



**Sixth meeting of the  
European Environment and  
Health Task Force (EHTF)**

**EURO/EHTF6/XX  
7 December 2016  
Original: English**

**Vienna, Austria  
29-30 November 2016**

## **SHORT MEETING REPORT**

### **Opening of the meeting**

1. The first session of the EHTF meeting was held jointly with the closing session of the International Youth Conference, hosted by Austria in Vienna on 27-29 November 2016.
2. The EHTF meeting was attended by delegations representing 37 member states, as well as UNECE, UNEP, the EU Committee, of the Regions, EEA, the REC, CAREC, UNDP, EEHYC, ECOFORUM, HEAL.
3. Opening interventions focusing on the importance of intersectoral collaboration and highlighting practical initiatives supporting youth engagement in health, environment and sustainable mobility were given in the form of a talk moderated by Ms Christa Kummer, Austrian Broadcasting Corporation by:
  - Andri Ruppachter, Federal Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management
  - Sabine Oberhauser, Federal Minister of Health and Women's Affairs
  - Sophie Karmasin, Federal Minister of Families and Youth
  - Jörg Leichtfried, Federal Minister of Transport, Innovation and Technology
  - Samo Kobenter, Director General for Sports, Federal Ministry of National Defence and Sport
  - Marco Keiner, Director Environment Division, UNECE
  - Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe

### **Involving Youth Representatives in decision-making and implementation of actions related to environment and health**

4. The International Youth Conference was hosted by Austria in Vienna on 27-29 November 2016 and was attended by some 70 youth representatives from more than 30 countries. The Youth Conference resulted in the development of the "Vienna Youth Position Paper", completed by a fact-sheet with suggestions on how the involvement of youth representatives in decision-making could be strengthened, and how youth can help to implement environment and health activities. The Youth Conference also made proposals to highlight "Active Youth Involvement, Meaningful Participation and Education" in the Declaration that will be adopted at the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health.
5. Interventions highlighting the importance of engaging Youth representatives in decisions and implementation activities related to environment and health were made by:
  - Dovile Adamonyte, European Environment and Health Youth Coalition



- David Neuber, Austrian National Youth Council

## Reporting and informing

6. The Chair welcomed participants and thanked Austria for hosting the meeting in Vienna and for organizing the International Youth Conference.
7. Dr Jakab welcomed participants on behalf of WHO. In her opening remarks, she thanked Austria for its hospitality and historical leadership in the European Environment and Health Process. She recalled the main messages from the Haifa high level mid-term review, highlighting how these have been taken into consideration in the preparation of the draft outcome documents for the Ostrava conference. She also thanked the Czech Republic for hosting the upcoming Ministerial Conference.
8. The EHTF:
  - a. Adopted the proposed programme of work.
  - b. Adopted the report of its Fifth meeting, held in Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on 24-25 November 2016.
  - c. Elected Mr Robert Thaler as its new Chair, and thanked Professor Gjorgiev for his very effective chairmanship of the EHTF.
  - d. Decided to launch a call for expressions of interest to take up the role of Co-Chair of the EHTF representing the health sector, open to all Member States. Expressions of interest should be submitted to the secretariat by Friday, 16 December 2016.
9. The EHTF was informed about the main outcomes of discussions held at:
  - the Sixty-sixth WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Copenhagen, Denmark, 12–15 September 2016), by Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab;
  - the Eighth Ministerial Conference Environment for Europe (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016), by Mr Marco Keiner;
  - the second United Nations Environment Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya, 23-27 May 2016), by Mr Wondwosen Asnake;
  - the International Youth Conference (Vienna, Austria, 27-29 November 2017), by Ms Natalia Ciobanu.
  - The COP22 Inter-ministerial meeting on Health, Environment and Climate Change,(Marrakesh, Morocco,15 November 2016), by Ms Marina Maiero, WHO Headquarters

## Presenting the draft outcome documents of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

10. Dr Matic introduced the draft outcome documents for the Sixth Ministerial Conference, highlighting the consultation process through which they were developed and their main contents.

## Discussion on the draft Ministerial Declaration

11. EHTF members expressed appreciation for the documents that had been provided, as well as for the inclusive consultation process. They also appreciated the links to the Sustainable

Development Goals and Health 2020, as important elements providing added value, along with the interlinkages between health and environment. They reiterated the need for the declaration to be short, linking to but avoiding repetitions and duplications of commitments taken in other processes, stressing more the equity, social inclusion and resilience (physical and social) dimensions and the need to protect vulnerable groups, placing emphasis on the most important commitments, as well as on the “unfinished business” resulting from the implementation of the Parma Ministerial Declaration.

12. Although some EHTF members expressed a preference for the declaration to focus on a more limited number of priorities, it was recognized that the diversity in the Region makes it difficult to identify a restricted number of priorities of universal relevance. The proposal to allow Member States flexibility in the choice of actions addressing major environment and health threats to better reflect national priorities, notably through the development of a “national portfolio of actions” based on the actions in the implementation plan, could address this point. However, a more explicit text should be developed in the declaration to this effect.
13. The EHTF achieved consensus on:
  - a. Keeping the Implementation plan as an annex to the Declaration, to serve as a guidance document with a proposed menu of actions from which Member States could compose their own national portfolio of actions. The substantive commitments of the implementation plan should be incorporated into the Declaration to establish a clear link between the two documents;
  - b. Moving the list of relevant instruments, conventions and resolutions as an appendix, except those that were established directly by the European Environment and Health Process (EHP), namely the Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP).
14. The EHTF entrusted the AWG and secretariat with developing a revised draft of the declaration taking into account the discussions and suggestions provided by the EHTF members.

### **Discussion on the future EHP institutional framework**

15. Dr Matic introduced the document on future governance of the EHP, explaining that it was felt that there was a need to achieve consensus on the main principles for an effective and efficient governance of the Process, and clarity about the substantive objectives of the declaration before drafting the details of the future governance of the process. These should be functional in order to support the implementation of the commitments to be undertaken in Ostrava.
16. The EHTF achieved consensus on:
  - a. Basing the institutional framework on one single body, representing all 53 Member States and stakeholders, and discontinuing the EHMB.
  - b. Retaining for this single body the name “Task Force”, as this would also maintain a sense of continuity and a focus on implementation of concrete actions;
  - c. Encouraging representation in the EHTF at the strategic/high level technical level of Member States and stakeholders, from both the environment and health sectors;
  - d. Emphasising the importance of strong and effective national coordination mechanisms to ensure implementation of the commitments at the national level, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders and youth representatives.
  - e. Establishing a Bureau to support the work of the EHTF, based on a small (e.g. 8 to 10) number of committed Member States elected by the Task Force, and EHTF stakeholders, including, NGOs and Youth, working with the secretariat in supporting

- implementation of the commitments taken in Ostrava. The Bureau should be open ended and fully transparent, building on the positive experience of the AWG. The Bureau should operate in a very lean way, with a minimum number of meetings.
- f. Strengthening the links between the EHP and the WHO and UNECE governing bodies, e.g. through yearly sessions/side events at the WHO RC and UNECE CEP, and inclusions of EHTF members and representatives of other sectors in national delegations participating in the WHO RC and UNECE governing bodies;
  - g. Promoting the engagement of Ministers in the EHP through their participation in the meetings of the Governing Bodies and in high level segments of meetings of the EHTF, to be convened flexibly;
  - h. Supporting the establishment of a joint WHO/UNECE secretariat, working in close partnership with UNEP and other actors, including the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions. This proposal would need to be brought to the attention of and endorsed by the UNECE CEP in January 2017 and by the UNECE Executive Committee, depending on the availability of additional extra-budgetary resources made available in advance by the Member States;
  - i. Fully capitalizing on the strong UN regional coordination mechanism for SDGs monitoring and reporting, led by the UNECE. The EHP should be integrated in the issue-based coalition on health.
17. The EHTF entrusted the AWG and secretariat with developing a draft of the proposed institutional arrangements taking into account the discussions and above mentioned suggestions provided by the EHTF members.

### Discussion on the implementation plan

18. Dr Matic introduced the implementation plan, summarizing the broad process that, through thematic consultations or statutory meetings of relevant policy instruments, led to the identification of the specific actions proposed to address the different priority areas.
19. The EHTF held a general discussion on the contents and structure of the implementation plan. It achieved consensus on:
- a. Using the Implementation plan as an annex to the Declaration, providing guidance on actions that could be used by the Member States in the development of their “national portfolios of actions”
  - b. Moving the text of political relevance, notably in relation to the added value of the Process, the development of national portfolio of action and the use of the SDG monitoring system to the declaration;
  - c. Making the implementation plan leaner and more focused, taking out unnecessary details, such as references to the SDGs targets;
  - d. Setting general targets, but leaving to the Member States their quantitative specifications;
20. The EHTF entrusted the AWG and secretariat with developing a revised draft of the declaration taking into account the discussions and suggestions provided by the EHTF members.

### Preparing for the Ministerial Conference

21. The Czech Republic informed of the positive developments of the conference preparation, and of the appointment of a new Minister of Health, who remains fully committed to the Conference.
22. Dr Matic informed on progress in the preparation of the host agreement between the Czech Republic and the WHO. He introduced the conference venue, with the support of a short video. He informed of on-going discussions with UNEP to hold a regional consultation with Ministers of Environment in preparation of UNEA3, back to back to the Ministerial Conference. He announced that the Ostrava Conference will be co-sponsored also by UNECE and UNEP.

23. The EHTF reviewed the list of forthcoming preparatory meetings and consultations in the run-up to the Conference. These include:

- a. The meeting of the UNECE CEP in January 2017;
- b. A consultation of Central Asian Member States organised by CAREC in February 2017 in Almaty;
- c. An additional meeting of the EHTF between end of March and early April;
- d. A meeting of the AWG in Ostrava in late April;

In addition, the AWG will meet virtually, as needed, to advance the preparation of the Conference.

### **Any other business, summary of decision and closure of the meeting**

24. Dr Matic informed that a revised version of the Declaration and implementation plan will be made available before the end-of-the-year break. The proposal for the new institutional framework will be made available after the UNECE CEP meeting.
25. Ms Birgit Staatsen announced the stakeholder consultation meeting which will take place in Utrecht on 13-14 December, hosted by the Netherlands, and invited EHTF members to participate in the consultation.
26. The EHTF was informed that Ms Lis Keiding, Specialized Medical Officer from the Danish Health Authority will retire at the end of 2016, and will be succeeded by Ms Pernille Thygesn as the incoming Focal Person from Denmark representing the health sector. The EHTF expressed its gratitude to Ms Keiding for her very many contributions and support to the Process and welcomed her successor.
27. The Chair of the EHTF thanked participants for their active contributions and the secretariat for the preparations of the meeting.
28. The EHTF thanked the Austrian Government for its excellent hospitality and Professor Gjorgiev and Mr Thaler for their very effective chairing of the meeting.

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