PROMOTING THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH PROCESS

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All the work of the young people in issuing this publication has been exclusively voluntary, proving once again that young people are an enormous resource of energy, goodwill, dedication and enthusiasm, for which we, as the Coalition, are deeply grateful.
INTRODUCTION

Poor environmental quality will sooner or later undoubtedly negatively affect human health. Similarly, exposure to negative environmental factors causes or enhances a vast majority of human health conditions.

The TUNZA process of engagement and involvement of young people in environmental issues of the United Nation Environmental Program, the European Youth Forum, the many initiatives under European Union’s Youth in Action Programme (2007-2013), and other recent developments across Europe and around the world show that young people want to actively participate in building their future at the local, national and international levels. In recent years, European decision-makers have recognized the need to involve young people in the environment and health process, signing in 2010 the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health and thereby committing to ensure that youth participation is facilitated across all Member States in the European Region of the World Health Organization (WHO).

This booklet highlights practical examples of meaningful participation of young people in the European environment and health process. It is addressed to two main target audiences: on the one side, it targets decision-makers across Europe, providing them with a better understanding of the role young people can and do play as key stakeholders in environment and health matters.

On the other side, it targets young people, who are interested in getting engaged in activities related to environment and health, providing them with inspiration and encouragement from the experiences already developed by their peers in different parts of Europe. The publication has three main purposes in accordance with the vision and mission of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition (EEHYC). Firstly it sets the stage for understanding what meaningful youth participation is and how it connects to youth involvement in environment and health issues. Secondly, it showcases examples of active youth involvement in addressing environment and health issues, which come to legitimize the voice of young people in decision-making processes on the subjects of Environment and Health. And thirdly, it aims to encourage further active involvement of youth across Europe in achieving a more healthy and sustainable environment, as well as further efforts from relevant policy and decision-makers to develop mechanisms to facilitate meaningful youth participation in decision-making.
RATIONALE

We, the young people of today, are facing an unprecedented variety of opportunities to spend our time and energy. The question of how to make use of this while improving our knowledge, skills and abilities to leave a meaningful and interesting life leaves us more vulnerable than ever to a wide range of potentially misleading answers. There is therefore a strong need to develop critical skills by supporting young people in the development of a sound understanding of the links between policies undertaken by different sectors, and their effects on the environment and health, so that their proposals for action are informed by scientific evidence, and in turn contribute to the development of an active and informed citizenship. Also, by supporting young people in thinking critically based on the understanding of scientific evidence, we would strengthen the democratic robustness of our societies. Youth initiatives intended to improve the quality of our environment and health therefore need to be encouraged and given due attention and priority.

Further, young people are currently very well aware of how decisions taken by governments at a given time affect the health and well-being of the generations to come. The use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and DDT are but two examples. Consequently, we feel more than ever the need to have our concerns, views and wishes heard by those who are taking decisions today that will affect our lives tomorrow. We are ready to show that we too are ready to “walk the talk”.

The first is from cleaning a park and the second from the performance of the National Opera of Greece in Varvakeios Meetmarket organised by atenistas. Photo credit Konstantinos Flamiatos, photographer.

Health4Youth project
The picture shows the project manager Mayri Tiido and communications responsable Matthijs Overhaal together with the mascot of the project “Carry the Carrot”

One is reflecting our one of the working methods - workshops, where we share interesting and interactive information about having and maintaining healthy lifestyle.
INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This document refers to 26 projects implemented by young people in various European countries. It is only a very small part of what young people are currently doing all across Europe and is primarily addressed to the policy makers and all other national and international stakeholders directly involved in addressing environment and health issues.

The projects in this booklet are described in more detail on the EEHYC website at www.eehyc.org —> Good practice repository.
HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN DECISION-MAKING ON EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH
The history of young people participating in the European environment and health process goes back to 2004, when ministers from the 53 countries of the European Region of WHO adopted a ministerial declaration promising to do more to protect children’s health from harmful environments. They have also committed themselves to involve young people in policy formulation and implementing national children’s environment and health action plans.

In 2007, the WHO Regional Office for Europe and some very dedicated young people set up the CEHAPE (Children’s Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe) Youth Network so that young people would have a voice in protecting children’s health at the national and international levels. As an emerging dedicated international platform, the Network had a unique role in representing environment and health youth networks at the European environment and health meetings. The main goals of the CEHAPE Youth Network were to bring the ideas, opinions and requests of young people on matters concerning environment and health to the attention of decision-makers and to ensure, through real partnership, the long-term sustainability of the lived environment through meaningful youth participation that directly influences the health and well-being of children and young people.

From that time on, young people have been active in the process of developing both children’s environment and health action plans and in organizing themselves into a European network. In 2010, the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health included ministerial commitments to promote and support youth participation during the 5th WHO Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, thus acknowledging young people as official stakeholders in the European environment and health process. In the Youth Conference Declaration, young people stated their readiness to follow the outcomes of the Parma Ministerial Conference, to undertake activities to support the efforts to achieve the objectives stated in the Parma Declaration and to call on policy-makers to account for their actions.

In 2012, the EEHYC was created, with strong collaboration and commitment between the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the young people involved in the process up to that point and the Member States, to fully ensure meaningful, democratic and sustained youth participation in the European environment and health process.
PURPOSE OF THIS PUBLICATION

We expect that decision-makers and policy-makers reading this booklet will:

1. better understand the potential contribution of young people in addressing environment and health issues in the European Region and the importance of making use of their experience in making decisions and policy regarding environment and health;

2. become familiar with some specific examples on how young people can and already do act to improve the quality of their lived environment and health across Europe, whether as students, researchers, government employees, young entrepreneurs, activists in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or members of initiative groups;

3. regard, the EEHYC as a representative body of the young people from all sectors dealing with environment and health and not only as a network of NGOs of, by and for young people;

4. acknowledge the need to include young people in formulating and implementing the environment and health policies in their countries and internationally; and

5. consider supporting young people nationally and internationally in creating national environment and health youth platforms.

We expect young people involved in environment and/or health activities:

1. to become more familiar with what their fellow young people are doing across Europe to address environment and health problems;

2. to be inspired themselves to continue acting to achieve a more healthy and sustainable environment locally and nationally;

3. to understand and acknowledge the importance of and need for addressing environment and health issues jointly;

4. to understand that their experience and knowledge are necessary to be taken to the decision and policy-makers at the local, national and European levels; and

5. to use the opportunity to join the EEHYC to bring their hands-on experience to the attention and use of the wider European community.
“F.T.M.B. team from Romania organizing various competitions for members of the organization and their partner institutions. The pictures captured how it is fun to play football, tennis and martial arts!”
WHY IS THE MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IMPORTANT?
The meaningful participation of young people can facilitate real democratic partnerships. As the word itself nicely shows, “meaningful” means “full of meaning”. Thus, young people get active, which for us means that we gain experience to build and support our opinions; decision-makers and policy-makers are receptive to young people’s input, which means that there is a reason for us to keep being active. On the other hand the advantage is that, as long as the decisions being made at all levels are in line with young people’s concerns, it strengthens our positive and supportive response to actions being undertaken by decision and policy-makers. This underlines the need for young people to be involved in decision and policy-making. The European Commission’s Structured dialogue with youth is a constructive example of this.

The most important element of meaningful participation is that adults respect young people’s capacity to take part in decisions and consider us as partners. That is, young people must have a certain level of empowerment, responsibility and decision-making power to participate actively. At this stage, however, the traditional mechanism for young people participating in the vast majority of countries around

**LADDER OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION**

- Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults
- Youth-initiated and directed
- Adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth
- Consulted and informed
- Assigned but informed
- Tokenism
- Decoration
- Manipulation

**DEGREES OF PARTICIPATION**

**NON-PARTICIPATION**

*Fig. 1. Roger Hart’s ladder of participation model*
the world is based on adults’ power and decisions, with very little or no involvement of youth groups at all.

The essence of participation is well explained by Roger Hart’s ladder of participation model (1), adapted from Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation (2). Hart has described the evolving participation in terms of a ladder with levels of youth involvement in projects ranging from non-participation to full participation in eight stages (Fig. 1). However, it is not to be perceived as a static reality. The degree of involvement in the participation process may change over time, given that efforts are taken towards doing this.

Determining the precise level of participation within a project or a process can sometimes be rather difficult, either because of its complexity or because there are no clear borders between different rungs.

The degree to which young people are or could be involved at a certain time depends indeed on such factors as the local circumstances, what is planned to be achieved and past experiences. Areas of participation that are of most interest for young people should also not be ignored. In May 2013, a report was published – European youth: participation in democratic life (3) – in which young people 15–30 years old were asked about their participation in a range of activities organized by different types of groups and clubs within the past year.

According to the survey, the youngest age groups are the most involved in youth organizations in general (30% of those 15–19 years old, 20% of those 20–24 years old and 17% of those 25–30 years old). As for the area of interest, young people decided to participate mostly in youth clubs or leisure clubs or any kind of youth organization (22%), local organizations aiming to improve the local community (15%), organizations involved in climate change or environmental issues (7%) and other nongovernmental organizations (12%). Participation in organizations promoting human rights or global development (8%) and in sports clubs (35%) has increased. Although most young respondents have participated in an activity of one of the organizations, the report has also revealed that a significant proportion have not taken part in any of the organizations at all (44%).

In the European Union (EU), participation is now a central consideration of policy discourses at the national and local levels. The EU youth strategy (4) also underlines the need to support young people’s participation in representative democracy and civil society, particularly in relation to issues on health and environment. How should this need be met? How should young people be involved, particularly the less active or inactive ones, in the areas known to be necessary? The answer as we, young people, see it is pretty much straightforward: by making us feel that what we do is needed and taken into consideration and can make a difference.

Successful participation is not limited to a single project but is rather an ongoing process that contributes to building a culture of participation in society. In light of this, the EEHYC focuses on projects and activities related to the health and environment issues throughout Europe, both supporting decision-makers in finding ways and tools to meaningfully
involve young people and facilitating young people’s active participation in pursuing environment and health objectives. It seeks to encourage young people’s active involvement in practical activities, to ensure that they express informed and experience-based opinions and to ensure that these opinions are taken into account at the relevant decision-making levels.

Meaningful participation in decision-making and policy-making gives young people the opportunity to talk about and influence provisions that are important to them. It helps ensure that programmes are appropriate and responsive, saving valuable time and energy in the long term. It creates better outcomes for the young people and organizations involved in the decision-making process by both contributing to the developmental needs of young people while benefiting organizations, be it public or private, government or nongovernmental, in the long term.

Providing a powerful platform to support and encourage good practices led by young people creates better opportunities for young people to voice their needs and share their hands-on experience.

**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION?**

It builds essential skills for effective functioning in society.

It contributes to developing democratic, equitable and sustainable societies.

It ensures that services are better aligned to intergenerational needs.

Peer-to-peer education plays a key role in supporting young people who are outside of the mainstream education.

Young people’s characteristic creativity, thinking outside the box and dynamism provide new perspectives to old problems.

It ensures greater chance of success in policy-making because decision-makers better understand and consider the needs of young people.

It raises awareness of the responsibility young people carry towards the environment as future decision-makers and inhabitants of the planet and thus familiarizes them with the processes required for designing and implementing policies related to health and environment.
WHY?

The key to a successful environment and health process is communication and cooperation between relevant stakeholders.

Effective participation by young people is likely to lead to successful outcomes, especially when changing young people’s attitudes and culture.

All stakeholders working together legitimize outcomes.
Youth NGO “Appel de la Jeunesse” team from France shares their good mood and energy. This picture is taken from their previous actions.

The picture shows EEHYC National Youth Coordinator from Serbia Danilo Arsenijevic with Prof. Vanja Petrovic, while working on “Primary Prevention of Children Injuries in Everyday Life Situations“ project.

School for Sustainable Development of Society is an online open peer-to-peer education tool for Russian speakers. Young educators are regularly giving other young people the opportunity to find out more about what Sustainable Development is about.

Young people from Youth NGO “No Excuse” from Slovenia share their skills and knowledge with their peers. The main aim is to achieve positive social change, foster their social participation and activate their peers.
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

The case studies presented in this publication have been collected following a pan-European call for examples of youth-led projects and activities aimed at tackling environment, health or environmental health issues. The call was launched in February 2013 via an open Facebook discussion group of the EEHYC and via e-mail. Young people were invited to send in short abstracts describing the aim and objectives of the project or activity. Following an initial screening by the EEHYC Organising Group of the submissions, selected case studies were then followed-up to obtain more detailed information about the projects by. A total of 26 case studies were received from 17 countries by October 2013, which are listed in this publication.

More examples of projects have been submitted since then. Case studies arriving after the deadline are not included in this publication, but are being published on the EEHYC website in line with EEHYC mission to give visibility to meaningful youth-led environment and health activities.
COLLECTING RAINDROPS TO MEASURE THE POND

Many actors involved in the European environment and health process, including the Member States, are currently striving to get a more accurate picture of the current state of involvement of young people in environment and health issues. Although evidence of intense activity by young people to implement environment and health projects is relatively abundant in the WHO European Region, a common platform is needed to compile such evidence and build much-needed coherence in how young people address environment and health problems. This fact makes it difficult for both decision-makers and other potentially active young people to understand and acknowledge the tremendous hands-on experience and achievements such young people have.

In the process of publishing this document, 26 case studies of meaningful youth involvement were gathered. Given considerations regarding the length of this publication and its purpose, the case studies have been published in full on the EEHYC website (www.eehyc.org) under the “good practice repository” section.

The diversity of projects presented as case studies is rather extensive from the perspective of issues addressed, professional and organizational background of the young people who implemented them. If we look at whether they address environment or health issues, it allows for rough clustering into four groups. Group 1 includes projects jointly targeting environment and health issues, which is what EEHYC encourages and supports. Groups 2 and 3 showcase projects that tackle some environmental and health issues separately. These projects highlight how the impressive potential of young people is channelled to solve issues that are of interest to them, and that can be further supported in the light of the EEHYC approach by increasing young people’s understanding of the intricate links between environment and health. Group 4, in contrast, showcases examples of youth involvement in peer-to-peer education projects in a wider spectrum of the sustainable development and health issues, which once again makes it worthwhile to consider young people as key partners in reaching out to the wider public to raise awareness and facilitate learning as part of the European environment and health process.

The projects included in this publication are but very few examples that show how young people – students, researchers, government employees, entrepreneurs, activists in NGOs or members of initiative groups – bring their individually small but overall impressive input to the process, thus calling for more sustained efforts in understanding more precisely the actual extent of the role they play in achieving national and international environment and health process objectives. Such case studies are examples of a higher level of participation achieved according to Hart’s ladder (1) (see the previous chapter on why the meaningful participation of young people is important).
The six projects showcased in this group target such issues as doing research and raising public awareness concerning the health effects of endocrine disruptors and pesticides, health consequences of exposure to polluted environments and environmental protection as primary prevention of cancer morbidity.

Youth NGOs and student groups have implemented them, and they reveal young people’s understanding of the fact that environmental factors can and usually do affect health. Improving working and living environmental conditions therefore positively affects health. Young people can play an active role in improving and protecting their immediate environment and in raising communities’ awareness of that. More details about the following projects are available on the EEHYC website (www.eehyc.org) under the “good practice repository” —> “environment and health projects”.

1. **CEHAPE – Youth Participation in Austria** is a project of Youth Environment Platform JUMP (Jugend-Umwelt-Plattform JUMP) from Austria, which aims at building the capacity of young people on the regional priority goals to involve them in implementing the CEHAPE and to ensure high-quality participation of young people in Austria.

2. **Project “Let’s Talk about Sex”** was developed by the youth NGO Appel de la Jeunesse from France to increase young people’s interest in endocrine disruptors.

3. **Greenpride Festival** is another project of Appel de la Jeunesse organized every year to reach people who do not usually think about the environment and the effects of its degradation on health in a fun way instead of a moralistic, distressing way.

4. **Guinea Pig Generations – No, Thank You!** is a regular campaign of Appel de la Jeunesse that focuses on a specific environment and health topic. In 2011, it focused on bisphenol A, a hormone disruptor used to make certain plastics, than then end up in the environment. In 2012, the campaign focused on raising public awareness about genetically modified organisms.

5. **Publication of books on environmental causes of cancer and on the mobilization of young people** is an activity of Appel de la Jeunesse, which focused on raising awareness among young people and on spreading an optimistic view of the future by proposing specific initiatives and alternatives in domains such as agriculture, energy, tax system, economy, entrepreneurship and environmental health.

6. **Health status of selected municipalities of the Slovak Republic with prevalence of cancer diseases** is a research project ran by a student group from Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia, trying to better understand the effect of microelements in soils on the health status of population and ways to solve the problem of incidental cancer, cardiovascular and endocrine diseases.
**ENVIRONMENT**

It is not news that this generation of young people is very aware of environmental problems that challenge the well-being of humanity all around the world. This is because they have already been living for quite some time with the consequences of a deteriorating environmental integrity, biodiversity, availability of non-renewable resources, as well as with alterations of climatic systems and of many natural cycles, while access to the large amount of specialized information helps them to see the connections and causes of that.

The seven projects in this group are an example of the fact that young people feel responsible and are taking practical action to reduce the negative effects human society has on the environment, given the implications it has on our lives today and in the future. This not only directly changes youth behaviour and attitudes but can also influence other people in the community. More details about these projects can be found on the EEHYC website (www.eehyc.org) under the section “good practice repository” —> “environmental projects”.

1. **RES-coop-Croatia (energy cooperatives as a new model for renewable energy development)** is a project of the United Nations Development Programme Croatia, within the framework of which a young researcher extended the work at a local level in the Municipality of Gundinci as a potential pilot project.

2. **The Green Project** of the Atenistas initiative group of young people from Athens, Greece is a regular activity of transforming abandoned public places into parks and playgrounds that aims to ameliorate the everyday environment of the citizens and highlight substandard areas of the city.

3. **Green Days at the University of Iceland** is a programme implemented by Gaia Student Organization that seeks to promote the environmental discourse within the University of Iceland with the aim of increasing students’ environmental awareness by seeking knowledge and expertise to practice more environmentally friendly behaviour.

4. **Local Action – Global Impact** is a project of Terra-1530 from the Republic of Moldova in which young people are actively involved in a reforestation project aimed at maintaining a cleaner environment.

5. **Versluijs – Projects, Green Youth Initiatives** is an informal youth platform established by an initiative group from the Netherlands that has as a goal to generate the possibility for youth to work on their ideas and start their own projects addressing the loss of biodiversity and sustainability.

6. **National Contest Edelweiss** is a yearly project organized by the teachers and students at Dr. Alexandru Barbat Technical High School in Romania aimed to develop an active and
The first one is from the Go4BioDiv International Youth Forum 2012 held in India. These are the youth who represented the most beautiful and extraordinary Marine World Heritage Sites.

In the second picture I am creating awareness for this project at an meeting of different Dutch companies.

While cooking food from local products, young people discuss and experiment how important it is to keep the environment clean so that our food is clean and healthy.

“Reduce Reuse Recyclers” discuss about how our consumption choices impact the environment and local communities.

Participants in the Reduce Reuse Recycle project by youth NGO Society for Responsible Consumption Romania have left their computers and smartphones for a week to spend time in nature, reflect on our connection with it.

Volunteers of NGO “Terra1530” from Moldova are on their mission to instruct and strengthen rural communities’ capacity on Sustainable Development.
protective attitude among young people towards the environment, development of environmentally friendly behaviour, knowledge and application of environmental norms.

7. **Reduce Reuse Recycle** is a project implemented by the youth NGO Society for Responsible Consumption from Romania, in which organizers created the conditions for participants to reflect and act on the relationship between people’s consumption habits, environmental protection and social welfare, based on the premise of sustainable development of local and regional communities and on young people’s role in building a strong local community as a prerequisite for a strong national and international community.

**HEALTH**

The social, economic, political and physical environment in which the individual lives plays a significant role in determining that person’s level of health. In the first International Conference on Health Promotion in Ottawa, Canada in 1986, it was suggested that activities be initiated not only to educate people about health matters but also to change the environments in which people live and to involve the community in projects to improve health (5).

This group comprises 10 projects carried out by young people that show a genuine concern about the health of children, young people and the wider public. The detailed project descriptions are can be accessed on the EEHYC website (www.eehyc.org) under the section “good practice repository” —> “health projects”.

1. **Health4Youth** is a project implemented by AEGEE-Europe from Belgium to show young people what a healthy lifestyle is all about. The main question addressed within the project is what is considered to be a healthy lifestyle and how to maintain it.

2. **First Aid for Schools** is a project of a youth organization for students from Denmark called International Medical Cooperation Committee. The project seeks to provide training in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation for the oldest school students at little or no cost for the schools.

3. **Health for All** is another project of the International Medical Cooperation Committee from Denmark, the mission of which is that undocumented migrants have the same rights to public health. The project aims at to make the health care professionals in Denmark aware of the problem and give them tools to meet undocumented migrants.

4. **HEALTHday (SUNDdag)** is also a project implemented by the International Medical Cooperation Committee from Denmark. It aims to increase the general citizens’ interest in their own health by providing different but highly qualified and easily understandable information with new inspiration for healthy lifestyles to the general public of Aarhus.
5. **IMCC-Sexinuk** is a project of the International Medical Cooperation Committee from Denmark that seeks to improve sexual health among young people in Greenland by providing adequate education in an attractive manner.

6. **The Food Day** project is a nationwide celebration and a movement for healthy, affordable, and sustainable food in Lithuania managed by Lithuanian Medical Students Association. Its goal is primarily to reduce diet-related disease by promoting healthy foods and supporting sustainable farms.

7. **A National Anti-Smoking Campaign** implemented by A-SMYLE Alumni student group from Montenegro aims to raise awareness about smoking throughout the population of young people in Montenegro, ranging from kindergarten children to university students, and to promote a healthy, no-smoking lifestyle to young people.

8. **The FTMB Trophy** project, as part of the European Move-Week, aims to enhance young people’s mental and physical health by encouraging them to practice sports in their everyday life. It was implemented by the Bucharest Youth Foundation of Romania.

9. **Tin Sport Cup** is another project of the Bucharest Youth Foundation, Romania that has been implemented to encouraging the young to practice sports in their daily life.

10. **Do You Have A Spare PLANet** was a research project conducted by a student from Belgrade’s School of Dentistry, Serbia, with the aim of providing information on ambient air quality in one’s school and highlighting how air quality affects student productivity.

**PEER-TO-PEER EDUCATION**

Young people are more likely to hear and personalize messages, and thus to change their attitudes and behaviour, if they believe the messenger is similar to them and faces the same concerns and pressures (6). Peer-based initiatives aim at facilitating the personal and social development of young participants to realize the potential, skills and attitudes necessary for their appropriate integration in society. Activities in this area provide opportunities for peers to undertake actions corresponding to their own aspirations and to assume responsibilities related to environment and health.

In the group of peer-to-peer education projects, young people are carrying out three projects at different scales and in different environments. The details of these projects are available on the EEHYC website (www.eehyc.org) under the section “good practice repository” —> “peer-to-peer education projects”.

1. **DiTestaMia Health Promoting Guys: Empowered Peer Education** is an initiative of a group of young people from Italy supported by the Tuscany Regional Government, which aims to promoting health in the young population through peer education.
In this picture you can see the Trier university of applied sciences team. It is a short moment from Reduco Energo and UNDP project.

David Fjolnir Armansson (left) president of Gaia (2012-2013) giving the Green Days awards to Dr. Guðni Elísson for his written work on political discourse on climate change.

This is a picture of the CEHAPE Training Group (CEHAPE-Peers), members of Youth Environment Platform “JUMP”.

The virtual space of very active youth NGO from Italy - “Ditestamia”. Here you can find a lot of interesting and inspirational information about how to keep healthy, feel good about yourself, and more.

Movie screening of the documentary Chasing Ice and an Icelandic representative of the movie (co-producer) answering questions about the movie.

NGO “Lithuanian Medical Students Association” members raise the interest of people about healthy lifestyle, physical activity and sustainable development. The communication process is in progress.
2. **Open Online Courses: Spreading the Word on Sustainability** is a peer-to-peer education project of an initiative group of young people from the Russian Federation called the Open School for Sustainable Development of Society (Открытая Школа Устойчивого Развития Общества). The aim of this project is to share knowledge on sustainable development in the Russian-speaking online community.

3. **No Excuse Slovenia – the Model for Youth Empowerment and Participation** is a project of the No Excuse Youth Network from Slovenia that aims at raising awareness about actual topics and encouraging young people’s critical thinking by peer-to-peer and intergenerational dialogue.

**END NOTE**

Building partnerships with young people and giving them an opportunity to shape the policies and influence the outcomes of decision-making processes is essential for meaningful youth participation. Acknowledging young people’s views and understanding our needs and attitudes should be the core principle of all policy-making affecting us.

Different projects led by young people, such as the ones presented in this booklet, legitimize young people as relevant actors and form the basis for our systematic involvement in the European environment and health process at all levels. By showcasing the specific results of work by young people in environment and health, we try to present young people as an effective tool for bridging the gap between policies and action at the ground level and to highlight the potential benefits of youth participation.

By issuing this publication, we hope to inspire young people across the WHO European Region and to encourage them to develop future youth-led activities jointly addressing environment and health issues. We also hope to support policy makers in gaining a better understanding of how youth participation can make an important positive difference for health and the environment for the present and future generations.

The EEHYC sees this publication as a step forward in creating effective channels of cooperation and information exchange among young people, national governments and other relevant stakeholders.

“By the year 2015 there will be 3 billion people under the age of 25. They are the future. They are also the now.”

By actively participating in environment and health decision-making, the youth involved in the European environment and health process can bring a fresh perspective to the European process by making use of their strong will and motivation to influence their future.

Nationally, the emphasis is on young people developing focused national projects on environment and health, in line with the Parma Declaration. Formal and informal national coalitions of young people from many sectors are to be formed. Collectively, they will seek to participate in national decision-making processes, represent young people and bring outcomes from their activities to policy and strategy forums, and at the same time provide a youth perspective.

Internationally, the EEHYC will work to bring the collective and representative voice of young people to an international audience. This is to be done by collecting and collating national data on EEHYC activities, through participation at international events and by being represented at WHO intergovernmental forums. The EEHYC will also work to strengthen EEHYC capacity at the national level by acting as a hub for information flows, to design and organize training activities and other developmental initiatives.
The mission of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition is to support, legitimize and give visibility to the participation of the young people in processes aimed at both promoting health and achieving sustainable environments. The EEHYC acts to unite and focus youth activities to implement, monitor and strengthen the Parma Declaration commitments on environment and health. Primarily, this will be achieved by helping young people to establish platforms and networks that support policy and decision makers in creating effective mechanisms for youth participation in environment and health processes.

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