

Abstract 3: WHO-EURO Pilot: Children's Environmental Health Indicators for CEHAPE

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The WHO European Centre for Environment and Health is coordinating a project "Implementing Environment and Health Information System in Europe: ENHIS", co-financed by the EC DG Sanco and partner institutions from 11 European countries. The main objective is to establish a harmonized information and knowledge system to support relevant policies in Europe by allowing international and interregional comparisons of the leading environmental health issues. The system will be based on a set of environmental health indicators developed and updated by the project, and will use health impact assessment methods. One of the project work packages aims at the development of a core set of children's environmental health indicators to enable the progress and implementation of the Children's Environmental Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE), endorsed by the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Budapest, June 2004. These indicators focus on the key action items of CEHAPE's four Regional Priority Goals (RPGs), which aim to reduce health effects in children arising from inadequate water and sanitation conditions, injuries arising from traffic as well as other unintentional injuries, promoting healthy mobility and physical activity, decrease respiratory disorders related to air pollution, and protect children from adverse health effects by physico-chemical environment.

Working Group relied on two approaches. First, the indicators already tested and recommended by the previous WHO project (ECOEHIS) were adjusted from the perspectives of CEHAPE and its RPGs. Second, the Group identified and developed new indicators by reviewing the evidence linking children's health to environmental exposure and policy actions, and consulting with the Member States and relevant technical experts to identify gaps in the existing indicators. For proposed indicators, methodology sheets were prepared for the definition and existing data sources as well as for the application to assessment and reporting. A brief questionnaire has been prepared to test newly developed indicators for their policy-relevance and availability in partner countries.

Experts at a WHO meeting in February 2005 reviewed the proposed indicators and selected a preliminary set of core indicators covering the key action items of the CEHAPE RPGs. A set of priority indicators is currently undergoing a screening process for policy relevance vis-à-vis EU and domestic policies and regulations. For a sub-set of indicators that were not previously tested, feasibility for implementation is being checked in 11 countries. Based on the results, a 'core' set of CEH indicators will be recommended for implementation in the piloting European countries by October 2005. It is envisaged that the indicators to be developed will serve as the basis for an evaluation report on CEHAPE implementation for the mid-term review at the intergovernmental meeting in 2007.

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