EU ENVIRONMENT & HEALTH ACTION PLAN 2004-2010

Meeting of the Consultative Group on Environment & Health

18 December 2008 from 10:00 till 17:00
Jean Monnet Building, Room M6
Plateau du Kirchberg, 2920 Luxemburg

Chaired by Paul Speight (Deputy Head of Unit DG Environment),
Michael Hübel (Head of Unit DG Health & Consumers),
Elisabeth Lipiatou (Head of Unit DG Research)

Participants
EU Commission: Paul Speight, Birgit Van Tongelen (ENV), Michael Hübel, Giulio Gallo, Laurent Bontoux, Antoni Montserrat (SANCO), Elisabeth Lipiatou, Tuomo Karjalainen, Tomás Turecki (RTD), Peter Pärt, Claude Guillou, St. Kephalopoulos, Paul Smits (JRC)

Member States: LUX (Health), DK (Env, Health), CY (Health), BE (Health), HU (Env, Health), FR (Env, Health), NL (Env), CZ (Health), FI (Health, Env), ES (Env), UK (Health), PT (Env)

Stakeholders: IBFAN, Ecobaby, WECF, ERS, SCED, EFA, HEAL, SREH, Eurelectric, CEFIC

MINUTES

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

Paul Speight welcomed the Consultative Group. He reminded that the last Consultative Forum took place on 2nd March 2007 in Brussels to exchange views on the draft Mid-Term Review on the Action Plan. Since 2007 a lot of progress has been made in several areas: indoor air quality, human biomonitoring, environment & health research; major environmental policy initiatives with an impact on health have been adopted, such as REACH, Pesticides, Biocides; and the Seventh Framework Programme for Community Research (FP7) was launched including a sub-activity on Environment and Health.

The aim of this meeting is to update the Consultative Group on the Commission's Environment and Health activities since 2007, and to brainstorm on the follow-up of the Action Plan which will come to an end in 2010.

In view of the transparency policy of the European Commission the names and organisations of the members of the Consultative Forum will be made publicly available in the Register of Expert Groups. Members of the Consultative Forum are therefore invited to complete the privacy declaration and to return it during the meeting or send it to birgit.van-tongelen@ec.europa.eu
2. **REPORT ON ACTIVITIES SINCE 2007**

2.1. **Research**

Elisabeth Lipiatou, Head of the Climate Change and Environmental Risks Unit in DG Research, explained that the 4th call for proposals under FP7 is now under preparation. The budget for the first 3 calls has been stable but will increase gradually until 2013. A Commission Inter-Service Group on Environment & Health Research has been established and aims to be a forum for discussion.

Tuomo Karjalainen gave an overview of the ongoing Environment & Health research projects under FP6. He mentioned that Climate Change & Health will receive more attention in the future.

Tomás Turecki presented the outcome of the first two FP7 calls for proposals under the Environment and Health sub-activity and the topics available in the currently open third call.

2.2. **Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)**

Giulio Gallo gave an overview of the IAQ projects under the Public Health Programme, the main achievements so far and the planned priorities for 2009.

Otto Hänninen presented the ENVIE project on IAQ and Health Effects (FP6 Scientific Support to Policy).


Stylianos Kephalopoulos presented the EC Inter-service website on IAQ and health effects: [http://iaq.jrc.ec.europa.eu](http://iaq.jrc.ec.europa.eu). He also stressed the enhanced interaction between the INDOOR-EXPO project (Administrative Arrangement between DG SANCO and the Joint Research Centre) and the HBM project (Administrative Arrangement between DG ENV and the Joint Research Centre) for setting up harmonised criteria and protocols for indoor air monitoring of priority chemicals and exposure assessment taking advantage of the similar work performed in the HBM project.

2.3. **Human Biomonitoring (HBM)**

Birgit Van Tongelen presented the Commission activities on HBM since 2007. The preparations for the European Pilot Project continue via an Administrative Arrangement between DG Environment and the Joint Research Centre, via FP7 and LIFE+ calls for proposals. Reflections on the post-pilot phase have started: how to link with REACH, INSPIRE, and the European Health Examination Survey. The Consultative Forum was invited to update the list of "Political Back-Ups" (persons responsible for HBM in the ministries) and to establish close cooperation between the responsible persons in the ministries for HBM, health examination survey and Inspire.

Antoni Montserrat explained the Commission’s intention related to the creation of a European Health Examination Survey (HES) and emphasised the golden opportunity to include HBM in the EU HES. It would be the most logical step to ensure a permanent European HBM programme. An EU Task Force on HES will be created in 2009 as a governance body for the HES process. A full-scale HES in the 27 Member States, Norway and others is
scheduled for 2011-2013 if funding from FP7 is available. The Consultative Forum was invited to identify who in the respective ministries is involved in the HES process and to ensure close links with the HBM process.

Claude Guillou presented the preliminary results of the Administrative Arrangement on HBM between DG Environment and JRC. The main tasks are to prepare a harmonised protocol for the EU Pilot Project and the elaboration of source identification and integration with environmental and health monitoring. A final workshop will be organised in November 2009 in Ispra to present and discuss the results with a wider audience.

Anne-Catherine Viso (Institut de Veille Sanitaire, France) reported on the European Conference on HBM organised under the French Presidency in November 2008 in Paris, which was a big success. The main conclusion was that decision-making structures at EU level, scientific support, a transparent determination of EU HBM limit values and appropriate funding are needed in order to achieve a long-term vision.

2.4. **INSPIRE**

Paul Smits underlined the relevance of the INSPIRE Directive to the Environment and Health sector: "human health and safety" is mentioned as a data theme in Annex III of the Directive and work on this data theme will start in 2009. By 15th May 2012 the Commission has to adopt Implementing Rules for the interoperability and harmonization of spatial data sets and services for human health data. He also suggested practical steps forward involving the sector in INSPIRE Implementing Rules development (see presentation).

In the discussion some concern was expressed about the pitfalls and unrealistic expectations from Inspire which will create unnecessary anxiety. It was emphasised that the aim of Inspire is not to establish causalities, but to bring environment and health data together as a basis for the Environment and Health Information System. It was also said that civil society should be brought into the process.

2.5. **Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)**

Due to the high level of public concern the Commission requested the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks to update its Opinion on EMF of 2007. The work is almost completed and adoption of the Opinion is foreseen in January 2009.

An EMF Workshop is scheduled for 11-12 February 2009 in Brussels.

2.6. **Antimicrobial Resistance**

In the context of the revision of the Biocides Directive the Commission requested the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks to prepare an Opinion on the antibiotic resistance effects of biocides. Adoption of the Opinion is foreseen in January 2009. The preliminary opinion concluded that the use of certain active substances may contribute to the increased occurrence of antibiotic resistant bacteria.
2.7. **Climate Change and Health**

The Commission is in the process of developing a "*White Paper on Climate Change Adaptation*" which will include a section on human and animal health. Adoption is scheduled for spring 2009.

The Commission has funded several research projects on climate change and health under FP5 and FP6. An increased focus on this area is foreseen under FP7.

2.8. **French Presidency Actions on Environment & Health**

The French Presidency organised several European Conferences on Environment and Health priority items: human biomonitoring, chemical risks, health care waste management, air quality (fight against ambrosia), information system on water, health & security at the workplace. Also, the French National Environment and Health Action Plan II was adopted including new goals.

3. **BRAINSTORMING ON THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE ACTION PLAN**

The follow-up of the Action Plan should focus on a number of priority areas for which concrete activities should be identified. The priority areas mentioned were:

- **Human biomonitoring**: activities should continue in a clear and comprehensive way and should be linked to the EU Health Examination Survey; the focus should be on its use for policy making (UK, ES, B, DK, EFA, IBFAN). The process should become more formal by establishing an Advisory Group of EU Experts (possibly based on the Implementation Group), and by creating a decision-making structure at EU level bringing together MS representatives and EU authorities in a HBM Committee (FR). EU Reference Values should be established and a Committee to establish the reference values should be set up (CY, CZ, ES, B, FR).

- **Indoor air quality** (CY, EFA): a Green Paper should be developed (B, NL); the relation to energy performance of buildings and harmonisation of indoor material emission labelling schemes in EU should be elaborated (DK).

- **Tools for assessing progress** such as the E&H Information System (B, NL, PT, DK) and Environmental Burden of Disease Methodology (PT).

- **Nanomaterials** (DK).

- **Chemical mixtures** (DK).

- **Education of professionals** (CY, ESP, Ecobaby).

The follow-up of the Action Plan should create expectations that we can achieve. Actions, resources and responsibilities should be clear.

The added value of the "*Environment & Health Action Plan 2004-2010*" should not be underestimated: the Action Plan has started a strong process of coordination and collaboration between the health, environment and research sectors at Member States and at EU level. The added value of the follow-up of the Action Plan lies in well-defined inter-sectoral actions, integrating E&H processes for which priorities should be set, and sticking to real targets/measurable deliverables compared to the current E&H Action Plan.
Furthermore it was emphasised that:

- Sufficient resources should be ensured as stressed in the EU Parliament Resolution. It is also important to make sure that the Environment and Health budget will not be solely devoted to climate change and health.

- The new Action Plan should be presented in the 5th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in February 2010 in Parma.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

This first brainstorming on the follow-up of the Action Plan was very useful and aimed to stimulate further thinking. The Consultative Forum was strongly encouraged to continue reflecting on the content and added value of a new Action Plan and to submit written contributions to the Commission.

Paul Speight underlined that the final decision on the content and format of the follow-up of the Action Plan will be taken by the new Commission, but that we need to start working hard now to explore the different scenarios.

All presentations are publicly available on the website under the Consultative Forum section: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/health/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/health/index_en.htm)

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