



EUR/ICP/CEH 216(S)
7544B
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SUMMARY REPORT

Meeting of National Focal Points for Report "Concern for Europe's Tomorrow" (CET)

Copenhagen
21-23 October 1991

1991

EUR/HFA target 18

SUMMARY REPORTS are issued by the Regional Office in English, French, German and Russian. They may be reproduced, or translated into any other language, providing due acknowledgement is made.

Les RAPPORTS SOMMAIRES sont publiés par le Bureau régional en allemand, anglais, français et russe. Ils pourront être librement reproduits, ou traduits dans une autre langue, avec mention de la source.

KURZBERICHTE werden vom WHO-Regionalbüro in Deutsch, Englisch, Französisch und Russisch herausgegeben. Nachdruck oder Übersetzung in andere Sprachen mit Quellenangabe gestattet.

КРАТКИЕ ОТЧЕТЫ издаются Региональным бюро на английском, немецком, русском и французском языках, но могут быть размножены или переведены на любой другой язык при наличии соответствующего указания на источник.

ABSTRACT

Both the European Charter on Environment and Health and the European Centre for Environment and Health stress the importance of improved systems to supply environment and health information useful in monitoring the effectiveness of measures taken, trend analysis, priority-setting and decision-making. In October 1990, special emphasis was given to the development and implementation of a two-year project, called "Concern for Europe's Tomorrow", to report on and assess conditions in all the Member States of the European Region. As a first step, countries nominated national focal points to be responsible for gathering the data. Meeting at the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the focal points agreed on the value of and a timetable for the project and made specific recommendations on its objectives and the protocols for and the implementation of data collection. The project and its final report are intended not only to describe environment and health conditions in the Region but also to indicate trends.

TARGET 18

POLICIES FOR A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Index:

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING
INFORMATION SYSTEMS
EUR

Introduction

The European Charter on Environment and Health was approved in 1989 by ministers and other senior representatives of the environment and health administrations of 29 countries at the First European Conference on Environment and Health. It stressed the importance of strengthening information systems "to support monitoring of the effectiveness of measures taken, trend analysis, priority-setting and decision-making". Following a recommendation in the Charter, a European Centre for Environment and Health was established, with priority tasks including the strengthening of collaboration on information systems.

In October 1990, the first meeting of the Scientific Advisory Board for the European Centre gave priority to the development and implementation of a two-year project to report on and assess existing conditions in all the Member States of the WHO European Region, and thus give an indication of trends. The project was entitled "Concern for Europe's Tomorrow".

As a first stage, the WHO Regional Office for Europe invited Member States to nominate focal points to be responsible for gathering data on various topics. These focal points attended a Meeting at the Regional Office. They examined the rationale and feasibility of the project, and its logistics and time scale. They also examined the draft protocols for data collection, which had been prepared previously by a series of task forces.

Conclusions

1. "Concern for Europe's Tomorrow" is an important exercise that should be pursued. The success of this difficult, complex and time-limited exercise will depend on close collaboration between Member States, the Regional Office and other international organizations.
2. The need for and subjects of the draft protocols were accepted, but the protocols require revision and clarification.
3. The following timetable for the project was agreed on:

Amendment of draft protocols by the Regional Office	22 November 1991
Arrival of comments from the focal points to the Regional Office	20 December 1991
Despatch of final protocols by the Regional Office	17 January 1992
Submission of data	28 June 1992
Second meeting of focal points	October 1992
Completion of draft report	September 1993
Third meeting of focal points	October 1993
Release of final report	March 1994

Recommendations

1. Member States should secure effective intersectoral cooperation to ensure the success of this important project. National focal points have an important role in this process and should be strongly supported.
2. The project should be harmonized with other initiatives to describe the state of the environment in Europe, which are being undertaken by other international organizations (such as the Commission of the European Communities, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation), to avoid duplication of effort.
3. A more clearly stated overall objective for the project should be formulated.
4. Clearly stated objectives relevant to health should be formulated for each protocol. A separate protocol should be prepared to cover indoor air.
5. A clear rationale should be provided for requests for data collection, specifying whether they are needed to meet a health objective or to provide background information.
6. Everyone involved in the project should have a clear idea of how the data will be used and presented in the final report, so that data can be collected in the optimum way to meet the needs of the project and the report.
7. Countries should be asked only to provide existing data, not to gather new data. Data should be provided in the form requested, but, when this is not possible, some guidance on acceptable alternatives should be available. If the data requested are not available, countries should state why this is so.
8. Clear criteria for data provision should be established to ensure comparability between countries. In particular, there should be a clearly defined methodology and effective quality control.
9. The protocols should have a standard format, based on recommendations 4-8 and more effort should be made to focus them more closely on important, readily available and comparable data. Requests for the results of ad hoc studies rather than systematic data collection, such as that in the protocol on multimedia exposures, should be clearly stated.
10. All the protocols require revision; the Regional Office should amend them on the basis of the comments made at the Meeting, and send them to the focal points for final comments before they can be accepted and data collection started.
11. In addition to collecting data according to the protocols, the national focal points should be requested to identify high-priority problems related to health and wellbeing in their countries and to state the sources of their information.
12. The WHO Regional Office for Europe should collect, review and analyse data already collected by international organizations and give the results to the national focal points (concurrently with further data collection) for incorporation in the final analysis.

13. Arrangements should be made for dialogue between the Regional Office and the focal points to identify and correct at an early stage any problems with the protocols or data collection or analysis. The national focal points will make arrangements for the designation of focal points for specific tasks.