

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FACTORS  
NATIONAL INTEGRATED PROGRAMME  
ON ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH IN  
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

FACTORS



# NATIONAL INTEGRATED PROGRAMME ON ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

WORKSHOP ON THE PRIORITY OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN RELATION  
TO POLICIES AND INVESTMENTS IN CENTRAL  
AND EASTERN EUROPE



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH  
BILTHOVEN DIVISION

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# WORKSHOP ON THE PRIORITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN RELATION TO POLICIES AND INVESTMENTS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

held within the framework of the National Integrated Programme  
on Environment and Health in  
Central and Eastern European Countries

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# Environment for Europe

## ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAMME FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Workshop on the priority of environmental  
health issues in relation to policies and  
investments in Central and Eastern Europe

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### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe considers health an important criterion by which to judge the merits of actions to address environmental problems. The effects of environmental deterioration on human health in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are recognized as having high priority for external support and technical cooperation from a wide range of national and international organizations. Initial evidence indicates that environmental pollution has significant impacts on the health of segments of the population.

2. The workshop took place at the WHO Regional Office for Europe in Copenhagen prior to the Ministerial Conference to be held on 29-30 April 1993 in Lucerne, Switzerland. It brought together high-level representatives of bi- and multilateral organizations involved in activities in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with representatives of both environmental and health sectors of countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It assessed the methodology used in identifying priorities for environmental action in Central and Eastern Europe, and made recommendations for consideration at the Ministerial conference. The workshop addressed in particular the following issues:

- Environment as a determinant of health status in Central and Eastern Europe;
- Decision-making in view of the available scientific knowledge on the effects of environment on health and the scarcity of reliable environmental health information for selected areas;
- Cost-effective measures to improve the availability of data and/or to assure the collection of essential new data within an appropriate time-frame to become available for future decision-making on new investment.

3. The workshop was jointly organized by:

The World Bank;

United Nations Environment Programme, Regional Office for Europe;

World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe and its European Centre for Environment and Health; and

The Federal Office for Environment, Forests and Landscape, Switzerland.

The workshop was attended by representatives of Ministries of Health and of Environment of eight Central and Eastern European Member States and three international organizations.

4. The workshop took particular account of

(a) the Draft Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe and the Draft Report on Environment and Health in Central and Eastern Europe,

(b) UNEP's Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS) and its Programme for Europe, and

(c) the provisions of the WHO/EURO Resolution of the 41st Session of the Regional Committee on the Programme for Central and Eastern Europe (EUR/RC41/R2).

## CONCLUSIONS

### General

There is significant and growing evidence that the environmental problems of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe involve substantial direct and indirect health hazards for their citizens. The workshop served as a valuable opportunity to exchange experiences between multilateral organizations working on issues affecting the interface between environment, economics and health, and representatives of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, prior to the European Ministerial Conference on Environment.

### Interface: Environment, health and economics

The participants underlined the importance of the interactive relationship between health, economic growth and the environment. In this respect the workshop welcomed the emphasis given by the Draft Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe towards environmental health issues and expressed satisfaction with the way in which health was taken into account as a priority.

### Improvement of data situation

The workshop underlined the need for access to information on the state of environment and health as being a prerequisite for rational decision-making by national, regional and local authorities.

The workshop underlined that, although available environmental health data in the region inadequately reflect the exposure/health effects relationship, policy decisions must necessarily be based on existing information and available scientific knowledge. At the same time, steps need to be taken to improve the data base for decision-making on environmental health issues.

The number of sufficiently trained and equipped personnel dealing with environmental health issues is at present inadequate. The urgent need for intensive bi- and multilateral cooperation in training and research in environmental epidemiology, economic assessment, application of geographical information systems in spacial data management, as well as quality assurance, and environmental health risk assessment and management, was highlighted. The crucial role of international organizations in this respect was underlined.

### Role of governments in Central and Eastern Europe and of multilateral organizations

The need to bridge the gap between ministries of environment and of health in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in accordance with the principles of the European Charter prior to the Second Interministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Helsinki/ June 1994) was highlighted.

Current and future cooperation in the field of environment and health with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe goes beyond the scope and capabilities of a single institution. International efforts to improve the environment and health situation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe should therefore form an integral part of the overall cooperation and expertise provided to these countries through development and financial assistance organizations.

The emphasis placed by the United Nations Environment Programme on institutional strengthening and capacity building in the environment field, particularly in relation to the implementation of global environmental conventions by Central and Eastern European countries, and the promotion of cleaner production technologies was welcomed. Support was given to joint UNEP/WHO activities in the field of environmental monitoring. WHO/EURO's efforts to prepare an assessment of status and trends in environmental health in the European Region ('Concern for Europe's Tomorrow') were appreciated to serve as a basis for the deliberations of for the Second European Interministerial Conference on Environment and Health.

The workshop indicated its satisfaction concerning the activities of the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health to upgrade through its National Integrated Programmes on Environment and Health the technical and administrative ability of the environment and health authorities to prepare reliable analyses of the causes and health impact of adverse environmental conditions. In this respect the need was noted to strengthen the resources of the WHO European Centre so that it could further assist in addressing the challenges in the field of environment and health in countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As resources are limited, it is important that clear priorities are set that take full account of the impacts of the various environmental conditions on health in Central and Eastern Europe. The participating institutions will endeavour to cooperate and coordinate their respective activities to avoid duplication and unnecessary overlapping. Consideration will be given to sub-national approaches in addressing issues of common interest, making the best use of available resources.

### Interface: Environment, health and economics

The participants

- highlighted the need to develop policies and programmes which integrate environment, health and economic considerations;
- suggested that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe should consider economic tools for the improvement of environment and health which support market mechanisms linked to economic growth;
- emphasized that previous investment policies and the respective clustering of industrial and energy production sites in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe led to intensive environmental pollution with important health effects in particular geographical areas;
- suggested that bi- and multilateral donors should underline the credibility of structural adjustment programmes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe by prioritizing environmental investments in those regions of the the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where human health is significantly endangered.

### Improvement of data

The participants

- expressed their satisfaction with the approach taken by the draft Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe, suggesting early investment decisions to be based on existing data while supporting, in parallel, urgent measures to improve the database on environment and health in Central and Eastern Europe;
- underlined that the ongoing data collection within the framework of Concern for Europe's Tomorrow (CET) should create the basis for strengthened databases of WHO/EURO and UNEP/GEMS in the field of environment and health and recommended that these should be utilized for the future development of the Action Programme; the UNEP Regional Office for Europe was commended for its initiative in developing the "UNEP in Europe"-Programme.
- stressed the need to further develop environment and health indicators and the updating of respective guidelines, and to gather specific economic data and information in this field;

- invited national and international environment and health authorities to strengthen their cooperation and to share relevant data;
- suggested that harmonized approaches to environmental health risk assessment and risk management, including development of machinery for public participation and risk communication, be developed as recommended by UNCED Agenda 21.
- underlined the need to establish training programmes for capacity building in collaboration with international organizations, emphasizing environmental epidemiology, risk assessment methodologies, and quality control and assurance.

Role of governments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and of multilateral organizations

The participants

- asked multilateral donors, in light of the recommendations stemming from 1991 Dobris Conference, to lend increased support to activities contributing to the Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe.
- invited the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to foster the dialogue between authorities respectively responsible for environment and for health and suggested that bi- and multilateral organizations consider the further development of the National Integrated Programme on Environment and Health of the WHO European Centre within the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and the Slovak Republic, and its extension to other countries of Central and Eastern Europe;
- invited bi- and multilateral organizations, in light of the forthcoming Lucerne Ministerial Conference, to consider reinforcing joint activities based on already existing experience among UNEP, WHO/EURO, the World Bank and the recipient governments.
- recommended the Draft Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe to the forthcoming Lucerne Ministerial Conference 'Environment for Europe' as a valuable tool to assess a first set of priorities based on existing data;
- appreciated the offer by WHO/EURO to improve the data base and its evaluation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe on environment and health issues and to make available its collected data;
- welcomed the substantial efforts which have been made to summarize environmental health data in countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the 'Environment and Health in Central and Eastern Europe' report and stressed the need for the application of an in-depth environmental epidemiological analysis as was being utilized in the preparation of WHO/EURO's 'Concern for Europe's Tomorrow' programme.
- welcomed efforts by WHO/EURO to address public health issues related to environmental conditions through the process leading to the Second European Conference on Environment and Health to be held in Helsinki in June 1994 and invited bi- and multilateral financing organizations to lend their support to the implementation of the forthcoming European Action Plan on Environment and Health;

- recommended better coordination among bodies and organizations of the United Nations system and funding agencies in order to use financial resources more effectively.
  
- recommended the development of intercountry as well as country-specific projects and pre-investment studies in the context of the G-24 Project Investment Portfolio for Technical Cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe as outlined in Annexes 1 and 2. WHO/EURO, in collaboration with the UNEP Regional Office for Europe, expressed their readiness to assist in the development and formulation of respective project proposals.
  
- suggested that the forthcoming Lucerne Ministerial Declaration should accord highest priority to the interface of environment, health and economics in Central and Eastern Europe and that it should endorse the deliberations of the workshop as expressed in this report, including Annex 1 summarizing national priorities and Annex 2 summarizing priorities for intercountry action in the field of environment and health.

**COUNTRY SPECIFIC PRIORITY ISSUES**  
in the field of environment, health and economics,  
raised during the  
UNEP, WORLD BANK, WHO/EURO Workshop on the priority  
of environmental health issues in relation to policies and  
investments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe  
for possible consideration by  
the G-24 in the Project Investment Portfolio  
for Technical Cooperation with the countries of  
Central and Eastern Europe

**BULGARIA**

- Strengthening of legislation in the field of environment and health and harmonization of national standards with international systems;
- Establishment of nationwide geographical information systems on environment and health;
- Capacity building in environmental epidemiology, monitoring, risk assessment, and environmental health management;
- Support to the establishment of unified environment and health monitoring systems.
- Priority of strengthening of environmental health administration;
- Development of concrete programmes in Russe, Demitrograd, Devnia, and Burgas in the field of environment and health.

**CZECH REPUBLIC**

- Support to the establishment of National Monitoring System of Environmental Pollution and Health Impact and, in particular, strengthening quality control and quality assurance programmes;
- Development of a national information system on environment and health;
- Support to the establishment of smog alarm system in southern Poland and Northern Bohemia.

## **ESTONIA**

- Improvement of rural and urban drinking water supply and sanitation systems;
- Extension of sewage treatment system for Tallinn;
- Assessment of health risks associated to oil shale based industries and power production;
- Formulation of legislation and regulation in the field of environment and health;
- Support to establishment of environment and health monitoring systems.

## **HUNGARY**

- Development of a national environmental health information system;
- Traffic-related air pollution in cities;
- Improvement of air quality in Szazhalombatta, and development of nationwide data base on health effects of air pollution;
- High arsenic content of drinking water in south-east Hungary;
- High nitrate content of drinking water in some areas;
- Environmentally sound hospital waste treatment;

## **POLAND**

- Strengthening of quality assurance, quality control and methods in environmental health monitoring at the national, regional and local level;
- Strengthening of legislation in the field of environment and health and harmonization of national standards with international systems;
- Support to the establishment of smog alarm system in southern Poland and Northern Bohemia;
- Public awareness campaign on the issue of lead exposure to children in areas close to lead smelters;

## **ROMANIA**

- Introduction of a system of management of municipal and industrial wastes;
- In-depth study of exposure to asbestos fibres in urban areas;
- Improvement of drinking water supplies and strengthening the chemical and biological monitoring of drinking water.
- Establishment of public health surveillance system in highly polluted areas;

## **RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

- Strengthening of municipal and industrial waste management; development and implementation of comprehensive air quality management system;
- Improvement of rural and urban water supply;
- Assessment of large-scale radioactive contamination and its health effects;
- Support to the establishment a national food monitoring system.

## **SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

- Epidemiological study on health impact of environmental pollution in the Hacava Hrusta region;
- Strengthening of waste management capacity;
- Establishment of uniform data collection system on environmental health at the National Institute of Health Promotion;

**INTERCOUNTRY PRIORITY ISSUES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING**

in the field of environment, health and economics,  
raised during the  
UNEP, WORLD BANK, WHO/EURO Workshop on the priority  
of environmental health issues in relation to policies and  
investments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe

- Improvement of the data base on environment and health in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in particular:
  - development of monitoring and assessment methodologies to assess the health effects of environmental conditions, including quality assurance;
  - establishment of compatible geographical information systems on environment and health, including transboundary information systems;
  - development of capacities for economic analysis applied to environmental health problems;
- Strengthening legislation, environmental health services and regulations in the field of environment and health;
- Application of international guidelines in the formulation of national regulations;
- Support to regional initiatives in manpower development in the fields of environmental epidemiology, risk communication and quality assurance.