



Better health. Better environment. Sustainable choices.

Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health Ostrava, Czech Republic, 13–15 June 2017

Introduction

The Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in June 2017 will be the sixth in a series of ministerial conferences initiated under the framework of the European Environment and Health Process (EHP) in 1989. An overview of ministerial conferences is presented below.

Overview of ministerial conferences on environment and health from 1989 to present

Conference	Place	Year	Main outcomes
First Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health	Frankfurt, Germany	1989	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Charter on Environment and Health, 1989 • establishment of the European Centre for Environment and Health
Second Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health	Helsinki, Finland	1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • launch of the National Environment and Health Action Plans (NEHAPs)
Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health	London, United Kingdom	1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter on Transport, Environment and Health • Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes
Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health	Budapest, Hungary	2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE)
Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health	Parma, Italy	2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to Act on four regional priority goals and cross-cutting issues • renewed governance of the Environment and Health Process

The ministerial conferences on environment and health provide a unique intersectoral policy platform, which brings together the ministries of health and ministries of the environment of the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region on an equal footing, along with stakeholders representing international organizations (such as the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the European Commission, the European Environment Agency, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)) and nongovernmental organizations from different sectors, and youth representatives, to assess priorities for policy action on environment and health and to make political commitments to address these priorities.

The main outcome of these conferences is a political document, which is the result of an inclusive and transparent political negotiation process involving Member States and stakeholders. The outcome document, which presents the political commitment made by Member States with respect to the priorities identified in the WHO European Region, is also endorsed by the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy.

The most recent outcome document, the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health and Commitment to Act, reviewed the impact of national and international environmental policies on Europe's health between 1990 and 2010; identified emerging environmental health challenges, focusing on cross-cutting issues; adopted time-bound targets to make progress on water and sanitation, air pollution, asbestos-related diseases and safe environments for children; and welcomed a framework for action on climate change and health. It also renewed the governance of the EHP through the establishment of the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF) and the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board. The EHTF is the leading international body for the implementation and monitoring of the EHP and the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board is the political face and driving force of international policies in environment and health for implementation of the commitments made within the EHP.

Towards a political outcome

The Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health will be the next major milestone of the EHP. A quarter of a century after the launch of the EHP in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1989, the Ministerial Conference will take stock of the changed geopolitical, socioeconomic and demographic scenario of the European Region, the new scientific knowledge that underpins the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, and the Health 2020 – the WHO European policy framework for health and well-being. The Sixth Ministerial Conference is expected to define the environment and health priorities for 21st century Europe and to enhance the engagement and commitment of Member States and other current and new stakeholders in the EHP.

In particular, the Sixth Ministerial Conference seeks to leverage the EHP as a platform for the coordinated implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in relation to selected goals and targets, and the Health 2020 platform by focusing on inequalities, improved governance, intersectoral work and rights-based approaches in addressing key determinants of health today.

Member States participating in the Sixth Ministerial Conference will be called on to adopt and sign a focused and target-based political declaration, which has been negotiated through a broad and inclusive consultative process steered by the EHTF. The political declaration is expected to

include an action plan for its implementation and an agreement on revised institutional arrangements for the EHP after 2017.

The declaration and its annexes are being politically negotiated through a process that started in Haifa, Israel, in April 2015, during the High-level Mid-term Review Meeting of the EHP. The process consists of two components: a series of political negotiations and a series of technical consultations.

- (a) **Political negotiations:** these are spearheaded by the EHTF, assisted by its Ad Hoc Working Group. The most recent negotiation meeting took place in Vienna, Austria, on 29–30 November 2016; the next one will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 10–11 April 2017. In addition, a web-based consultation will take place between February and March 2017 within the context of the preparations for the 67th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe.
- (b) **Technical consultations:** these involved scientists, experts, stakeholders and representatives of Member States, and addressed the main thematic priorities identified by Member States as those defining the European environment and health agenda of the future. The technical consultations provided the scientific evidence underpinning the political negotiation process. They addressed the following priorities, identifying specific actions that could be undertaken by Member States to ensure progress:
- building the environmental sustainability of health systems as a means to enhance efficiency in the use of energy and resources, sound management of chemicals throughout their life-cycle and reduced pollution and waste;
 - ensuring integrated, sustainable and safe water use, sanitation and hygiene for all, particularly in education and health facilities;
 - improving air quality, the most important environmental risk factor in the European Region, by moving towards the WHO air quality guidelines;
 - making European cities and regions sustainable and health promoting, fully acknowledging their role in promoting change;
 - reducing the risks to human health from waste, contaminated sites and chemicals, while supporting the transition to a circular economy;
 - undertaking adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, including by strengthening resilience and recognizing the co-benefits to be gained in the area of air quality; and
 - promoting chemical safety and safe non-chemical alternatives, including by promoting monitoring, as well as human biomonitoring, of exposure to chemicals, adopting a precautionary approach, and investing in risk assessment and in research to better understand human exposure to chemicals and the associated burden of disease.

Through the declaration, Member States are expected to commit to using the EHP as a platform for the implementation of and reporting on progress made towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, as well as a mechanism for enhanced implementation of existing commitments and international obligations; to completing the unfinished agenda of the Fifth Ministerial Conference; and to addressing major environment and health priorities through the adoption of country-specific “portfolios of actions”. These “portfolios” will represent the national political pledge to:

- (a) implement the commitments of the Sixth Ministerial Conference;
- (b) make progress towards achieving specific targets of the Sustainable Development Goals of national priority;
- (c) reflect national specificities, priorities, means and capacities in the “portfolio”;
- (d) engage all relevant government sectors and levels (national and subnational) that need to take action, along with non-State actors in each Member State; and
- (e) identify and mobilize resources and build or pool the necessary capacities to support the national implementation of the action plan.

The specific actions to be implemented through the “portfolios” will be drawn from those proposed in the implementation plan annexed to the declaration, built around the thematic priorities highlighted above.

The Sixth Ministerial Conference is also expected to adopt a renewed and streamlined institutional framework, which should enhance the links to the WHO and UNECE governing body processes, as well as collaboration among WHO, UNECE and UNEP in the implementation of the commitments to be undertaken in Ostrava.

Contact details for additional information

Dr Srdan Matic, Coordinator, Environment and Health, Division of Policy and Governance for Health and Well-being, matics@who.int; tel: +45 45 33 67 73

Ms Francesca Racioppi, Senior Policy and Programme Adviser, Division of Policy and Governance for Health and Well-being, racioppif@who.int; tel: +45 45 33 68 22

Further information is available on the website of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health at <http://www.euro.who.int/en/Ostrava2017>.

The Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health is hosted by:



OSTRAVA!!!