



**Report of the side-event session**  
**“Youth and the Protocol on Water and Health:**  
**True partnership for mutual benefit”**

26 November 2013

3rd Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health  
Oslo, Norway

**Purpose and outcomes of the side event**

The session aimed at building a common understanding among participants about meaningful youth involvement in the implementation of water and health related projects and activities in the European Region. Organizers and guests explored together possible roles of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition in the implementation of the Protocol at national levels.

The side event was attended by a number of 16, and at times 18, participants – representatives of national governments, media and NGOs.

Following a short presentation on the history of youth involvement in the European Environment and Health Process, participants were invited to share their opinions on three topics, in an open-space format:

- Where do countries see young people as potentially contributing to the implementation of activities under the work program 2014-2016?
- How do we involve young people in the implementation of actions under the Protocol, which were initiated by the Government?
- How do we link the ongoing independent youth projects to the Protocol objectives at the national level?

The outcomes of the discussions are summarized in **Annex 1** to this report.

Once country and NGO representatives expressed the views from their side, EEHYC representatives presented a series of projects that had been implemented by young people across Europe as examples of how they can practically contribute to the achievement of Protocol objectives. Such projects included: awareness raising campaigns on water protection, safety, sanitation and hygiene, publishing policy guidance on water supply and sanitation, capacity building for young people on water and health issues, promotion of Protocol in local community, maintenance of water monitoring facilities for management of transboundary rivers, promoting and facilitating community participation in water and watershed management activities.

The side event was a necessary last step for EEHYC to take the decision about which tasks to undertake in the Protocol Work program for 2014-2016. It was preceded by an analysis of experience, capacities and priorities of EEHYC members in water and health related issues. The side event plaid the role of assessing the needs of the Parties and other stakeholders with the aim of identifying most appropriate directions for the EEHYC to work on under the Protocol. It proved that indeed both the Coalition and the Parties, as well as other stakeholders have a common vision about how young people can meaningfully contribute to the implementation of the Protocol.

As a result of the side event, it became clear that the areas where the Coalition can contribute are:

1. Working together with the leading country on implementing the activity 1.1. of the 2014-2016 work programme (Setting targets and implementing measures: capacity-building, exchange of experience and networking) particularly the translation and dissemination of the Guide at local levels in the countries where the Coalition is currently active.
2. Participate as partners in the implementation of activity 2.4. (Strengthen hygiene education and promote sanitation in schools) under the programme area 2 — Prevention and reduction of water-related diseases.
3. Working together with the leading country on point 5.1 of the work programme (Raising awareness on the equitable access to water and sanitation).

Consequently, EEHYC has offered and has been accepted by the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health to be partner in the implementation of the above-mentioned activities.

### **Usefulness of the side-event in relation to participants' expectations**

At the beginning of the side event, organizers asked the participants to note down their expectations. The purpose was on the one hand to have a better picture of what government representatives expect when attending events organized by EEHYC, and on the other hand – to check if what EEHYC considered being relevant and important for meaningful youth participation is also relevant for the Parties to the Protocol. At the end of the side event organizers asked the participants to check the expectations that had been met. The results show that up to 90% of participants' expectations were met by the format and content of the 1-hour side event, which recommend such an approach for organizing similar events in the future. The list of expectations is available in Annex 2 to this report.