

Report of the EEHYC Side Event "Youth is in Motion"
organized during the 4th High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and the
Environment
on 15 April 2014 in Paris, France

I. Introduction

The European Environment and Health Youth Coalition (EEHYC) seeks to bring its input in ensuring long-term environmental sustainability. Consequently, during various meetings organisation representatives always try to learn about environment and health issues and exchange interesting and valuable experience with other members and representatives of the various countries.

Looking from the retrospective, *The first meeting of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition (EEHYC)* was held in Florence, Italy, on 16-17 October 2012. The meeting was attended by young people from twenty-four European Member States, was hosted by the Tuscany Region and supported by the European Union in the framework of the Health Programme 2008-2013 project “Promoting networking and action on healthy and equitable environments for physical activity (PHAN)”. The meeting reviewed and discussed present level and forms of Youth engagement in the national implementation of the Parma Declaration; showcased and shared experiences developed by Youth organizations in different European countries, with a views of promoting cross-fertilization and learn from each other; launched “The Blueprint: A plan for making physical activity appealing to a youth target group” as the first product developed with the direct input of the Youth Network to support the promotion of physical activity.

The 24 youth delegates adopted the proposed mission, organization structure and a work plan for the EEHYC. It was agreed the mission of the 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 will act 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.*”

On 11-12 November 2013 the first General Assembly of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition (EEHYC) took place in Bonn Germany. The meeting was hosted by the WHO Regional Office for Europe with the support of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. It was built on the work of the Organizing Group throughout the year, which included a strategic meeting of the Organizing Group in Slovenia supported by WHO Regional Office for Europe and Slovenian Government. The meeting was attended by young people from 24 countries of the WHO European Region including members of the EEHYC and the 14 appointed EEHYC National Youth Coordinators, together with experts from the WHO Environment and Health programme, representatives from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and international experts. During the meeting, young people adopted the text of the EEHYC Constitution and the structure of the Coalition. It was decided that the structure of the new Coalition is to be based upon the formation of national EEHYCs which would affiliate to an international EEHYC which will become an official legally established international youth NGO. Nationally and internationally these coalitions will form platforms for young people. They will act as points of focus for young people and organisations to create a collaborative approach to activities and actions on environment and health issues linked to the Parma declaration and other relevant priorities. It was agreed that the Coalition will be more than a network of organizations. It will empower and interlink the participation of young people through youth organizations, informal groups, students, young professionals, researchers and activists, young entrepreneurs, focus groups, special interest groups and young government employees.

Also on 26 November EEHYC hosted a side event during the 3rd session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health in Oslo, Norway. The side event, organized and facilitated by Aidana Zhalelova, Jovana Dodos and Natalia Ciobanu focused on advancing youth participation in the implementation of the Protocol, and 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.

The side event was attended by a number of 18 participants – representatives of national governments, media and NGOs, and resulted in EEHYC defining which tasks to undertake in the Protocol Work program for 2014-2016. It proved that 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.

EEHYC represented by Aleksander Vassiljev, Danilo Arsenijevic, Dovile Adamonyte, Jovana Dodos, Julia Baschinger, Marcello Pacitti and Natalia Ciobanu, was one of the participants in the ***Tunza Europe Youth Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development on 6th – 8th of December, Munich, Germany***. The conference focused the role of youth in Rio+20 outcomes and follow up processes, the Post2015 development agenda, and implementation of the 10 Years Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production (10 YFP). EEHYC representatives participated in the discussions and held a workshop for meeting participants. The aim of the workshop was to create the context for the young people to explore how environment and human health are linked in the context of Post-2015 agenda, and discuss possible directions for action under that framework (Air quality and health-, Soil quality and health, Climate change and health, Food security and health and Water quality & availability and health).

What is more, the ***EEHYC held it's part during The European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF) held its third meeting in December 2013 in Brussels, Belgium***. The purpose of the meeting was to review progress towards achieving the Parma commitments (2010-2014), governance aspects of the Environment and Health Process and to adopted of an the EHTF inter-sessional work plan for EHTF and the establishment of the working group for the implementation of the Framework for action on climate change and health (HIC, Health in Climate Change) discussions on possible priorities and focus for the 6th Ministerial Conference in 2016 were also held.

On behalf of the EEHYC, the Executive Board member Dovelè Adamonytè, actively participated in this important meeting and reported on the progress made by EEHYC, presented the main outcomes of the 1st EEHYC General Assembly, new Coalition's logo, website and the first EEHYC publication „Promoting participation of young people in the European Environment and Health Process“ and expressed Coalitions readiness to continue actively participating in the EEH process nationally and internationally. The EEHYC on “The European Environment and Health Process (2010-2016): Institutional framework” was identified as a full member of the EHTF. The EEHYC was represented at this meeting by a member of the Executive Board with the generous support of the German Government.

During the *EEHYC Executive Board members held its 2nd Strategic Planning Meeting in Trakai, Lithuania on January 31st – February 4th*, the Executive board members drawn up a strategy to address the priorities of the action plan agreed at the EEHYC GA in November 2013, to define the progress and to measure implementation of young people commitments under the Parma Youth Declaration on Environment and Health and to discuss the preparations for the capacity-building meeting which will be on July. First of all, this meeting for the Executive Board members was an extraordinary possibility to improve team work and to get a better understanding how they interact as a group. Secondly, it helped to set valuable guidelines for the upcoming working stage. And thirdly, EB members successfully developed and build their possibilities of establishing the EEHYC as an International NGO in Lithuania.

Transport is essential part of nowadays life with many advantages and disadvantages. According to this point, people have to be aware of the crucial connection between Transport, Health and Environment. Adrian Vasnic, Dovilė Adamonytė and Jovana Dodos, on behalf of the EEHYC Executive Board, also managed to fulfil this objective through their participation in the *Fourth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment of THE PEP held in Paris 14–16 April 2014*. They contributed ideas, opinions and requests on matters concerning environmental and health-related issues, organised two separate events (photo/video competition “City in Motion: People First” and pedometer initiative) as well as represented the Coalition.

a. Photo and Video Competition:

To mark the Fourth High Level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment, the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition has launched an on-line international photo and video competition addressing the theme of the meeting “City in motion: people first”.

The theme of the competition was linked to highlight the connections between transport, health and environment. Moreover, the competition was an additional opportunity to increase participation and organisation visibility of the youth. The photo and video competition aimed to draw the attention of the public, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders to the views of young people on issues related to Transport, Health and Environment in Europe. According to this purpose, the NGO prepared the submission guidelines for the contestants with the goal to stick to the topic related to the Parma commitments. Participants of the competition were requested to send photos and videos which would express their views and ideas concerning how to ensure the efficient movement of people and goods in an environmentally conscious, safe and affordable

way. Moreover, it was important to encourage youth to address the current challenges that transport and mobility poses to the health of individuals and the environment. This includes reflecting on the significant positive impacts of being an active individual on health and national/ international pollution levels: by walking and cycling rather than driving your car to get to work/ school for example. Furthermore, the idea of the theme of the competition was to encourage young people to capture in their photos and videos the best methods on how to promote zero-emission mobility, alleviate congestion and to develop the activeness among the population to combat obesity and non-communicable diseases. Moreover the competitors were also pleased to try to highlight the crucial role the public transport systems play in ensuring that there are clean, efficient, affordable, accessible with harmonised safety and information signs, in particular for the more vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, children, the poor and people with reduced mobility. In order to improve the bigger youth involvement, each NYC were pleased to share the poster made by the EEHYC members for the purpose on advertising the competition in as many youth groups, organisations, sites as possible.

The Coalition received 90 submissions (75 photos, 15 videos) from 19 countries. According to the first round of voting through social networks where all people were able to vote which lasted from 25th of March until 6th of April 2014, following photos and videos were selected as finalists:

- Photo competition – 2 photos from Romania and 1 from Lithuania;
- Video competition – 3 photos which got the biggest amount of votes – Turkey, Bulgaria and ...

The second round of online voting was conducted prior to the 4th High level meeting on Transport, Health and Environment by the participants of the meeting. Their contribution in the competition process was an opportunity for the EEHYC to show what activities they are improving and developing and how they implement goals set in the Parma Youth Declaration. Also it brought a visibility of the youth actions and implications and yet another possibility to strengthen partnerships between other NGOs and stakeholders. Winners of the competition were announced during the EEHYC side event “Youth is in Motion”. The Winner photo (“Enjoying the summer, improving the health”) in the photo category was from Lithuania and video (“City in Motion”) – Bulgaria.

To sum up, the majority of the contestants came from the countries where are the EEHYC National Youth Coordinators who made great promotions and advertising companies in their native countries. However, there were not submissions from such countries as France, Germany, Spain etc. The main reason for these outcomes could be that the EEHYC don't have strong representatives in mentioned countries. Though the organisation actively deals with this issue and the next future step would be to organise a second round of National Youth Coordinators selection.

Youth representatives agreed that to organise a competition in all European region is not an easy task, however it's a good experience and the opportunity to improve environment and health issues not just for the youth, but also for the broader group of people – society, policymakers, relevant stakeholders. The biggest advantages to organise this competition was that Coalition highlighted important steps and considerations regarding partnerships with other organizations, for example with the partners from youth NGO from France “Appel de la jeunesse“. Also this competition gave a better knowledge for the representatives of the Ministries about the EEHYC and Youth involvement in the European Health and Environment Processes, and the possibility to build strategic partnerships. What is more, it helped to increase youth awareness and initiatives in the EEHYC activities. In contrast distinction some disadvantages were discovered. During the competition's organisational procedure, EEHYC faced with some people's inactivity and lack of motivation. Considering the reasons, it might be that EEHYC did not provide enough information about other jobs they are doing and tasks completing (participating in the meetings, updating Working groups progress etc) and lost other member trust.

b.

c.

d. **Round-table**

During the meeting, EEHYC nominated Mr. Adrian Vasnic, Executive Board Member, to represent the Coalition in the second high-level roundtable. The topic of discussion was: People first!, having as a guiding question: „What kinds of new policy, research, media, industry and civil society actors are relevant to support sustainable and healthy urban transport and mobility that is accessible to all, including youth, the poor, the aged and people with reduced mobility?“

Together with Ms. Andrea Arz de Falco, Deputy Director of the Federal Office for Public Health, Switzerland, Ms. Madeleine Mahovsky, Deputy Head of Unit, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission, and Ms. Michèle Dix, Managing Director

Planning, Transport for London, United Kingdom, Mr. Vasnic presented a statement concerning the active ways to get people involved in creating and maintaining a healthier and sustainable transport system, expressing ideas following the concept of „youth friendly cities.“ With this occasion, Mr. Vasnic was given the opportunity to convey a message of youth involvement, which EEHYC represents. His intervention during the round table mentioned the vision that young people presented in relation to sustainable transport, through the photo and video competition that was organized prior to the PEP meeting. Moreover, it was a meaningful experience to be part of the panel discussion as he challenged participants’ perceptions on the value of the young people’s input regarding environment and health. After Mr. Vasnic’s intervention, the Chair of the roundtable concluded on the importance of having youth representatives in decision-making processes and he referred to the adaptability and innovative spirit that youth can bring. One of the personal lessons from this moment was the importance of being proactive and anticipating strategies and policies, as all the speakers addressed the topic of strategic planning in such a way that their actions were guided according to medium and long-term policies. For the first time in the PEP, EEHYC positioned itself as a relevant equal stakeholder in the process, this being acknowledged by the Member States that voted an article in the Paris Declaration, where EEHYC contribution is being specifically mentioned.

For European Environment and Health Youth Coalition, being represented in a high level roundtable was a good opportunity for addressing a strong message to the member states that are part of THE PEP. It also brought the certainty that members of Transport, Health and Environment Pan European Programme acknowledge the importance of youth contribution to the overall process.

According to Adrian’s words: “Being invited to address a message to the PEP members during the round table means for EEHYC recognition of its contribution to the process. We are focused on continuing our hard work for achieving healthy and environmentally friendly transport, and we will do our best to have young people involved all over the European Region.

The learning dimension of EEHYCs participation in the round table is related to a better understanding of the transnational dimension of THE PEP, getting acquainted with different representatives of the member states, and gaining the knowledge of the mechanisms that comprise the negotiations and voting of articles for the Paris Declaration.

II. “Reflections for moving forward.”

The European Environment and Health Youth Coalition has been developing, thanks to the election of its first Executive Board and set up of a specific action plan that was adopted during the first General Assembly. In 2014, after a productive and important 10 years of youth participation, new results have started being counted: First of all, 17 National Youth Coordinators have joined EEHYC efforts in ensuring youth participation, and they have been bringing the ideas, opinions and requests of young people on matters concerning environment and health to the attention of decision makers. The National Youth Coordinators have been working in putting together Country analysis, where information about organizations and projects in the field of environment and health is being made available, in order to later during the year proceed with establishment of EEHYC National Platforms.

EEHYC was actively involved in the Fourth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment of THE PEP by organizing a Photo and Video Competition on the topic of sustainable transport, facilitating a side event, and by speaking during a round table. In several ways it was a valuable and useful experience. Firstly, it was a challenging task and a great responsibility to organise two separate events. THE PEP brought us in contact with supportive participants who were opened towards EEHYC initiatives on healthy and environmentally friendly transport suggestions. Secondly, it was a serious inspiration for our future work. Thirdly, we had a possibility to share our vision and good practice, experienced in cooperation between the different audiences, including the World Health Organisation (WHO) National Focal Points. EEHYC Executive Board (EB) believes that National Focal Points provide the „bridge” between young people at both national and international levels. Fourthly, the EEHYC Executive Board felt that as a team, they improved their internal communication. Over the past few months, since formation, it has been discovered that working separately (in different countries) is not easy. Communication and coordination can be problematic; therefore, coming together at THE PEP was a good opportunity to discuss improving EEHYC teamwork. Through this we strengthened our direction and enhanced the vision we have for the future.

Following the meeting in Paris, EEHYC has been pushing for legal establishment in Lithuania, and in the same time for organizing a meeting of NYCs, Board Members and advisors of the Coalition. Scheduled for 6-9 July in Bonn, the meeting aims at building capacity for National Youth Coordinators group, and in the same time to prepare EEHYC for the Mid Term Review that is planned for November 2014.