

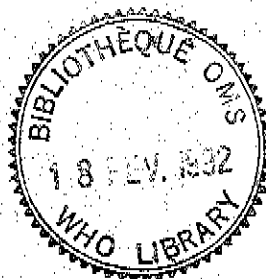


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SUMMARY REPORT

Ad hoc Consultation on Externally Supported Environmental Health Projects in Countries of Central and Eastern Europe

Bilthoven, Netherlands
14-15 November 1991



1992

EUR/HFA target 18

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ABSTRACT

Representatives of ten national and international organizations met to exchange information on existing and planned environmental health programmes in countries of central and eastern Europe, and to improve coordination of efforts. The Meeting recommended (a) that the Regional Office review priorities and disseminate the conclusions, (b) that the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH) prepare an inventory of bilateral and multilateral activities and make available a database on cooperative activities in environment and health, (c) that the participating organizations should endeavour to coordinate their respective activities, (d) that consideration be given to a regional approach to common issues, (e) that encouragement be given to epidemiological studies, and (f) that ECEH share its environmental health information systems database with other interested organizations.

TARGET 18

POLICY ON ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

By the year 2000, all Member States should have developed, and be implementing, policies on the environment and health that ensure ecologically sustainable development, effective prevention and control of environmental health risks and equitable access to healthy environments.

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The effects of environmental deterioration on human health in the countries of central and eastern Europe are increasingly recognized as having high priority for external support and technical cooperation from a wide range of national and international organizations. To exchange information on existing and planned programmes and to improve coordination of efforts, an Ad hoc Consultation was organized by the WHO Regional Office for Europe at the newly established Bilthoven division of the European Centre for Environment and Health. The Meeting was supported by the National Institute of Public Health and Environmental Protection of the Netherlands, and attended by representatives of 10 national and international organizations.

The Consultation took particular account of (a) the provisions of the European Charter on Environment and Health, (b) resolution EUR/RC40/R7 of the fortieth session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, requesting the Regional Director to establish a programme of intensified cooperation with the countries of central and eastern Europe, and (c) the recommendations of the CEC conference entitled "Environment for Europe" at Dobris Castle, Czechoslovakia, in 1991.

It was recognized that, in the spirit of the European Charter, bridging the gap between the ministries of environment and of health in the countries of central and eastern Europe would continue at a meeting in 1992 arranged by the Regional Office, and subsequently during the preparatory work leading to the Second Ministerial Conference to be held in Helsinki in 1994.

The participants presented the mandates of their organizations for environmental health activities in the countries of central and eastern Europe, the nature and extent of their present and planned activities and their expectations for interagency cooperation.

Conclusions

1. There is significant and growing evidence that the environmental problems of the countries of central and eastern Europe involve substantial direct and indirect health hazards for their citizens.
2. The Ad hoc Consultation served as a valuable opportunity to exchange experiences among those institutions working on issues affecting the interface between environment and health in countries of central and eastern Europe.
3. Any international efforts to improve the environment and health situation in countries of central and eastern Europe must form part of the overall cooperation and expertise provided to these countries through the major development and financial assistance organizations.
4. It was fully accepted that the current and future environment and health dimensions of cooperation with the countries of central and eastern Europe go beyond the scope and capabilities of a single institution.
5. WHO has an important role as a catalyst for cooperation between donor institutions and recipient countries of central and eastern Europe in relation to environment and health.

Recommendations

1. As resources are limited, it is important that clear priorities are set that take full account of effects on health. The Regional Office is invited progressively to review such priorities with the countries concerned and with other organizations, and to disseminate the conclusions to national and international bodies involved in collaborative activities with countries of central and eastern Europe.
2. The WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (WHO/ECEH) is invited to:
 - prepare an inventory of bilateral and multilateral environment and health activities in relation to the countries of central and eastern Europe in cooperation with other organizations; and
 - make available to the countries of central and eastern Europe a database to be established on environment and health cooperation provided by bilateral and multilateral organizations.
3. The participating organizations should endeavour to cooperate and coordinate their respective activities (policy consulting, implementation, training, etc.) to avoid duplication and overlap. WHO/ECEH is invited to follow up this ad hoc session with the development of a regular series of meetings for the purpose of exchanging views and harmonizing activities.
4. Consideration should be given to a regional approach in addressing common issues, making the best use of available resources.
5. Encouragement should be given to epidemiological studies specifically designed (a) to help set priorities for clean up and (b) to evaluate the potential effect of feasible options for remedying environmental problems.
6. It was recommended that WHO/ECEH share its environmental health information systems (EHIS) database with other interested organizations.