BUDAPEST CONFERENCE DECLARATION Paragraph 21b: ‘We agree to meet again at a fifth European ministerial conference on environment and health to be held in 2009. We invite WHO to convene an intergovernmental meeting to carry out a midterm review of the process by the end of 2007’.

Youth Conference
of the Intergovernmental Mid-Term Review IMR
Meeting Report

Vienna, Austria, 12 - 15 June 2007

Organized by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, in collaboration with WHO Regional Office for Europe
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1. Background

The Fourth European Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health took place in Budapest from 23-25 June 2004 with theme “The future for our children” within the broader context of sustainable development. In keeping with that theme, young people took part in the Conference – most notably through the Youth Parliament, which took place at the same time as the Conference.

113 delegates took part in the Youth Parliament - a delegation from Hungary, 30 delegates from 17 country delegations to the Conference and a group of young people from UNEP Tunza network. They prepared a Youth Declaration which called for the participation of young people in the follow-up to the Budapest Conference, including their representation on the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC) and the Task Force of the Children’s Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE). The Youth Declaration was presented to the ministers at the Budapest Conference, who supported the involvement of youth in the implementation process and more specifically in the EEHC and the CEHAPE Task Force. Since then youth participants have been involved in EEHC meeting on a regular basis (Dublin, Oslo, Szentendre, Brussels). Independently, two youth workshops took place (Luxembourg and Belgrade) in 2007 aiming to integrate youth participation into decision making processes in order to implement the Budapest commitments. It is essential to ensure continuation of the involvement of young people in the implementation of these commitments.

2. Purpose

The youth conference took place from 12–15 June 2007 in parallel with the Intergovernmental Midterm Review (IMR) at the Hofburg Congress Centre in Vienna bringing together youth representatives interested in children’s and young people environment and health with ministers from WHO Member States of the European region. Its aim was to integrate youth participation in decision making processes in order to implement the Budapest commitments, especially related to the CEHAPE and EEHC. The youth conference reviewed progress on the implementation of the Budapest commitments and discussion on future plans in view of the Ministerial Conference in 2009.

The purpose of this youth conference was to evaluate youth participation since the Budapest Conference, to set future priorities about youth participation up to the Ministerial Conference, to officially elect the EEHC, CEHAPE and EC youth delegates for the term 2007-2009 and to review the youth-friendly CEHAPE (YFC) which has been worked on by European youth representatives since they last met in a youth workshop in March 2007 in Luxembourg. The YFC was presented to the ministers on the last day of the IMR with a presentation held by the official CEHAPE and EEHC youth delegates. The conference further had the purpose to enhance the mandate of youth participation in the European Environment and Health process and to further strengthen and build up the youth network with the goal to address next steps for the way to the Fifth Environment and Health Ministerial Conference in Italy in 2009.

Youth groups have formed an important part of the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC) as well as the CEHAPE Task Force since the Budapest Conference.

3. Participation

51 participants out of 28 Member States of the WHO Regional Office for Europe gathered in Vienna to hold the IMR youth conference. The Member States represented were Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Turkey, UK, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Participants were aged 16–22 and were interested and active in children and young people’s environment and health issues. All participants who attended the youth workshop in Luxembourg earlier this year were invited and funded to participate in the youth conference
in order to guarantee continuity and sustainability of the youth network. About two delegates per Member State attended the youth event. Most of the young people were working in national or NGO organizations dedicated to environmental and health issues. The sessions were attended by Bente Moe, from the Directorate for Health and Social Affairs, Norway, Siobhán McEvoy, Department of Health & Children, Ireland, and Anne O’Donnell, National Children’s Office, Ireland, as well as persons sent from the Member states accompanying the youth.

The list of participants is given in Annex 1.

4. The IMR youth conference

The youth event consisted in 4-day meeting during which the European youth representatives held their own youth conference and attended the IMR on two days of the conference. The conference was framed by different visits to environment and health related institutions and facilities in and around the city of Vienna, which were organized by Austria’s youth network JUNE (Jugend-Umwelt-Netzwerk). The youth programme included youth adequate evening programmes and the attendance of the Ministerial reception at Palmenhaus.

4.1 Tuesday, 12 June

The youth participants held their youth meeting in the Hofburg addressing the topics of sustainable youth participation and strengthening of the youth network. The elaboration of the presentation for the ministers took place at the additional session on Thursday, 14 June 2007.

a) Agenda

The conference addressed the following issues:

1. Review and approval of the youth-friendly CEHAPE;
2. Elaboration of a formal presentation of the YFC to be delivered to the ministers in the IMR session ‘A bridge to the future – Youth involvement in decision-making’;
3. Election of official youth representatives to the European Environment and Health Committee, to the CEHAPE Task Force as well as to the EC Environment and Health Consultative Forum for the term 2007-2009;
4. A sustainable and continuous way of youth participation;
5. Strengthen networks among the youths and with the national Environment and Health Focal Points;
6. Definition of priorities and goals until the next Ministerial Conference in 2009.

b) Programme

09:00 Welcome session
10:00 “World Café” – changing groups dedicated 15 minutes to each topic
11:30 working groups
13:00 Lunch
14:00 Continuation working groups
14:30 Collection of result from the working groups
15:00 Presentation of the results from the working groups
15:30 Coffee Break
16:00 Presentation of nominated youth delegates
16:30 Election of new youth delegates
17:00 End of youth conference

Austria’s youth network JUNE organized Tuesdays’ session with the help of facilitators experienced in working with youth. The conference started with a welcome session for all participants and the presentation of the facilitators, followed by the presentation of the youth-friendly CEHAPE by the former youth delegates and members of the working group. The delegates held a brief presentation pointing out the main points of the YFC they had
written on since their youth meeting in Luxembourg and presenting a first draft for the presentation to the ministers for the last day of the IMR.

The presentation was followed by the ‘World Café’, about one and a half hours which were dedicated to working in changing groups on six different topics with 15 minutes working time per group and per topic. The purpose of the World Café was to give the participants the opportunity to get informed about the different aspects of youth participation in political decision making on the basis of prepared questions and exchange their initial ideas. Through the continuous change of the groups youth participants had the opportunity to get in touch with most of the other participants and form ideas to each of the six discussed issues, in order to elaborate their ideas on their preferred topic in a more concentrated way in the working groups later on.

The topics comprised:

1. Youth participation in general, on national and on local level;
2. Discussion about the YFC presentation;
3. Meeting Dr. Franklin Apfel for discussion about the questions to be asked to the ministers in the round table session “Towards the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health”;
4. A sustainable youth network;
5. How to support the youth delegates in their work;
6. How young people could get involved in the CEHAPE.

After the World Café youth representative started to discuss in working groups dedicated to these different topics, about how results could be achieved, how the way for the future could be paved and what their contributions could be. The results were collated and presented to the entire group. The summarized points were included by a working group made up from youth delegates and other members in the final presentation to the ministers.

In order to elect the official youth representatives to the European Environment and Health Committee, to the CEHAPE Task Force as well as to the EC Environment and Health Consultative Forum for the term 2007-2009 youth participants had been nominated by the network and interested youth participants who were available as candidates for youth delegates were asked to present themselves. The youth delegates for the term 2007 – 2009 were elected in two ballots, as election results in the first ballots were even. As the new EEHC delegates were elected Ildiko Almasi (Hungary) and Kyle Worgan (UK). The new CEHAPE delegates are Alina Bezhenar (Russia) and Rena Javaid (UK). The former youth delegates Reka Prokai (Hungary), Tuuli Madiberk (Estonia), Ida Karkainen (Sweden) and Lina Tislevold (Norway) volunteered to be substitute delegates, in order to provide advice for the new delegates and give further contribution with their experience they have gained over the years.

The evening event was organized with a dinner at the Donau Island in the restaurant Sansibar.

4.2 Wednesday, 13 June

The youth delegation attended the opening of the IMR and left thereafter for visiting different institutions related to environment and health issues and learning about the following topics: Visit to an organic farm, Water supply in Vienna, Public Transport in Vienna and a Visit to the national park Lobau. In the evening, the youth group participated in the ministerial reception held at the Palmenhaus, where participants had the opportunity to socialize and meet their Focal Points.

4.3 Thursday, 14 June

After a sight seeing tour through the city of Vienna participants returned to the Hofburg where they concentrated on integrating all comments made and results they had achieved on Tuesday’s session and on finalizing the presentation of the youth-friendly CEHAPE. After dinner at the youth hostel, sports activities for the participants were organized.
4.4 Friday, 15 June

The youth participants attended the IMR conference were they had the occasion to hold their presentation elaborated throughout the previous days of the conference and present the youth’s opinion to the ministers. The official youth delegates R. Prokai, T. Madiberk and I. Karkainen were invited by Mr Lomtadze from the Ministry of Environment of Georgia to inform the participants about their activities since the Budapest conference. The youth delegates gave a brief overview over their involvement in the CEHAPE Task Force and the EEHC and explained how the involvement of youth in the international process had developed from Budapest. They described the work they had done at the previous EEHC/CEHAPE meetings as well as at the youth workshops. Their primary objective was to set up a youth network enthusiastic in environment and health issues and to advocate for change at a national level in a way that was more understandable for their age group.

The delegates reported about what had been discussed at their youth conference held in Vienna a day before the IMR started, emphasizing that their objective had been to elaborate a final version of the youth friendly action plan. The youth-friendly CEHAPE is based on the EU Environment and Health Action Plan and CEHAPE. The first six parts are referring to each single point of the CEHAPE, identifying the most pressing environment and health issues and offering practical solutions to these problems seen through the eyes of the youth. Their plan addresses the topics water and sanitation, better city planning and human settlements which should also include better, cheaper and more environment friendly modes of transportation (e.g. more bicycle paths). It carries on with methods to increase physical activity and to save energy and the environment by giving solutions for alternative energy. The education and sensibilization already at children’s age with regard to environmental topics and a better communication are emphasized. Chapter 6 is dedicated to the hazards to environment and health caused by chemicals and toxic substances as suggested in the CEHAPE.

With regard to the EC Environment and Health Action Plan, the delegates reported that they had found difficulties in understanding the EC action plan and recognized that the plan presented too few concrete actions that could be worked on. The youth document further outlines that youth are mentioned, however, their point of view is missing from the action plan, which calls for more youth involvement into political processes.

The presentation of the youth delegates and the youth’s enthusiasm for getting involved was appreciated by the participants. Countries such as Ireland, Norway and Sweden, where youth involvement already plays an important role, explained what had been done in terms of youth involvement in these countries.

In the following ministerial roundtable, youth had the occasion to raise the voice once again. Dr. Franklin Apfel led the discussion and encouraged three youth representatives from the network to voice the questions which had come up during their meetings. They explained that to become active, they require better and more direct involvement in meetings and conferences on a regular basis. They explained the ministers that they would need practical tools (technology means, a website dedicated to their network, closer involvement, better information) and asked what tools member states could provide to them. The panel agreed that specific goals and training was necessary, in order to promote and integrate the youth’s ideas which can only be a refreshing new point of view from a different involved group.

5. Outcome

The youth recognized in their conference report that the IMR youth conference enabled them to build up on their relations made during previous network and felt that the network had strengthened and they wish to remain such strong group. They appreciated the nature of the challenge to meet key individuals within the CEHAPE process in their country and expect that this would enhance the youth participation at local level.

The youth acknowledged the opportunity to express their needs and views around youth participation through a presentation. They welcomed the possibility to get more information about the relevant processes and develop a greater understanding of the CEHAPE process
and their possible role in the next few years. The youth representatives appreciated that they were given a chance of being listened to at a conference for which all key people had gathered, as well as the occasion to present them as a strong network which needs to continue.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

In their conclusions, the youth proposed ways which would enable them to get better involved in discussions and meetings at international and national policy making level. They described their requirements for better equipment and tools which would help them to provide active work and concrete participation in children’s health and environment. They recommend to be given adequate equipment, technological means such as a website dedicated to the environment and health youth network, which would be beneficial to the network for exchange of useful resources and would help keeping the network alive, while they are working from different countries. They request to learn more through observation and participation and asked to attend other important meetings. The youth asked for training about how to make presentations, write articles and skills workshops about how to interact with the press and with politicians. In order for them to get appropriately involved they recommend that important documents were more easily understandable. They also recommend that discussion of the youth-friendly CEHAPE is to be considered at the next EEHC meeting.

Other recommendations include that though many delegations had attended the IMR with youth as an official part of their delegation, more should be in a position to do that and that more regular youth events are needed.

The youth’ objectives and targets until the next ministerial conference include to encourage countries who do not have a CEHAPE youth representation to build up such representation mentioning that there are 53 WHO member states, however youth representatives from only 30 countries attended the IMR. They intend to create more national youth networks and strengthen the network on local levels in order for the new delegates to be able to rely on a strong youth network as a source of information when EEHC asks for a European youth perspective on certain issues. The youth networks aims to having a number of national youth friendly action plans that are being implemented up until the Ministerial conference. Further goals of the network are to be increasingly involved in meetings and conferences and to advocate and raise awareness with regards to the youth networks’ activities and their purposes during the next years.
Annex 1
List of participants

Albania
Daniela Guxha
Elsa Zaja

Armenia
Mariam Avetisyan
Gayane Petrosyan

Austria
Veronika Loder-Taucher
Anna Mähr
Elisabeth Sailer

Azerbaijan
Leyla Naghiyeva

Bulgaria
Neli Decheva

Cyprus
Sofia Ioannu
Gerogios Tamiolakis

Czech Republic
Adela Mlejnkova
Kristyna Soldanova

Denmark
Felipe Godoy Poulsen
Mathias Esmann Poulsen

Estonia
Eric Katskowski
Tuuli Madiberk

Finland
Antti Melander
Kamilla Billiers

Greece
Alexander Karyolemos
Stylianos Gianniotis

Hungary
Ildiko Almas
Reka Prokai

Ireland
Rebecca Rodgers
Shane Kiernan

Kyrgyzstan
Aibek Samakov

Latvia
Andris Lagzdins
Vita Vitola

Lithuania
Evelina Preisegolaviciute
Rytis Masiliūnas

Malta
Lara Cassar
Kristina Miggiani

Netherlands
Maayke Damen

Norway
Mina Adampour
Lina Tislevold

Romania
Laura Badut

Russia
Alexander Ageykin
Alina Bezhenar

Slovakia
Miriama Hudáková
Martin Nastisin

Sweden
Malin Henriksson
Ida Karkiainen

Tajikistan
Zarina Alieva
Alina Mustafina

Turkey
Betul Uralcan

Ukraine
Khrystyna Dubnytska
Ganna Yeliseva

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Rena Javaid
Kyle Worgan

Uzbekistan
Hulkar Karimova
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Anne O'Donnell

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