

## Youth Position Paper on Environment and Health

Vienna, 2016

### Introduction

The Vienna Youth Position Paper on Environment and Health 2016 has been produced by the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition (EEHYC), which is the first European youth participation network that emphasizes and promotes the understanding of the inherent links between environment and health and envisions Youth participation in decision making processes at all levels in the WHO European Region.

The Vienna Youth Position Paper derives from the outcome of an online consultation process conducted on 75 young people from 20 European Countries prior to the International Youth Conference on Environment, Health and Mobility. It has been further discussed and agreed on by over 70 Youth Delegates from 33 Member States, participating in the International Youth Conference on Environment, Health and Mobility from 27th to 29th of November 2016.

This paper contains the views and proposals of young people regarding the Environment and Health issues in the WHO European Region and the Draft Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Health to be adopted in the Ostrava Ministerial Conference in 2017. The paper also presents the contribution that young people are eager to have in the implementation of Environment and Health commitments and in further strengthening youth participation in all aspects of the process.

### Acknowledgement

1. We, the young people of the WHO European Region, acknowledge the positive influence of previous declarations and actions taken to safeguard and improve both our health and the environment we live in. We recognize the improvements achieved in human health and well-being and recall the Batumi Declaration: Greener, cleaner, smarter! (2016), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015), the THE PEP Paris Declaration - "City in Motion - People first!"(2014), the Health 2020 Agenda, the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health (2010) and its commitment to actions under the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE). We reaffirm our commitments from the Parma Youth Declaration (2010) and the Budapest Youth Declaration (2004).
2. We welcome the Member States reaffirmed commitments on ensuring safe and sustainable water and sanitation in the context of climate change, improving air quality, reducing waste and pollution and strengthening resilience to climate change in the WHO European Region.
3. We welcome the Member States new commitments on achieving environmental sustainability of health systems and on making European cities environmentally sustainable and resilient to global environmental change in order to protect and promote health and wellbeing.

## Moving Forward

The EEHYC is a direct result of the commitments made by the Member States of the WHO European Region through the Parma Declaration to “ensure that youth participation is facilitated across all Member States at both national and international levels” (Parma Declaration, 2010).

Since its establishment, the EEHYC, in its role as official international body for representing young people from the in the WHO European Region in the European Environment and Health Process, has built a network primarily consisting of the National Platforms that have been established by national organisations focused on youth participation, environment and/or health and consolidated National Youth Councils. They implement projects and programs within the European Environment and Health process, are involved in decision-making processes, and in strengthening youth participation at national and international levels.

Five years after the commitments made by Member States in the Parma Declaration, only about a quarter of the European Region Member States have reported about meaningful youth engagement. This indicates that strengthening youth involvement in the European Environment and Health Process still needs significant improvement, and that Member States need to make a greater and more sustained effort to demonstrate a stronger commitment to implementing the Parma commitments to youth across the Region (Mid Term Review Report, 2015).

4. We welcome Member States support to the EEHYC’s continuous active role in advocating greater engagement of youth at the national level and international levels, including the new institutional framework of the EEH process;
5. We welcome the involvement of young people in contributing to the Ministerial Declaration and its Implementation Plan.
6. Therefore we call Member States to reinforce the establishment of EEHYC National Platforms in all WHO Member states by actively implementing youth participation structures, financially supporting and increasing the involvement in environment and health decision-making of
  - a. *National organisations with focus on youth participation and environment and/or health issues;*
  - b. *Legally consolidated National Youth Councils focusing on environment, health and mobility;*
7. To evaluate the progress of establishing national youth participation mechanisms, we call Member States to comply with following indicators:
  1. *Establishment of 53 EEYHC National Platforms in each of the WHO Member States until 2025;*
  2. *At least monthly meetings between national WHO Environment and Health Focal Points and youth representatives of already established and newly established EEHYC National Platforms to discuss and update each other on activities under the European Environment and Health Process at national and local levels.*

8. We call Member States to implement mechanisms for active and meaningful youth participation by integrating youth representatives of National Platforms in local and national task forces and involve them in national decision making and policy development processes on Environment, Health, Mobility and Transport issues, by assenting to following indicator:
  - *Including youth representatives in structures outlined above in 23 WHO Member States by 2025.*
  
9. We call Member States to initiate and/or strengthen the collaboration with the Ministries of Youth and Education in order to set-up and/or increase formal and non-formal educational programs, and implement trainings on Environment and Health issues in line with former CEHAPE-Program, for raising awareness amongst young people in the WHO European Region, as well as to include youth representatives of National Platforms in the development process of these very measures by complying to the following indicator:
  - *Implementation of formal and non-formal educational programs and trainings on Environment, Health and Mobility issues in a least 25 WHO Member States by 2025 by integrating EEHYC National Platforms.*
  
10. We call Member States to financially support, promote and strengthen the implementation of national and international youth projects and initiatives in support of the positive future development of the EEH including youth participation processes; by assenting to the following indicator:
  - *Financially support at least 25 national best-practice projects and/or initiatives related to Environment, Health and Mobility issues, developed and implemented by young people in the WHO Member States until 2025 for a valuable and positive exchange of youth leadership expertise in this field.*

## Youth Commitment to Act

**Understanding the role of young people in bringing about long-term change in the society and the needs of our Governments to be supported in the implementation of environment and health commitments, we young people through the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition - the body that represents us officially in the European Environment and Health Process (EHP) are committed to ensure and provide the necessary time and effort for an active involvement and meaningful participation of youth in decision making process and implementation of Environment and Health commitments listed below.**

### Achieving Environmental Sustainability of Health Systems

1. We, the young people, will work enhanced with WHO European Member States, to ensure broad involvement of young people, who work closely with inter- and non-governmental organizations and support networks to ensure policy progress for implementing environmental sustainable health systems.
2. We will accelerate knowledge sharing and innovation addressing social determinants of health and environmental sustainable health policies by increasing individual health literacy as well as improving the capacity of health and other professionals.
3. We will further observe progress being made in this area until every child in the WHO European Region has access to health care.
4. We will provide our knowledge in digitalization process to people involved in health system to strengthen their skills in order to reduce amounts of waste and achieve environmentally sustainable health system.

### Ensuring Safe and Sustainable Water and Sanitation for All in the Context of Climate Change

5. We, the young people, will continue to collaborate with the Member States and national/local stakeholders on ensuring that young people are meaningfully involved in the water-related decision making processes as equal stake-holders.
6. We will continue supporting the implementation of WHO/ UNECE Protocol on Water and Health in order to tackle the persistent challenges related to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in the European Region as well as other relevant programs and policy papers.
7. We will continue working closely with the members States and national/local stakeholders on ensuring adequate to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation as well as the basic hygiene and sanitation education for children and pupils in all schools.
8. We will continue monitoring the progress in achieving universal and equitable access to safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools (WASH) services and facilitates in the region and take action whenever needed.

### **Improving Air Quality**

9. We, the young people, will closely work with national and regional platforms and stakeholders towards reducing air pollution and related health risks from industry, transport and heating through expanding ambient air quality monitoring networks and improving national legislation to comply with WHO Air Quality Guidelines.
10. We will encourage measures leading to progress in reducing indoor air pollution levels with special attention to vulnerable groups. We will engage more actively in conducting and publicizing research on health effects of indoor air quality in educational institutions.
11. We will support projects on all levels that will contribute to improving air quality through smart urban planning, and providing access, preservation and expanding green spaces and car-free zones. We will contribute to and support policies and law enforcement activities that will ultimately lead to de-carbonization of the economy and energy sector.
12. We will contribute to improving knowledge and raising awareness among youth on healthy lifestyle, sustainable transport (including road traffic) and tackling the issue of over-consumption.
13. We will facilitate the open access to air quality data through supporting or initiating online air quality monitoring and information platforms.

### **Making European Cities Environmentally Sustainable, Resilient to Global Environmental Change, Protecting and Promoting Health and Wellbeing**

14. We, the young people, will support health promoting physical activity such as walking and cycling, and will work to support the increase of public transport share by improving the quality of infrastructure for public transport, for walking, and for cycling. We will further support and contribute to the provision of affordable and accessible public transport for everyone, and introduction of environmentally friendly technologies.
15. We commit to promote planning and implementing sustainable human-oriented urban spaces by preserving, protecting and expanding urban green areas, making them free and accessible especially for vulnerable groups and by making car-free city areas.
16. We, the young people, will work to ensure access to fresh, local, organic food in urban areas, by promoting, amongst others, transparency in labeling, farmer's markets, food waste management, incentives for healthy food producers, and reducing plastic packaging.
17. We, the young people, commit to working towards a holistic approach to sustainable, resilient, smart cities by ensuring effective inter-sectorial communication, policy-cohesion and the meaningful participation of youth in the decision-making processes concerning the social, environmental and economic aspects.

### **Eliminating Threats to Human Health in Transition to a Circular Economy: Reducing Waste and Pollution in Europe**

18. We, the young people, commit to follow, act and promote policies and practices to reduce the amount of food being declared as waste and being thrown away on the side of producers (e.g. farms) as same as on the side of dealers (e.g. supermarkets, restaurants) and consumers (e.g. households, hotels).
19. We commit to address the efficient disposal of waste (with putting a special focus on medical waste, chemical waste and hazardous waste) through recycling and ask ministries to implement waste separation schemes. We commit to supporting them through collaborations with educational institutions.
20. We commit to the management of waste disposal and ask the ministries of education to implement a "healthy green day" where students could collect waste in their communities. We commit to support this project by creating educational material and modules. We specifically target to act that at least 5 of our countries have pilot projects implemented until 2018.
21. We commit to reduction of waste generated due to single-use items, and to support our ministries to introduce a deposit system on reusable packaging, to encourage alternative packaging methods, and to ban giving away single-use plastic bags and other similar items for free.

### **Promoting Health by Mitigating, Adapting and Strengthening Resilience to Climate Change**

22. We, the young people, commit to lead by example in adopting active mobility behaviors (walking and cycling), that will both contribute to climate change mitigation and reduce the emergence of sedentary-related diseases.
23. We commit to lead by example in adopting responsible food consumption patterns, including by reducing our meat consumption and preferring local and organic produce whilst supporting and engaging in local/organic farming initiatives, which will contribute to climate change adaptation, strengthen our resilience and promote healthy eating habits.
24. We commit to enhancing our first aid skills and encouraging governments to implement soil protection measures with the goal of strengthening our resilience to and limiting the health impacts of increasing extreme weather events..
25. We commit to being powerful advocates of the health co-benefits of mitigating and adapting to climate change, and encouraging governments to implement "education to sustainability" programs that raise awareness about the interconnections between climate change and health in schools, universities and professional settings in order to ensure that these topics remain a priority for our society as a whole.

### Promoting Chemical Safety

26. We, the young people, commit to doing as much as we can to ensure chemical safety, as it impacts all people, especially the very young. We define chemical safety as: all the measures that can be taken to protect people and the environment from chemical exposure and its effects, this includes: medical, industrial, agriculture, commercial, cosmetic and transport sectors.
27. We emphasize the use of evidence based, independent information accessible to all, in formal and non-formal education, to educate citizens about chemical safety, in order to: improve awareness about chemical hazards in the living environment; encourage critical thinking within citizens so they can create informed opinions and make informed decisions regarding their chemical exposure caused by products and living environment factors; to optimize citizen lifestyles regarding chemical safety.
28. We encourage the conduction of more independent studies in chemical safety to measure the health and environment impact of said chemicals and to find ways to optimize existing measures and create new ones. Furthermore, we ask for more transparency about resources used by industries and improved availability of information.
29. We support the prohibition and replacement of harmful resources that we call for. We will actively avoid harmful resources when governments fail to control usage of those resources, and ask for the prioritization of research on more healthy and environmentally friendly substitutes.
30. We will form strong links and collaborate with governments as major partners to emphasize the use of preventative measures when evidence is inconclusive and regulate activities regarding chemical safety. With all resources and stakeholders included. We call for quick actions when evidence suggests that population and environment are negatively affected by regulated and unregulated chemicals.