6th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health


Ostrava, Czech Republic, 13–15 June 2017

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Ostrava Youth Declaration 2017

Preamble

The Ostrava Youth Declaration 2017 has been put together by the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition (EEHYC) with the direct input of international youth delegates.

EEHYC is the official organization that ensures the youth contribution to the European Environment and Health Process (EEHP). As a direct result of the commitments made under the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health, EEHYC ensures that young people priorities are recognized and represented across all Member States at both national and international levels. EEHYC also supports, legitimizes and gives visibility to young people’s participation in any processes aimed at achieving a healthy and sustainable environment.

This document derives from the Vienna Youth Position Paper on Environment and Health 2016, which in turn was the outcome of a consultation process conducted on young people across the European Region.

DECLARATION

1. We, Young Leaders, nationals of Member States in the European Region of the World Health Organization (WHO), active in the fields of health and the environment, in the presence of the Ministers of Health and Environment of the European Region of WHO, the WHO Regional Director for Europe, the Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Director of the Environment Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and of high-level representatives of the European Union and other United Nations and intergovernmental organizations, have gathered in Ostrava, Czech Republic, from 13 to 15 June 2017, to engage in the overcoming key environment and health challenges of our time.
Acknowledgment

2. We acknowledge the positive influence of previous declarations and actions taken to safeguard and improve both health and the environment. We recognize the improvements achieved in human health and wellbeing and recall the Batumi Declaration: “Greener, cleaner, smarter!” (2016), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015), THE PEP Paris Declaration - “City in Motion – People first!” (2014), the Health 2020 Agenda, the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health (2010) and its commitment to actions under the Children’s Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE). We reaffirm our commitments from the Parma Youth Declaration (2010) and the Budapest Youth Declaration (2004).

3. We welcome the Member States reaffirmed commitments on ensuring safe and sustainable water and sanitation in the context of climate change, improving air quality, reducing waste and pollution and strengthening resilience to climate change in the WHO European Region.

4. We fully support the Member States new commitments on achieving environmental sustainability of health systems and on making European cities environmentally sustainable and resilient to global environmental change in order to protect and promote health and wellbeing.

Moving Forward

5. Since its establishment, EEHYC, in its role as registered European body representing young people from the WHO European Region in the European Environment and Health Process (EEHP), has built a system of National Platforms, each of them composed of national organizations focused on youth participation on the environment and health topics. Such National Platforms implement projects and programs within EEHP, are involved in decision-making processes, and strengthen youth participation at national and international levels. Despite efforts, five years after the commitments made by Member States in the Parma Declaration, only about a quarter of the European Region reported during Mid Term Review about meaningful youth engagement. This indicates that strengthening youth involvement in the EEHP still needs significant improvement, and that the process would further benefit from Member States enhancing their practical support for youth participation, demonstrating a stronger attachment to implementing the Parma and subsequent commitments to youth across the Region.

6. We are open to Member States support to enhance the EEHYC’s continuous active role in advocating greater engagement of youth at the national and international levels, including the new institutional framework of the EEHP.
7. We call upon the Member States to follow up on their commitments by recognising EEHYC National Platforms in all WHO Member States as stakeholders - youth participation structures, creating financial support mechanisms and the contexts for our meaningful contribution in environment and health decision-making processes.

8. We highlight the importance of regular communication and meetings between national WHO Environment and Health Focal Points and the representatives of EEHYC National Platforms, in order to discuss and update stakeholders on activities under the EEHP at national and local levels.

9. We call on the Member States to implement mechanisms for active and meaningful youth participation by integrating youth representatives of National Platforms in local and national task forces and involve them in national decision making and policy development processes on Environment, Health, Mobility and Transport issues.

10. We express our interest for Member States to initiate and/or strengthen the collaboration between Ministries of Health, Environment and the Ministries of Youth and Education in order to set-up and/or increase formal and non-formal educational programs, and implement trainings on Environment and Health issues in line with former CEHAPPE-Program, for raising awareness amongst young people in the WHO European Region, as well as to include youth representatives of National Platforms in the development process of these very measures.

11. We call on the Member States to increase their financial support, promote and strengthen the implementation of national and international youth projects and initiatives relevant for the positive future development of the EEHP including youth participation processes.

**Commitment**

12. We are committed to act on environment and health topics. Our focus includes:

   a. achieving environmental sustainability of health systems;
   b. ensuring safe and sustainable water and sanitation for all in the context of climate change;
   c. improving air quality;
   d. making European cities environmentally sustainable and resilient to global environmental change;
   e. protecting and promoting health and wellbeing;
   f. eliminating threats to human health in transition to a circular economy;
   g. reducing waste and pollution in Europe;
   h. promoting health by mitigating, adapting and strengthening resilience to climate change; and
i.  promoting chemical safety.

13. We hereby strengthen our commitment to preparing and providing meaningful input in all the Environment and Health processes, to attend all relevant meetings and to be an active stakeholder in the Seventh European Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health.

14. We, the Executive Board of the EEHYC, on behalf of EEHYC, of the National Platforms and of all the young people in the European Region of WHO, together with the Ostrava Children and Youth Parliament (PDMMO), in the presence of the Ministers of Health and Environment of the European Region of WHO, the WHO Regional Director for Europe, the Regional Director for Europe of the UNEP, the Director of the Environment Division of the UNECE, the Chair of the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF), the high-level representatives of the European Union and other United Nations and intergovernmental organizations and other partners, hereby fully assume the articles and commitments made in this Declaration.

Signed on 15 June 2017 in Ostrava, Czech Republic

Dr. António Marques Pinto
EEHYC Executive Board

Mr. Pavel Linzer
Chairman of PDMMO
Ostrava Youth Commitment to Act 2017

We, the young people from the WHO European Region, through the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition (EEHYC) - the body that represents us officially in the European Environment and Health Process (EEHP) - are dedicated to ensure and provide the necessary time and effort for an active involvement and meaningful participation in the decision making process and implementation of Environment and Health commitments.

We understand the role of young people in bringing long-term change in the European Region society and the needs of our Governments to be supported in the implementation of environment and health commitments.

Building on the foundations laid in the EEHP to date, including in particular the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health and the High-level Mid-term Review, we will intensify our efforts to address not only the main, but all the topics which are listed below. We also reiterate our commitment to work in other sectors whenever necessary, according to our needs, interest, expertise and capacity.

A. Achieving Environmental Sustainability of Health Systems

1. We will work together with the WHO European Region Member States to ensure a broader participation of young people who work in or closely with inter- and non-governmental organizations and support networks to ensure policy progress for implementing environmental sustainable health systems.
2. We will accelerate knowledge sharing and innovation addressing social determinants of health and environmental sustainable health policies by increasing individual health literacy as well as improving the capacity of health and environment professionals.

3. We will further observe progress being made in this area until every child and young person in the WHO European Region has access to health care.

4. We will provide our knowledge in digitalization process to people involved in health systems design in order to strengthen their skills which will ultimately lead to the reduction of the amount of waste produced.

B. Ensuring Safe and Sustainable Water and Sanitation for All in the Context of Climate Change

5. We will continue to collaborate with the WHO European Region Member States and national/local stakeholders on ensuring that young people are meaningfully involved in the water-related decision making processes as equal stakeholders.

6. We will continue supporting the implementation of WHO/ UNECE Protocol on Water and Health in order to tackle the persistent challenges related to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in the European Region as well as other relevant programs and policy papers.

7. We will work closely with WHO European Region Member States and national/local stakeholders on ensuring access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation as well as the basic hygiene and sanitation education for children and pupils in all schools.

8. We will continue monitoring the progress in achieving universal and equitable access to safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools (WASH) services and facilitates in the European region and take action whenever needed.

C. Improving Air Quality

9. We will work closely with international, national and regional stakeholders towards reducing air pollution and related health risks from industry, transport and heating through expanding ambient air quality monitoring networks and improving national legislation to comply with WHO Air Quality Guidelines.
10. We will encourage measures leading to progress in reducing indoor air pollution levels with special attention to vulnerable groups. We will engage more actively in conducting and publicizing research on health effects of indoor air quality in educational institutions.

11. We will support projects on all levels that will contribute to improving air quality through smart urban planning, and providing access, preservation and expanding green spaces and car-free zones. We will support policies and law enforcement activities that will ultimately lead to de-carbonization of the economy and energy sector.

12. We will contribute to improving knowledge and raising awareness among youth on healthy lifestyle, sustainable transport and tackling the issue of overconsumption.

13. We commit to advocate the enhancement of young people first aid skills. We will also encourage campaigns advocating a better utilization of each country’s healthcare system, namely by pushing people to opt on primary care instead of hospital care every time the situation does not require such type of specific resources.

14. We will facilitate the open access to air quality data through supporting or initiating online air quality monitoring and information platforms.

D. Making European Cities Environmentally Sustainable and Resilient to Global Environmental Change; Protecting and Promoting Health and Wellbeing

15. We will support health promoting physical activity such as walking and cycling, and will work to support the increase of public transport share by improving the quality of infrastructure for public transport, for walking, and for cycling. We will further support policies towards the provision of affordable and accessible public transport for everyone, and introduction of environmentally friendly technologies.

16. We commit to promote the planning and implementation of sustainable human-oriented urban spaces and the preservation, protection and expanding of urban green areas, making them free and accessible for everyone.

17. We will work to ensure access to fresh, local, organic food, in urban areas, by promoting, amongst others, transparency in labelling, farmer’s markets, food waste management, incentives for healthy food producers, and reduction of plastic packaging.
18. We commit to work towards achieving a holistic approach to sustainable, resilient, smart cities by ensuring effective inter-sectorial communication, policy-cohesion and the meaningful participation of youth in the decision-making processes concerning the social, environmental and economic aspects.

E. Eliminating Threats to Human Health in Transition to a Circular Economy: Reducing Waste and Pollution in Europe

19. We commit to follow, act and promote policies and practices to reduce the amount of food being declared as waste and being thrown away on the side of producers, dealers and consumers equally.

20. We commit to address the efficient disposal of waste (with a special focus on medical waste, chemical waste and hazardous waste) and advocate the implementation of waste separation schemes and recycle.

21. Together with the Ministries of education of the WHO European Region Member States, we will promote the implementation of the “European Healthy Green Day” in which students may collect waste in their communities. We will also support this project by creating educational materials on this topic.

22. We will encourage the reduction of waste generated due to single-use items and will push for a ban on giving away single-use plastic bags and other similar items for free. We will support governmental policies to introduce deposit systems on reusable items and encourage alternative packaging methods.

F. Promoting Health by Mitigating, Adapting and Strengthening Resilience to Climate Change

23. We are committed to guiding young people to lead by example in adopting active mobility behaviours that will both contribute to climate change mitigation and the reduction of the incidence of sedentary-related diseases.

24. We are committed to motivate young people to adopt responsible food consumption patterns, namely and above all by reducing the consumption of red meat, sugar, salt and the intake of saturated and trans fats, and increase the consumption of plant foods, particularly fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains.
25. We are committed to encouraging young people to favour local and organic products instead of processed or artificial ones, therefore supporting and engaging in local/organic farming initiatives.

26. Soil is a vital element of terrestrial ecosystems, and a central piece in supporting a healthy human life on earth. In order to prevent soil loss from erosion or reduced fertility caused by extreme weather events, we encourage governments to implement soil protection measures.

27. We will encourage governments to implement Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) programs able to raise awareness about the interconnections between climate change and health in schools, universities and professional settings.

G. Promoting Chemical Safety

28. Chemical safety concerns all the measures that can be taken to protect people and the environment from chemical exposure and its effects, this includes: medical, industrial, agriculture, commercial, cosmetic and transport sectors. We are therefore committed to ensure chemical safety in every aspect of nowadays life as it impacts all people, especially the very young.

29. In order to increase literacy on this topic, we emphasize the adoption of independent and evidence based information in every formal and non-formal educational settings. In the end it will improve awareness about chemical hazards in the living environment, it will encourage citizen’s critical thinking essential for the undertaking of informed decisions regarding their chemical exposure in their surrounding environment and hopefully optimize their lifestyle.

30. We will work for more transparency about the specific resources used by industries in their labour. We will also encourage the implementation of more independent studies specially focused on measuring the health and environment impact of said chemicals and to find ways to optimize existing safety measures or even creating new ones.

31. We will strongly support the prohibition and replacement of harmful chemicals. We will actively avoid such products if governments find it hard to control their usage, and we will ask for the prioritization of research on healthy and environmentally friendly substitutes. We will also strive for accountability of the main decision makers in case of inertia towards imposing such control measures.
32. We will cooperate and establish a network of resources and stakeholders, having governments as major partners. Together we will emphasize the use of preventive measures when evidence is inconclusive and regulate activities regarding chemical safety.

33. We will call for and implement timely actions when evidence suggests that population and environment are negatively affected by regulated and unregulated chemicals.

Dr. António Marques Pinto
EEHYC Executive Board