widely promoted. Next, voting recommendations were sent to MEPs ahead of the vote in the Environment Committee. HEAL also encouraged members to contact their national environment ministers. Prior to important deliberations and votes, HEAL sent a template letter to members for national environment ministers as well as targeted advocacy action with MEPs as part of a lunch discussion in March 2013.



In preparation for the trilogue negotiations with the Irish EU presidency, the Parliament and the EU Commission, HEAL had an opportunity to provide expertise to hone in on the Programme's health chapter specifically.

Deputy Director Anne Stauffer (right), who led HEAL's advocacy efforts, says the 7th EAP shows the commitment of the EU, particularly of Member States, to protecting our health from environmental threats. It will be an important driver for the policy proposals in the coming years.



Engaging with WHO

HEAL's Executive Director, Génon K. Jensen represents around 600 health NGOs in the WHO's



Environment and Health Process. She took part in several task force and preparatory meetings during the course of the year and contributed to the midterm (between ministerial conferences) assessment report in preparation for the next major meeting. Joint NGO recommendations include:

- Better use of latest science for precautionary policies
- Better calculation of the costs of inaction on environmental health problems
- Setting up national stakeholder consultations
- The addition of new topics, such as energy and health.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Europe's environmental news and information service, ENDS Europe (21 June 2013) described the important achievements of this final round:

"The negotiators strengthened the European Commission's initial text regarding actions on chemicals. For example, they called for the development of "harmonised hazard-based criteria" for the identification of endocrine disrupters. There was no mention of such criteria in the original version." (21 June 2013)



A healthy environment for a good quality of life **Green 10**

www.green10.org

The Green 10 top ten demands for the 2014 European Parliament elections

Europe is struggling to find its way out of multiple crises. Austerity measures in reaction to the economic crisis are causing untold human suffering. The environmental crisis is continuing apace, endangering the well-being of future generations. Meanwhile, little has been done to put the region on an environmentally sustainable path. Ten of the leading environmental organisations in the EU, representing over 20 million Europeans, believe that the answers to these crises lie in smarter and more sustainable EU policies. This will help Europe create new jobs, regain competitiveness, address the climate crisis and improve quality of life within the limits of our planet.

Preparing for European elections

HEAL provided members with a workshop on how to get the health and environment messages to MEPs and worked as a member of the Green10 to launch a manifesto at the end of 2013 (above).

The Green10 is a group of the ten leading environmental organisations active at EU level. As a member, HEAL values working with these organisations to gather expertise and produce sound evidence, and to multiply the impact of our efforts. Exchanges with top level EU Commission officials such as the EU Commissioner for Environment Janez Potočnik have helped to raise HEAL's profile and ensured health considerations were taken up in horizontal EU policy deliberations. This was particularly impactful during the Irish EU Presidency and the agreement on the 7th EU Environmental Action Programme (EAP).



Green 10 representatives including HEAL present their position on TTIP to EU Commissioner for Trade, Karel de Gucht (second from right).

Fighting threats of a trade agreement to public health

The EU-US Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) talks have risen rapidly up the political agenda this year. If accepted TTIP would not just be another agreement on easing trade barriers, it involves harmonising regulatory systems, which could mean a watering down of EU protective standards. HEAL is part of a coalition of environment and health NGOs opposed to the inclusion of the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS).

HEAL's Deputy Director Anne Stauffer has spoken extensively on concerns that the deal would undermine the precautionary principle and EU chemicals policies. Letters have been sent to EU Commissioner for Trade, Karel de Gucht and US-Ambassador Michael Fromann.

An open letter, published in Euractiv, one of the leading EU news portals in December 2013, said:

'ISDS forces governments to use taxpayer funds to compensate corporations for public health, environmental, labour and other public interest policies and government actions'



TTIP – how the EU-US trade talks could harm our health by affecting chemicals regulation

EU-US negotiations on a trade agreement (called the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, "TTIP", or the Trans-Atlantic Free Trade Agreement, "TAFTA") have been criticised for their lack of transparency and little involvement of civil society.¹ Concerns have been raised relating the potential weakening of existing standards and democratic procedures. This briefing deals with the threat to undermine EU chemicals regulation.

A joint briefing by HEAL and CHEM Trust in March 2014 (above) gives the reasons why TTIP is not a typical trade agreement, and shows the differences in EU and US chemicals regulation, with a much weaker system in the US.

Fracking: safety first!

HEAL's speeches, letters, policy papers and press releases on shale gas extraction (a controversial gas and oil mining process, known as fracking) achieved an early policy success. MEPs voted to include fracking in the revision of the EU's Environmental Impact Assessment Directive. Disappointingly, however, the plenary vote in December 2013 called only for "voluntary" measures.



Lisette van Vliet, HEAL (shown above holding the banner from the right) joined others to call for "No fracking in Europe" outside of the EU Commission buildings on 22 January 2013.

Film festival hears film celebrity's concerns

Leading US actor, Sean Penn was heard as the narrator in "The Human Experiment" at this year's Paris environmental film festival (FIFE 2014). Sean Penn's film was one of three films screened and debated during the "Health and Environment" day at the festival, which was sponsored by HEAL.



Nadia Bennich, whilst at Fundacion Vivosano (now with HEAL) hosted a debate on her film "In Small print" with Pauline Berthelley, from Réseau Environnement Santé (RES), and Génon K. Jensen, HEAL.



SANTÉ ET ENVIRONNEMENT

En partenariat avec HEAL, Alliance pour la Santé et l'Environnement www.env-health.org



Vendredi 7 • 13h45 • S.2

CETTE COULEUR QUI ME DÉRANGE THIS COLOUR THAT BOTHERS ME

Khadiata Pouye

Sénégal • 2012 • 26' • vostf

Au Sénégal, de nombreuses femmes se dépigmentent pour avoir une peau plus claire, sans mesurer les conséquences de cet acte sur leur santé.

RENCONTRE

Cosmétiques et santé

Une rencontre sur les problèmes sanitaires liés aux cosmétiques et aux diktats actuels en matière de beauté. Avec Anne Barre (*Women in Europe for a Common Future*), Genon K. Jensen (HEAL), Claudine Reinhard (*Wala France – Dr. Hauschka*) et Carole Tawema (*Karethic*).



Vendredi 7 • 10h15 • S.2
Samedi 8 • 12h30 • S.3

THE HUMAN EXPERIMENT

Don Hardy & Dana Nachman

États-Unis • 2013 • 52' • vostf

Au quotidien, nous sommes de plus en plus exposés aux pollutions chimiques, mais l'ampleur des enjeux économiques rend le combat contre les industriels inégal.



+ Projection en IDF p. 21

Vendredi 7 • 12h15 • S.2
Samedi 8 • 10h00 • S.3

IN SMALL PRINT LA LETRA PEQUEÑA

Nadia El Bennich

Espagne • 2012/2013 • 75' • vostf

Il y a quelque chose d'invisible dans notre nourriture, nos cosmétiques ou les jouets de nos enfants, dont l'impact sur notre santé peut être grave.

Reaching future messengers?

The world's first-ever textbook on "Children's Environmental Health" will help take the history of Europe's successes to a new generation of doctors and clinical practitioners thanks to a chapter by HEAL's Genon K. Jensen and Diana G. Smith. The Oxford University Press publication is aimed at students of public health and environmental science.

