



ANPED WORKING GROUP BRIEFING PAPER

DRAFT

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

Health is an important cross-cutting issue, touching upon the activities of all other working groups. We recognize that there are huge regional differences in health and environment issues and that different regions will have different priorities. Large parts of Eastern Europe suffer from extensive nuclear and/ or chemical pollution, gravely endangering the natural resource base, in particular water and soil. For these regions improvement in legislation, drinking water plants, public control and decision-making is of the utmost importance. In comparison, the western region has many of these instruments and technical facilities in place, but the waters are still polluted, and huge public health problems from pervasive chemical pollution, electromagnetic fields and new technologies are beginning to show.

Industrial countries suffer from unprecedented rise in asthma, allergies, cancer, and various congenital defects. Recent research indicates that chemical pollution, affecting children from conception on, lie at the root of many disturbing trends. Also, we see in other regions in the world, including Eastern Europe a rapid rise in the aforementioned modernization related health problems.

The EU is taking major steps to put an end to this ongoing pollution from unsustainable production processes, in particular in the area of the chemicals industry. At the moment, there are more than 100.000 substances in use, of which we have little or no information about hazards to health and environment. Current legislation puts the burden of proof to the government, and allows the industry plenty of opportunities to successfully oppose restrictions. Of the 140 priority substances established in 1993, only 90 so far have been evaluated. It has been estimated, that another 1400 substances, hitherto unevaluated, will appear to have hazardous properties.

The REACH proposal (Registration, Evaluation, Authorization of Chemicals) intends to reverse the burden of proof and is as such a most crucial step forward, with major implications for the other regions as well.

Another important result from the regional process is the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE), which puts children's health at the centre of environment and health policy making. The EU Strategy on Health and Environment and EU's research and indicators programme on health of children, SCALE, is also important, as it will generate lots of scientific information of environmental impact on health of children.

Mission statement and envisaged goals

- To get environment and health higher on the political agenda
- To promote integration of environment and health
- To raise awareness about environmental hazards and health effects
- To promote a precautionary approach
- To address injustices in environmental health protection
- To achieve a better protection for vulnerable groups, in particular children.

Activities and achievements

A number of ANPED members is very active in this field. On the subject of chemicals, MNGM (Monitoring Network on Health & Environment) and Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) have done a lot of advocacy and lobbying work in the REACH process, in cooperation with the European Environmental Bureau, EEN (EPHA (European Public Health Alliance) Environment Network), Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and WWF. MNGM and WECF have drafted the NGO/ civil society declaration, known as the Brussels Statement in the course of the Budapest Conference on Health and Environment. ANPED itself has conducted 2 workshops at the NGO Healthy Planet Forum in Budapest. MNGM also organised an event, part of which is published in Northern Lights. WECF and its member organisations had a huge share in the organisation of the Budapest NGO conference and the ministerial roundtable. WECF was the NGO-representative in the European Environment and Health Commission (EEHC), preparing the official documents. Via WECF and EEN / EPHA, which also has a seat in the European Environment and Health Commission, several ANPED members have given input to the Budapest process, and EEHC will continue its work in implementing the CEHAPE, which is the main result of the Budapest Conference.

Progress and challenges

As indicated above, there are huge activities in the field of health and environment, but in most of them members from the western region are involved, quite often via interconnecting networks, and not primarily from ANPED. As a consequence, not all the results and materials developed have been communicated properly to ANPED. This is because funding is notoriously difficult for NGO's from the western region. Because of the funding structure, it is difficult for these NGOs to participate in ANPED's AGM and to channel their work through ANPED. Yet, what happens in the industrialised parts of the ECE region is not to be ignored, and ANPED members in these parts have quite a lot of materials and expertise, which, if made available to ANPED, could benefit the other members and working groups a lot.

At the moment, ANPED does not have that many members with a major focus on health and so far ANPED did not develop particularly strong positions at the CSD. Apart from outreach to civil groups working on national or local level, it is important for ANPED to invest in network building. Because of the broad scope of ANPED and its affiliations with a wide variety of networks and issues in sustainable development, ANPED is in an excellent position to promote integration of health and environment. Health, being a major cross-cutting issue, touches upon a host of other topics in sustainable development. Many intersections have hardly been explored, for example health and sustainable energy policy, or health and environment in rural areas, or gender, health and environment. Apart from good communication with other working groups and networks, strengthening the bonds with the research world

will help to promote integration of health and environment and a precautionary approach.

Relevant case materials

At the moment, reports of ANPED's 2 workshops and of MNGM's activities are available. MNGM can submit the report of the groups on electro-sensitivity and MCS (multiple chemical sensitivity). MNGM organises a conference on vulnerable groups in November, and WECF, MNGM, ISDE and INCHEM participate in the EU and UNECE health processes. Further material needs to be selected for editing and being made available to the ANPED members. Other materials, such as a gender analysis of the EU proposal for new legislation on chemicals (REACH), are currently being developed. WECF has developed a toolkit on chemicals in daily life. The Global Lead network has developed a lot of high quality information about lead in gasoline and health consequences. Accessibility of these materials will be promoted.

Future priorities

First of all, we can improve communication and dissemination of high-quality information on health and environment. Very high on the priority list is the need for a general mobilisation on the issue of chemical hazards. The EU is doing groundbreaking work, transferring responsibility to provide information on chemical hazards to the industry and reversing the burden of proof. This work needs support. In the short run we can produce briefing papers on chemicals policy and hazards, on electromagnetic fields and on Multiple Chemical Sensitivity.

By involving science shops and excellent contacts in the research world, we can make a start with the production of high quality background reports on emerging issues like UMTS or nanotechnology, and explore cross-sectoral linkages between for example energy and health, spatial planning and health, or case studies on health and chemical pollution. MNGM is working on software to enable NGOs to systematically register cases of environment-induced health problems. It is willing to organize side events and workshops on registration and/ or civil empowerment.

The Global Lead Network aspires to organize a regional meeting on phasing out of lead in gasoline in 2006 or 2007. During the AGM, a Working Group on Water Pollution and Health was proposed. The huge regional differences in health priorities in our opinion justify two working groups on health issues. Western Europe and the US are suffering under the burden of huge chemical background contamination, EMF, noise and problems with little transparency and limited availability of health information. Strengthening relations with partners across the Atlantic would benefit organisations active on background pollution and health issues. It is also important to link with a wide variety of networks concerned with environmental health and sustainable development. Major problems in this region are air pollution, indoor environment and product safety, as well as the right to know and reversing the burden of proof. For the water group it is important to note, that in March 2006 the World Water Forum is scheduled.

Institutions, processes and allies

Obviously, REACH is a very important process, which will extend over another 2.5 year. Also CEHAPE and SCALE follow up will be followed. Given this state of affairs, ANPED will be in a position to prepare well in advance of the CSD agenda. Important

allies campaigning on REACH are Greenpeace, WWF, FOE and EEN (EPHA Environment Network), of which ANPED is a member. Consumer networks also form part of the REACH coalition.

ANPED will contribute to these processes wherever possible and develop its position in CSD and Environment for Europe processes, drawing on the vast experience from these networks and processes.

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ANPED – the Northern Alliance for Sustainability

ANPED is a unique alliance of NGOs working together for sustainable development in the northern hemisphere.

The alliance was set up in 1991 before the UN Earth Summit in recognition of the fact that northern NGOs have special responsibilities with regard to the impact of the richer northern nations on the poorer south. This relates especially to issues of sustainable consumption and production, which has always been a major issue for ANPED.

Since 1992 ANPED has developed a second major role: it offers a way for NGOs in the east and west parts of the northern hemisphere to work together. A majority of our members are from nations in eastern Europe and from nations that were formerly part of the USSR. As well as linking Europe and North America we also have strong links with southern NGO networks.

ANPED is both a network and an alliance. Networking takes place in many ways, while the Alliance members meet annually to agree priorities and policy goals. Our mission statement is:

ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability, works to empower Northern civil society in creating and protecting sustainable communities and societies world-wide. We do this by:

- *Building capacity among Northern civil society organisations through sharing of information, knowledge, and skills; and*
- *Enabling informed and effective democratic participation by civil society in local, national, regional and international decision-making on sustainable development policy and processes.*

ANPED receives funding from the EU and other organisations and has a permanent secretariat based in Amsterdam. ANPED currently works on these issues:

- Agriculture and Biodiversity
- Health and Environment
- Human Rights and Sustainable Development
- Local Action for Sustainable Development
- Nuclear Issues
- Sustainable Production and Consumption
- Water, Pollution and Health

ANPED welcomes new members from any nation within the regions in which we work.

For more information visit the website: www.anped.org

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