



**International High-Level Roundtable on
Environmental Health aspects of the Lisbon Agenda
and the Sustainable Development Strategy:**

“Clean, clever and competitive from a citizen’s perspective”



27 November 2006

Goethe Institute, Rue Belliard 58, 1040 Brussels
Metro Maalbeek (1A Debroux / 1B Stokkel)

Organised by Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF)

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The Environmental Burden of Disease

Environmental pollution has a variety of effects on human health. Part of the increase in diseases such as allergies, asthma, cancers, neurodevelopmental disorders, and cardiovascular disease have already been linked to exposure to environmental pollutants. According to a growing group of scientists the environmental burden of disease (EBD) is highly underestimated. Some examples:

- In Europe 30 million people suffer from asthma. In Western Europe the prevalence of asthma has doubled over the last decade and one person dies from asthma every hour. Asthma healthcare costs Europe approximately EUR 17.7 billion yearly. One child in seven suffers from it.
- In Europe there were 2.9 million cases of cancer in 2004, and 1.7 million cancer deaths. For children, the increase of cancer is 1 % yearly. In the last 20 years breast cancer cases have doubled and prostate carcinoma's have tripled. Part of this increase is associated with carcinogenic and mutagenic substances.
- Male fertility has drastically declined in western countries over the past 50 years and one in every 6 boys born in Europe today will have a low sperm count. In addition, there's an increase of boys born with genital malformations. Research shows links with prenatal exposure to endocrine disrupting substances. An alarming change in sex ratio following exposure to PCBs and dioxins has been seen.
- Recent Paediatric Research shows that environmental health effects in children include premature births, intra-uterine growth retardation, testicular dysgenesis syndrome, diabetes, obesity, asthma, allergies, attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders (Acta Paediatrica Supplement Oct 2006).

The EBD causes high societal costs and loss of healthy life years. This undermines the aim of the EU to become the most progressive, competitive, knowledge-based economy in the world.

Challenges for the European Union

In recent polls Europeans have expressed the desire to see improvement of the environment and health protection prioritised at the EU level. However, the current priority, driven by the Lisbon strategy, is almost exclusively economic competitiveness. Pursuing a one-sided growth strategy can have negative consequences on the environment, which we are now learning can substantially affect health and social welfare.

The effects of the environment on public health is a hot topic in Europe. European scientists discussed a new approach to assessing the extent and complexity of the EBD in an expert workshop organised by WECF in April. Finland, holding the current EU Presidency, is staunchly advocating health in all policies, meanwhile EU and other international scientific institutions have held and planned several conferences and workshops to better understand the implications and costs associated with the EBD.

Our aim is to present new scientific views and evidence on the EBD and discuss with members of the EU Commission, Ministers of Member States, members of the European Parliament, and opinion leaders from business and civil society, on how the Lisbon Strategy and policy development can better incorporate reduction and prevention of environmental pollution in order to decrease the EBD.

WECF believes that better integrating environmental health in all policies is a prerequisite for sound economic and social development and for long-term competitiveness. A healthy economy needs a healthy population which can create a win-win-win situation: for the environment, society, and for the economy.



Programme

Chair: Mary MacPhail, Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby

14.00 Opening by Commissioner Stavros Dimas, Environment - *To be confirmed*

14.10 Introduction: A healthy Europe: prerequisite for long-term competitiveness
Sascha Gabizon, WECF International Director

14.20 Chemical Braindrain
Prof. Philippe Grandjean, Harvard University USA and the University of Southern Denmark

14.45 A Revolution in Science - New opportunities to reduce the environmental burden of disease
Dr. John Peterson Myers, Cornell University USA

15.10 Briefing from the Conference on Environment and Sustainable Health: an International Assessment (ARTAC/UNESCO) at UNESCO in Paris, 9 Nov 2006.
Prof. Dominique Belpomme, Professor in Oncology, University V, Paris; President of ARTAC

15.20 The Environment and Health: Low Doses – High Impact?
David Gee, European Environmental Agency

15.30 Q&A from the audience

15.45 Tea / coffee break

16.00 Roundtable Participants will join in the discussion and give their views on possibilities for integrating health in the environmental pillar of Lisbon and in the SDS. They will react to recommendations formulated by WECF, based amongst others on the outcomes of the expert workshops.

Roundtable participants:

- Michel Catinat (Head of Competitive Aspects of SD Unit, DG Enterprise)
- Artur Furtado (Project and Policy Officer at Health Information Unit, DG Sanco)
- Satu Hassi (MEP Finland, Greens / European Free Alliance)
- Pieter van Geel (Minister of Environment, The Netherlands) - *To be confirmed*
- Liisa Hyssälä (Minister of Health and Social Services, Finland) - *To be confirmed*
- Laurent Vogel (Research Officer, European Trade Union Confederation)
- John Hontelez (Secretary General, European Environmental Bureau)
- Philippe Grandjean (Professor, Harvard University USA / University of S-Denmark)
- Representative of The Lisbon Council (Entrepreneurs) - *To be confirmed*
- Sascha Gabizon (International Director, WECF)

Q&A from the audience

Summary and Conclusions by the Chair

17.15 The Lisbon strategy and the protection of public health - Presentation of the conclusions to:

- European Commission, Georgina Georgiou, Member of the Cabinet, on behalf of Commissioner Kyprianou (Health and Consumer Protection)
- European Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström – *To be confirmed*

17.40 Final conclusions by the Chair

17.45 Reception



WECF

Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) is a Network of 78 Organisations in 31 Western and Eastern European countries, the Caucasus and Central Asia, working on sustainable development, health and environment, and poverty reduction.

Organizing Committee

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Registration

Send an email to WECF: irma.thijssen@wecf.org

Regarding the "High-Level Roundtable Nov 27"

With your name, country, ministry or organization, official title and email address

(There are no participation costs)
