

Thank you Mrs Chairperson

My name is Sascha Gabizon, our partners of Eco-Tiras asked me to take the floor. They are partners in the Women in Europe WECF network, and we are all members of Eco-Forum, thus we support the statements just made by WECF and Eco-Forum. I take the floor only to give an illustration of a typical dilemma we encounter in our work in the field.

I will give an example of a project WECF carries out in Romania. First of all I want to say that we very much appreciate all the efforts of the Romanian government. And the example is not meant as criticism, just as an illustration of the barriers encountered when trying to improve water related health problems.

I want to refer to the statement just made by the Romanian delegate, that Blue Babey Disease is still a problem. WECF is working in a village in Romania, Garla Mare. When we started in 2000, 5 babies suffered from Blue Baby Disease (methemoglobinaemia), caused by nitrates in drinking water. With a village committee all the public wells were tested with nitrate test sticks and not one well was found with less than 50 mg/lites (the max. allowed level WHO). We had the results checked at accredited laboratories in Bucharest and Germany and it was confirmed that the average level in the village wells was 120 mg/liter, with several wells with over 500 mg/liter. We also found microbiological pollution in extremely high levels: non of the drinking water wells met the criteria for the EU bathing water guidelines! It is not surprising that the local medical doctors says that villagers have chronic diarrhoea and think this is a normal situation.

As a result of our project there have been no more cases of blue baby disease in the village of Garla Mare. But in the neighbouring village two babies got blue baby disease in 2006.

This protocol should urgently help such babies. What is needed is , as mentioned by EcoForum, indicative water testing to identify the hotspots.

The mayor of the village is in principle obliged to test all public wells 3 times a year. But he does not want to do so because according to the new legislation he will then be obliged to close these well. And he has no funding for providing an alternative water supply. So what is also needed is that the protocol will search for funding to implement urgent measures to provide safe water supply.

This is only one example , and I want to add that we find similar dilemmas in many of the other countries in the EU and EECCA region.

Thank you