Report of the twelfth meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force

BONN, 23–24 NOVEMBER 2022
Abstract

The twelfth meeting of the Environment and Health Task Force was convened in Bonn, Germany on 23 and 24 November 2022, with some representatives attending online. Representatives of Member States of the WHO European Region and stakeholders discussed the proposed outcome document and programme of work of the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Budapest, Hungary, 5–7 July 2023) and elected a new Chair, Co-Chair and Bureau member from the environment sector.

Keywords: ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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This publication contains the report of the twelfth meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force, held in Bonn on 23–24 November 2022, and does not necessarily represent the decisions or policies of WHO.
Report of the twelfth meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force

Bonn, 23–24 November 2022
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CoLSA</td>
<td>EHTF Working Group on Collaboration of Local and Subnational Authorities</td>
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<td>COP27</td>
<td>Twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change</td>
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<td>COVID-19</td>
<td>Coronavirus disease 2019</td>
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<td>ECEH</td>
<td>WHO European Centre for Environment and Health</td>
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<td>EHTF</td>
<td>Environment and Health Task Force</td>
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<td>HIC</td>
<td>EHTF Working Group on Health in Climate Change</td>
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<td>THE PEP</td>
<td>Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNECE</td>
<td>United Nations Economic Commission for Europe</td>
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<td>UNEP</td>
<td>United Nations Environment Programme</td>
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<td>WASH</td>
<td>water, sanitation and hygiene</td>
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Introduction

1. The twelfth meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF) took place at the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH), Bonn, Germany on 23–24 November 2022, with some representatives attending online. Dr Tamás Pándics, Chair of the EHTF, presided on the first day, and Ms Brigit Staatsen, Co-Chair, on the second day. The meeting was generously funded by the German Federal Ministry of Health and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection. See Annex 1 for the scope and purpose of the meeting, Annex 2 for the programme of work and Annex 3 for the list of participants.

Opening and adoption of agenda and programme

2. Dr Pándics formally opened the twelfth meeting on 23 November and welcomed 78 representatives of 42 Member States and 11 institutional stakeholders. His country, Hungary, will host the forthcoming Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, scheduled for 5–7 July 2023. Hungary had also hosted the Fourth Ministerial Conference in 2004, where ministers had adopted the Budapest Declaration on the links between children’s health and the environment.

3. Dr Hans Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, addressed the meeting in a prerecorded video statement, in which he stressed the threat to life inherent in the escalating climate emergency and urged all Member States to explore possible solutions at the Seventh Ministerial Conference.

4. Dr Nino Berdzuli, Director, Division of Country Health Programmes, WHO Regional Office for Europe, speaking in a prerecorded video statement, likewise welcomed participants and highlighted the importance of the current meeting in tackling the recovery from the pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the triple crisis of climate change, environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and land degradation. She called upon representatives to advocate for action on those issues at the highest political level in their own countries.

5. Mr Marco Keiner, Director, Environment Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), speaking in a prerecorded video statement, said that the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference would inspire action in the field of environment and health for many years to come. The legal instruments and programmes developed by UNECE, such as the Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP), as well as the Ministerial Declaration of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, Cyprus, 5–7 October 2022) and the work of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy, could make a valuable contribution to the success of the Ministerial Conference.

6. Ms Francesca Racioppi, Head of ECEH, outlined the objectives of the meeting (see also Annex 1). The main objective was to explore possible themes and establish clear priorities for the outcome document of the Ministerial Conference, working from an initial draft prepared by the Secretariat (document EURO/EHTF12/6). The outcome document would provide guidance for Member States in building forward better in the aftermath of the pandemic, increasing their resilience to face future challenges and increasing their awareness of and preparedness for the threats posed by the triple crisis. The necessary knowledge is available: it must now be put into practice more quickly.

7. The agenda and programme of work were adopted.
Setting the scene on recent policy developments

**Twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

*Vladimir Kendrovski, Technical Officer, ECEH, Bonn, Germany*

8. The historic breakthrough at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) (Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, 6–18 November 2022) was the agreement to create a loss and damage fund to assist developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. The decisions adopted reaffirmed the Parties’ commitment to limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Some progress was also achieved on the global goal on adaptation, adopted under the Paris Agreement on climate change, and on agriculture and food security. However, the Sharm el Sheikh Implementation Plan excluded any mention of winding down the use of fossil fuels and included only limited information about countries’ concrete efforts to reduce emissions. WHO participated in the session as an official United Nations observer and contributed policy briefs and statements for the discussion and negotiations on issues related to health. As at COP26, WHO staffed a Health Pavilion with health information and advice throughout the session.

**Protocol on Water and Health**

*Márta Vargha, Senior Expert, National Public Health Centre, Budapest*

9. The sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health took place in Geneva on 16–18 November 2022. The session began with a high-level segment, in which participants stressed hand hygiene as the first line of defence against infectious diseases and called upon Parties to capitalize on the current momentum for climate and health action, with an increased focus on resilience in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services; equity, to counter the disproportionate impact of crises for vulnerable and marginalized groups; and long-term financing to prevent the even higher costs of failing to act. The Protocol Secretariat has issued a range of tools and resources, including a field guide to improving small-scale drinking-water supplies and policy options and good practices for making water and sanitation affordable for all. The programme of work for 2023–2025 includes activities on resilience against climate change, improving the management of water supply and sanitation systems and improving governance and WASH in institutional settings.

**Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme**

*Robert Thaler, Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, Austria*

10. THE PEP celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2022. The Programme is pursuing its strategy of building forward better by transforming to new, clean, safe, healthy and inclusive mobility and transport, for instance through the Pan-European Master Plan for Cycling Promotion, which now covers both cycling and walking. Partnerships have been established with other stakeholders in child and youth mobility, sustainable jobs and green tourism. The Programme looks forward to participating actively in the Ministerial Conference and collaborating even more closely with the EHTF.

**Tenth meeting of the EHTF Working Group on Health in Climate Change**

*Orna Matzer, Chair, Working Group on Health in Climate Change*

11. The tenth meeting of the Working Group on Health in Climate Change (HIC) took place online on 10 and 11 October 2022. Its main objectives were to consider the evidence arising from the latest reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change, as well as national experiences and regional and global initiatives, and to identify potential transformative actions for consideration at the Ministerial Conference. The priorities identified by the Working Group were consistent with the draft ministerial declaration currently before the EHTF.
including: the creation of a regional initiative to promote implementation of the commitments of the Health Programme adopted at COP26; the preparation of a second edition of the 2021 HIC publication, *Zero regrets: scaling up action on climate change mitigation and adaptation for health in the WHO European Region*; the promotion of collaborative partnerships across the WHO European Region; and the sharing of the tools and evidence already available.

**Meeting of Member State representatives on health-related priorities in chemical safety**

*Dorota Jarosinska, Programme Manager, Living and Working Environments, ECEH, Bonn, Germany*

12. Regional priorities for chemical safety include endocrine disruptors and the commitments laid down in the Ostrava Declaration, adopted at the Sixth Ministerial Conference. A meeting of Member State representatives on chemical safety, held in Bonn, Germany on 12–13 October 2022, focused on two further priorities, human biomonitoring and poison centres. Representatives agreed on the need to promote human biomonitoring at both the Ministerial Conference and the fifth session of the International Conference for Chemicals Management (Bonn, Germany, 25–29 September 2023) as a tool to protect health, poison control centres, chemical safety and the role of the health sector in the sound management of chemicals. They suggested that both issues should be reflected in the future Budapest Declaration and promoted through briefings for policy-makers, videos and case studies.

**International Youth Health Organization**

*Katja Čič, Manager on Youth Health Issues, International Youth Health Organization, Ljubljana, Slovenia*

13. The International Youth Health Organization works to build the capacity of youth organizations in youth research, advocacy and behaviour-change strategies to improve young people’s health and well-being. The organization contributed to the Youth4Health statement of the Tirana 2022 Health and Well-being Forum for Youth (Tirana, Albania, 25–27 October 2022) and is a member of the new WHO Youth Council. It calls for young people to be involved in every session of the Ministerial Conference, with specific youth quotas if necessary, and for more support for capacity-building and advocacy to enable young people to reach their peers, as well as audiences of other age groups. It was proposed that a Budapest youth declaration be issued at the close of the Ministerial Conference.

**European Environment and Health Youth Coalition**

*António Marques Pinto, President, European Environment and Health Youth Coalition*

14. The European Environment and Health Youth Coalition participated actively in the European Year of Youth in 2022, in particular in the #TheGreenTrack campaign, which solicited concerns and recommendations from European young people on biodiversity and nature, the circular economy, climate change, zero pollution and lifestyles. There are increased opportunities for synergies in the activities of the growing number of European youth organizations working in environment and health.

**Progress on the preparations for the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health: negotiation of the Budapest Declaration**

15. Dr Pándics, speaking as the representative of Hungary, the host country of the Ministerial Conference, described the preparations undertaken so far to attract high-level political figures to the Conference, including the distribution of the concept note to all Member States and the preparation of promotional videos and other publicity materials. A memorandum of understanding specifying the final arrangements for the Conference will be signed by his Government and the Regional Director in early 2023.
16. A short promotional video was shown, highlighting the importance of the Ministerial Conference and the attractions of the host country.

17. Participants discussed the draft outcome document of the Ministerial Conference (document EURO/EHTF12/6). The draft was initially prepared by the Secretariat and amended following feedback from the EHTF Bureau, UNECE and Member States. The concept behind the draft, the “Budapest approach”, reflects the changing context of health and the environment and the need to learn lessons from the pandemic, act to protect future generations, increase resilience and accelerate the transition from knowledge and policy to real action. It envisages two strategic directions: taking action on the most pressing health challenges – the triple crisis of climate change, environmental pollution (including air quality and chemical safety) and biodiversity loss – and identifying factors that will accelerate implementation of the measures required to combat them, including good governance, human resources, knowledge and tools, and partnerships. A set of actions is proposed for each strategic direction, with qualitative and quantitative commitments and “accelerators” – actions or events that promote the implementation of the commitment. An updated compendium for action on environment and health and the terms of reference for partnerships will be annexed to the declaration.

General remarks

18. Participants generally welcomed the structure of the draft declaration. Suggestions for amendment included a greater emphasis on its function as an urgent political call to action for Member State governments; a clearer focus on the triple crisis of climate change, environmental pollution and biodiversity loss, which would entail moving some details of the commitments to the annexes; the interactions between the three elements of the triple crisis; and the co-benefits for health of mitigating environmental hazards.

19. The role of the EHTF should be clarified, with an emphasis on functions unique to it, such as providing guidance on human biomonitoring, as well as its contribution to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the importance of coordination between the health and environment sectors.

20. The commitments should be achievable and expressed in quantitative terms (e.g. the percentage of Member States implementing a certain commitment), with indicators to measure progress. One participant felt that the stated timelines for achieving the commitments are too ambitious.

21. Other suggestions included a greater focus on partnerships, knowledge-sharing and collaboration and on prevention, preparedness and response, including a reference to the treaty on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response currently being negotiated by WHO Member States at global level.

Preamble

22. The draft text of the preamble acknowledges existing commitments, including the Ostrava Declaration, the WHO European Programme of Work 2020–2025, “United Action for Better Health” and the Sustainable Development Goals, and stresses the importance of a dual-track approach, combining improved preparedness and resilience with the strengthening of day-to-day essential health services.

23. Participants suggested a number of amendments. The preamble should convey in much stronger terms the urgency of the current environment and health crisis and the existential threat posed by environmental risks; these should potentially appear in a separate paragraph for added emphasis. The environmental risk factors affecting health should be clearly described, including those that contributed to the emergence of COVID-19, and physical risk factors such as noise. The preamble should lay out more clearly the co-benefits for health of environment and climate mitigation activities and the unique role of the European Environment and Health Process as a catalyst and accelerator rather than an enabler of intersectoral action. The value of partnerships with youth and civil society should be emphasized.

24. The paragraph on international commitments should emphasize the role the health sector should play in the updating of countries’ nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement in
2025; however, it seems unwise to commit to achieving the objectives of future international commitments whose content is not yet known. Action on environment and health must be accelerated to mitigate the setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was suggested that references be made to a number of recent policy-related developments, such as: resolution 76/300 on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in July 2022; the Vienna Declaration on the transformation to clean, safe, healthy and inclusive mobility and transport; and the outcomes of the forthcoming fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Montreal, Canada, 7–19 December 2022), where health will feature largely on the agenda.

25. A number of participants considered that tobacco use and malnutrition do not strictly come within the mandate of the EHP and could be omitted; another participant considered, however, that these are important environmental factors with adverse effects for health and should be taken into account.

Prioritizing action to tackle the most pressing health challenges related to climate change, environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and land degradation

26. The operative part of the draft text addresses the three elements of the triple crisis: climate change, environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and land degradation.

Climate change (paras. 1–9)

27. The draft text seeks to address the urgent and growing threat posed by climate change through a health lens and from a regional perspective, without duplicating the work of other international frameworks. It calls for support for the COP26 Health Programme and includes commitments to join the WHO Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health by 2026 and convene a high-level conference on climate, health and water scarcity by the end of 2023, as well as commitments related to WASH.

28. Participants reiterated the importance of avoiding duplication with the work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other international platforms. The Budapest commitments, and their timelines if any, should be clearly distinguished from background information and from other recommended actions; new commitments should be distinguished from earlier ones. The commitments should basically be expressed in terms relevant to governments, specifically ministries of environment and health, although there is also a need for policies that will influence the behaviour of individuals. Participants asked whether the resources required for the proposed high-level and technical conferences have already been identified.

29. Suggestions for additions to this section included a reference to the national adaptation plans supported by the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility; awareness-raising about the health impact of climate change; nature-based solutions and ecosystem approaches; the close link between biodiversity and climate change; the health co-benefits of action to prevent and mitigate natural disasters; and the need to strengthen adaptation and mitigation policies if climate goals are to be achieved.

Environmental pollution (paras. 10–18)

30. The draft text focuses on air quality and on chemical safety and addresses the transition to clean, renewable energy, as well as human biomonitoring and poison centres. The main emphasis is on capacity-building. Participants noted that many of the commitments in this section apply to both air quality and chemical safety, and some suggested that the two areas should be combined in the text.

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31. In respect of air quality and health, participants’ suggestions included: adding a reference to sustainable agriculture; aligning national air quality standards with the updated WHO global air quality guidelines; describing impacts of indoor air pollution and air pollution attributable to transport; and highlighting the burden of both communicable and noncommunicable diseases. One participant suggested that the ministerial declaration should express concern on the part of the EHP at the failure of participants at COP27 to call for the phasing-out of all fossil fuels.

32. In respect of chemical safety and health, participants recommended that the commitments should cover chemical hazards and long-term exposure as well as risks, and that human biomonitoring activities should be accompanied by research on the exposome. More emphasis should be placed on prevention. All sectors should be involved in integrated chemicals management, which should aim to reduce the toxicity of chemicals in current use, since it is not feasible to ban many chemicals altogether. Reference should be made, potentially in the compendium of actions, to legally binding international policy instruments such as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Minamata Convention on Mercury, as well as the legally binding policy instrument on plastic pollution currently being negotiated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The health sector should be involved in the control of highly toxic pesticides.

33. The recommendations on poison centres should be discussed further with countries that do not yet have such a centre, in view of the political will and financial resources required to establish them; 2030 would be a more realistic deadline than 2026 for new centres. Poison centres should have access to essential antidotes, potentially supplied by WHO or international donors, since these antidotes, although vital, are unlikely to be required frequently.

**Land degradation and biodiversity loss (paras. 19–22)**

34. The draft text deals with the role of the environment in One Health, a recently developed concept about the interconnectedness of humans, animals and plants that was not considered in the Ostrava Declaration or the existing national portfolios for action on environment and health. One Health will be extensively discussed at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

35. Participants welcomed the references to One Health, which could contribute to intergovernmental collaboration, breaking down “siloed” thinking. Action to increase the visibility of One Health, especially among young people, would be valuable. The balance of the text should be improved, since there is far more information about biodiversity loss than about land degradation. Participants agreed that both topics should be included in the national portfolios for action on environment and health.

36. A reference to primary prevention at source of biodiversity loss and land degradation should be added. Ministries of agriculture should be closely involved in One Health activities. It would also be useful to mention the sixth track, related to the environment, of the future One Health Joint Plan of Action (2022–2026) launched by the One Health Quadripartite, as well as the Nature for Health Multi-Partner Trust Fund, a new initiative of UNEP and the Government of Germany. The draft declaration should be revised in due course in the light of the outcomes of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the nineteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Panama City, Panama, 14–25 November 2022).

**Providing essential services and acting through the built environment for a healthy and just transition in a more resilient post-COVID-19 world (paras. 23–28)**

37. The draft text covers the need to increase resilience in the built environment (including urban health islands and brownfield regeneration), WASH, clean and renewable energy and active mobility. It calls for close collaboration with the WHO Healthy Cities Network and the European Union Committee of

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2 The Quadripartite consists of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNEP, WHO and the World Organisation for Animal Health.
the Regions, and includes a proposal to convert the EHTF Working Group on Collaboration of Local and Subnational Authorities (CoLSA) into an EHTF partnership.

38. Participants noted that the term “built environment” does not necessarily cover all the areas where action is required (e.g. essential services, active mobility, resource use); alternatives would be “human settlements” or “spatial planning”. Moreover, the built environment may come under the responsibility of ministries other than environment and health, which can, accordingly, only commit themselves to promoting and supporting the recommended actions. The Secretariat suggested that a separate paragraph could be added on essential services.

39. Participants suggested that the recommendations on increasing resilience in the built environment should be expressed as a formal commitment rather than an aspiration. The paragraph on nature-based solutions should also mention the associated risks, such as allergies, vector-borne and other communicable diseases and drowning in open water. Transport must be sustainable and healthy, but it must also contribute as little as possible to air pollution.

**Strengthening factors enabling action in health and environment (paras. 29–45)**

40. The draft text covers partnerships at national, subnational and local levels and the knowledge and tools required to move from research and policy to practice. The subsection on advancing knowledge and tools for effective action is intended to identify gaps and accelerate the uptake of new scientific insights into current practice with the help of big-data solutions and behavioural and cultural research. A host country is still required for the proposed conference and exhibition on new and emerging methods in policy-making. The paragraph on an initiative to create environment and health information systems for the highly vulnerable Aral Sea subregion will require further political discussions with the countries concerned; the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea could make a valuable contribution here.

41. Participants made various suggestions for rearranging the order of the paragraphs and potentially moving all references to future conferences to an annex; a reference should also be added to the potential costs of failing to take action now.

42. Improving governance for health and environment: one participant suggested that, rather than convening a high-level conference on governance and capacities for environment and health, it would be better to address the most senior politicians directly, i.e. those above ministerial level. The Secretariat clarified that the conference would be aimed at professionals at the level of chief medical officer. Participants suggested the addition of a reference to access to justice in environmental matters.

43. Investing in human resources for health and the environment: participants noted that education and training are often the responsibility of ministries of education or professional associations, although ministries of environment and health have much more control over continuing professional education. The ministries can evaluate curriculums in their areas of competence and recommend changes, preferably with the involvement of the young people receiving that education; they can also collect and disseminate existing best practices from universities in the Region. It may not be practicable to revise curriculums every four years. The EHP could contribute to the training activities proposed in the One Health Joint Plan of Action, namely the creation of an interoperable One Health in-service training programme for environment, medical and veterinary sector professionals. It could also contribute to the European Year of Skills, announced by the European Commission for 2023.

44. Advancing knowledge and tools for effective action on health and the environment: the EHP could contribute to WHO’s work on behavioural and cultural insights in order to show why knowledge is not always transformed into action. Suggested additions included human biomonitoring, capacity-building in health impact assessment and improved networking and communication between countries.

45. Promoting partnerships for mobilizing joint action on shared priorities: the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition, an umbrella organization of national youth organizations, is the official youth partner of the EHP, but other relevant groups (International Youth Health Organization, WHO Youth Health Council, European Youth Network, Youth and Environment Europe, etc.) could be more closely involved, for instance in a new consortium of youth organizations. The Secretariat stressed the
importance of maintaining a critical mass of youth participation, particularly in social media and public engagement; it is important to involve new youth organizations while maintaining the institutional memory built up since the Fourth Ministerial Conference.

Closing paragraphs (paras. 46 and 47)
46. The representative of UNECE noted that the Committee on Environmental Policy, while fully supportive of the EHP, was not a stakeholder and could not directly mobilize resources.

Election of officers
47. The EHTF elected Ms Brigit Staatsen (Netherlands) as its Chair for the coming year. Professor Raquel Duarte-Davidson (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) was elected Co-Chair. Ms Maia Javakhishvili (Georgia) was elected to the Bureau as a member from the environment sector.

48. The EHTF thanked the outgoing Chair, Dr Tamás Pándics, and the outgoing member, Ms Biljana Filipovic Djusic, for their valuable contribution to its work, both during and between its meetings.

Conference programme: proposals for structure and contents
49. The proposed programme of the Ministerial Conference is shown in document EURO/EHTF12/8. A Secretariat note providing further details is shown in document EURO/EHTF12/10. The programme includes a high-level segment or another session specifically for ministers of environment and health, either at the opening of the session or to mark the adoption of the ministerial declaration at the end, as well as seven plenary sessions. The main programme will be complemented by preparatory events for specific subregions, youth participants and stakeholders; a ministerial lunch; exhibitions; parallel sessions and side-events; social events; and technical site visits. Member States are invited to participate in the panel discussions during the plenary sessions and/or to organize side-events on specific topics.

50. The main background documents include an evaluation of Member State experiences in the implementation of their national portfolios for action on environment and health, progress towards the relevant targets and indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals, new estimates of the environmental burden of disease in the Region, lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and a report on tools and methods to advance environment and health issues.

51. Lessons learned from the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, Cyprus 5–7 October 2022) include recognizing the value of pre-session preparatory meetings to encourage high-level participation and the need to allow sufficient time for round-table discussions and the subsequent questions from the floor.

52. Participants drew attention to the possibility of organizing or co-organizing a side-event at the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region (Geneva, 29–30 March 2023). In addition, in mid-July 2023, 15 Member States from the Region will be reporting to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development on the outcome of their national voluntary reviews of four relevant Sustainable Development Goals; they could be encouraged to present their findings and practical examples of action to the Ministerial Conference as well.

53. Participants suggested including activities to commemorate the Fourth Ministerial Conference, also held in Budapest, and its outcome document, the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe; a report on the progress of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at its halfway point in 2023; and the role of workers and trade unions in ensuring a healthy and just transition to a low-carbon economy. The European Investment Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development should be encouraged to participate fully in the Ministerial Conference in view of their investment in infrastructure in cities; indeed, a representative of the international financial community could be invited to participate in every plenary session.

54. Additional remarks included the advantages of working with existing local and regional platforms and networks rather than creating new ones; the role of civil society organizations and the “voice of the
people” in a conference intended primarily for government ministers; and the importance of ensuring a sustainable conference, including the transport to and from the conference venue.

55. The Secretariat asked participants for any information they could provide about the likely size and seniority of their delegations, especially any ministers likely to attend and the areas of environment and health that particularly interest them.

The EHP Partnerships as a potential new implementation mechanism (paras. 28, 38 and 39)

56. The proposal to set up EHP Partnerships is modelled on the successful example of THE PEP and is intended to identify mechanisms for implementing the Budapest commitments that will transform the extensive body of existing knowledge on environment and health issues into practical, country-oriented action. The partnerships will be led by one or more Member States/organizations, which will report back to the EHTF. The EHP Secretariat will provide tools, methods, guidance and expertise, depending on the availability of resources.

57. The representative of Germany described a partnership on human biomonitoring which her Government plans to launch, following on from the successful European Human Biomonitoring Initiative. It will be separate from, but will collaborate with, the successor to the Initiative, the European Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals. The new partnership will create a network of experts for the exchange of experiences, standards and methods. Other Member States are welcome to join.

58. Other suggestions for partnerships were: a partnership with the Association for Medical Education in Europe and the World Federation for Medical Education; a partnership for sustainable health systems; and a partnership to accelerate the political take-up of the COP26 Health Programme.

59. Participants suggested that the EHP might seek potential partners from the WHO Register of Non-State Actors, which would also help to raise awareness of the Process outside the current health and environment community.

Delivering together: interests, engagement and possible contributions from different stakeholders and partners

60. The representative of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia offered to organize a subregional consultation in preparation for the Ministerial Conference, potentially as a recognized stakeholder of the EHTF.

61. Representatives of the European Commission and the European Environment Agency offered to support the identification of suitable speakers and the organization of side-events.

62. Several stakeholders suggested possible topics for side-events: the European Green Deal, including the commitment to ban the export of pesticides and hazardous chemicals to countries outside the European Union; nature-based solutions to climate problems; the educational tools and infographics produced by the Health and Environment Alliance in 15 languages; and protection of children and prevention of early-life exposure to hazardous chemicals.

63. The representative of the Centre for Planetary Health Policy, Berlin, Germany, introduced the forthcoming assessment of national portfolios for action on environment and health as part of the preparations for the Ministerial Conference. This assessment is now needed to reveal countries’ new priorities and plans for the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Member States are invited to complete the online survey that will be launched in February 2023, participate in the interviews and submit their national portfolios to the Secretariat if they have not already done so, and share their innovative practices, as well as challenges, barriers and needs for support.
Roadmap towards the Conference:

64. The Secretariat drew attention to the continuation of the successful Bonn Dialogue series in 2022. The third Dialogue took place online on 3 June, on walking and cycling for green, healthy and sustainable mobility, and the fourth, also online, on 14 October, on risk communication for environment and health.

65. The Secretariat introduced the proposed communications plan in the run-up to the Ministerial Conference, including audiovisual materials and videos, social media content, website materials, news stories and a media advisory, and attendance by selected journalists at the opening ceremony and at a press conference at the end. One of the first products will be key messages and an advocacy guide to help Member States to publicize the conference and encourage participation by ministers and their staff. A dedicated webpage will be added to the Regional Office website. Provision will be made for publication and report launches, poster exhibitions and, potentially, a photographic exhibition during the Conference. Feature stories from Member States, United Nations entities and other stakeholders will also be prepared. Activities still under discussion include the campaign on resilience, which aims to create a repository of the experiences of national and local governments, partners and cities in building forward better in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic; again, if Member States find this idea attractive, they are invited to indicate areas of interest and share relevant experiences.

66. Participants urged the youth representatives to involve themselves in the conference preparations and the proposed side-event for youth from an early stage; UNECE, UNEP and the Government of Hungary stand ready to support them. Member States are encouraged to include youth representatives in their national delegations. A youth representative suggested that an up-and-coming young professional should be invited to speak in each of the plenary sessions. Younger representatives who have not yet begun their professional careers should also be involved. Youth organizations will prepare side-events and activities and present the Budapest youth declaration to reflect the opinions expressed in consultations with young people throughout Europe.

Any other business, summary of decisions, next steps and closure of meeting

67. There was no other business.

68. Next steps: Member States are invited to submit written comments and proposed amendments to the draft declaration by 15 December 2022. One or two meetings of the Bureau will take place virtually before the 13th, in-person, session of the EHTF, provisionally scheduled for April 2023. A further session of the EHTF will take place on the day before the Ministerial Conference to resolve any outstanding issues in the wording of the draft declaration. The next edition of the Bonn Dialogues, on preventing and reducing the negative impacts of hazardous chemicals on health and the environment, is scheduled to take place virtually in February 2023.

69. Ms Racioppi thanked all participants for their active engagement, the outgoing Chair, Dr Pándics, and his successor, Ms Staatsen, on their invaluable contributions before and during the meeting, and her staff for their hard work in preparing for it.

70. Ms Staatsen congratulated all participants and the Secretariat on a successful and enjoyable meeting, and declared the meeting closed.
Annex 1. Scope and purpose

The twelfth meeting of the EHTF is convened to discuss the preparation of the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, which will take place in Budapest, Hungary, on 5-7 July 2023.

The main purpose of the meeting is to start the negotiation of the draft political outcome of the Conference, the Ministerial Declaration.

In particular, the discussion will focus on the following main areas:

1. Preparation of the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

The EHTF will discuss and provide input to the draft outcome document for the Ministerial Conference proposed by EHTF Bureau – the Ministerial Declaration. The concept for the new proposed operational EHTF mechanism, the EHP Partnerships, will be discussed and possibly adopted.

The EHTF will also discuss and decide on different aspects related to the preparation of the Conference, including proposals for the structure, programme and documentation of the Conference, and the approaches through which those will be further developed and implemented.

After the meeting, Member States and stakeholders will be invited to provide written feedback and proposals on the text of the draft Declaration back to the Secretariat, which can then develop an updated version to be discussed at the next Task Force meeting.

2. Elections of officers:

The EHTF will elect one member of the Bureau from the environment sector and the new Chair and co-Chair.
## Annex 2. Programme of work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday, 23 November 2022</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>08:30–9:30</strong></td>
<td>Registration (physical attendance)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Checking in to the Zoom session and testing sound and video (virtual attendance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09:30–9:45</strong></td>
<td><strong>Session 1 – Opening, adoption of the agenda and programme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Chair of the EHTF and representatives of WHO Regional Office for Europe and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) will open the meeting and welcome EHTF members. A representative of WHO will introduce participants to the scope and purpose of the meeting. The EHTF will adopt the agenda and programme of the meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tamás Pándics, Chair of the EHTF</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe (video)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Nino Berdzuli, Director of the Division of Country Health Programmes, WHO Regional Office for Europe (video)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Marco Keiner, Director of Environment Division, UNECE</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Francesca Racioppi, Head, WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Relevant documents:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EURO/EHTF12/1 Provisional list of documents</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EURO/EHTF12/2 Scope and purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EURO/EHTF12/3 Provisional agenda Rev. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EURO/EHTF12/4 Provisional programme Rev.1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>09:45–10:30</strong></td>
<td><strong>Session 2 – Setting the scene on recent policy developments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This session will highlight recent developments relevant to the European environment and health agenda.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Outcomes of the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties of the Protocol on Water and Health (<em>Marta Vargha, National Public Health Centre, Hungary, Chair of the Protocol on Water and Health</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Recent activities of the Working Group on Health in Climate Change (HIC) and outcomes of its tenth meeting (<em>Orna Matzner, Ministry of Environmental Protection, Israel, co-Chair of the Working Group on HIC</em>)</td>
</tr>
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<td>• Outcomes of the Twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (<em>Oliver Schmoll, WHO ECEH</em>)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Outcomes of the WHO meeting on health-related priorities in chemical safety (<em>Dorota Jarosinska, WHO ECEH</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Outcomes of the Health and Well-being Forum for Youth and reflections on how youth could contribute to the Ministerial Conference (<em>Katja Čič, Youth Health Focus, International Youth Health Organization</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Relevant documents:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EURO/EHTF12/11 Progress report on the implementation of the EHP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>EURO/EHTF12/12 Briefing note on the tenth EHTF Bureau meeting outcomes</td>
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<td>EURO/EHTF12/13 EHP Newsletter, September 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EURO/EHTF12/14 Report of the ninth EHTF Bureau meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Session 3 (part I) – Progress on the preparations for the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health: negotiation of the Budapest Declaration</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30–11:00</td>
<td>The WHO Secretariat will introduce the draft Conference outcome document, highlighting the drafting process to-date and its structure and main content.</td>
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<td>Relevant documents:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EURO/EHTF12/6 Draft Declaration of the Ministerial Conference</td>
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<td></td>
<td>EURO/EHTF12/7 Draft Terms of Reference for the EHP Partnerships</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Coffee break</th>
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<td>11:00–11:30</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session 3 (part II) – Negotiation of the Budapest Declaration – General discussion</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:30–12:30</td>
<td>The aim of this session is to discuss the overall structure and content of the draft Budapest Declaration.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Questions for discussion:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would you support the proposed overall structure and format of the Budapest Declaration?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would you agree with the overall proposed focus of the Budapest Declaration? (i.e. the convergence of COVID-19 with the “triple environmental crisis”)</td>
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<td>Relevant documents:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EURO/EHTF12/9 Guidance note for participants</td>
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<td>EURO/EHTF12/6 Draft Declaration of the Ministerial Conference</td>
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<td>EURO/EHTF12/7 Draft Terms of Reference for the EHP Partnerships</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session 3 (part III) – Negotiation of the Budapest Declaration – Preamble</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:30–13:00</td>
<td>The aim of this session is to discuss the Preamble of the draft Budapest Declaration.</td>
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<td>Questions for discussion:</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• Is the Preamble complete, clear and conducive to the identification of the two strategic directions?</td>
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<td>• Do you have specific suggestions for the text of the Budapest Declaration?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Lunch break</th>
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<td>13:00–14:00</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session 3 (part IV) – Negotiation of the Budapest Declaration – Prioritizing action to tackle the most pressing health challenges related to climate change, environmental pollution, land degradation and biodiversity loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14:00–15:30</td>
<td>Participants will continue the negotiation of the Budapest Declaration, focusing on the thematic areas, proposed commitments and accelerators (paragraphs 1–22).</td>
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<td>Time</td>
<td>Session Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:30–16:00</td>
<td>Session 3 (part V) – Negotiation of the Budapest Declaration – Providing</td>
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<td>essential services and acting through the built environment for a healthy and</td>
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<td>just transition in a more resilient post-COVID-19 world</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:00–16:20</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:20–17:10</td>
<td>Session 3 (part VI) – Negotiation of the Budapest Declaration – Strengthening</td>
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<td>factors enabling action in health and environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>17:10–17:25</td>
<td>Session 4 – Election of officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>17:25–17:30</td>
<td>Summary of the first meeting day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday, 24 November 2022</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>09:30–10:30</td>
<td>Session 5 – Conference programme: proposals for structure and contents</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30–11:00</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00–11:30</td>
<td>Session 6 – The EHP Partnerships as a potential new implementation mechanism</td>
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<td>Time</td>
<td>Session Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30–13:00</td>
<td>Session 7 – Delivering together: interests, engagement and possible contributions from different stakeholders and partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:00–14:00</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:00–15:15</td>
<td>Session 8 – Roadmap towards the Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:15–15:30</td>
<td>Session 9 – Any other business, summary of decisions and closure of the meeting</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## Annex 3. List of participants

### Albania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eralda Mariani</td>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>Sector for Monitoring and Vitalising of Priorities</td>
<td>Tirana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alida Mici</td>
<td>Director of European Integration</td>
<td>Ministry of Health and Social Protection</td>
<td>Tirana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Andorra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr Josep Romagosa</td>
<td>Health Information System Technician</td>
<td>WHO National counterpart</td>
<td>Andorra la Vella</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Armenia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anahit Aleksandryan</td>
<td>Adviser of the Ministry of Environment</td>
<td>Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia</td>
<td>Yerevan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nune Bakunks</td>
<td>Deputy Director General</td>
<td>National Centre of Disease Control and Prevention</td>
<td>Yerevan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Austria

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert Thaler</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology</td>
<td>Vienna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andreas Maier</td>
<td>Public Health Expert</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Vienna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Azerbaijan

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ramina Abdullayeva</td>
<td>Director of AzeLab: LLC of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Baku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ismayil Afandiyev</td>
<td>National Focal Point for Environment and Health</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Baku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samir Afandiyev</td>
<td>Environmental Manager</td>
<td>Public Health and Reforms Center of Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Baku</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Belarus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iryna Ilyukova</td>
<td>Head of the Laboratories of Preventive and Ecological Toxicology</td>
<td>Scientific and Practical Center for Hygiene</td>
<td>Minsk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya Pronina</td>
<td>Head of International Cooperation Department</td>
<td>Scientific and Practical Center for Hygiene</td>
<td>Minsk</td>
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### Belgium

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anne Swaluë</td>
<td>International Relations Attaché</td>
<td>Federal Public Service of Public Health, Food Safety and Environment</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vesna Rudic Grujic</td>
<td>Head, Department for Hygiene and Human Ecology</td>
<td>Public Health Institute</td>
<td>Banja Luka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Twelfth meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force 23–24 November 2022

Aida Vilić Švra
Medical doctor, Specialist of Hygiene and Environmental Health
Public Health Institution of Federation Sarajevo

Bulgaria
Kamelia Konova
Expert
Ministry of Health
Sofia
Viktoriya Hristova
Sofia

Croatia
Mirna Ćorak
Senior Expert Advisor, International Affairs
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
Zagreb
Margareta Karadža
Head of International Affairs Service
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
Zagreb
Pavle Jelicic
Head of Environmental Health Division
Croatian Institute of Public Health
Zagreb

Czech Republic
Dominika Bachmanová
Officer
Ministry of the Environment
Prague
Frantisek Mudronka
Ministerial Counsellor
Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic
Prague

Cyprus
Andromachi Katsonouri
Senior Chemist
State General Laboratory
Ministry of Health
Nicosia

France
Caroline Paul
Head of the office of the outdoor environment
French Ministry of Health
Paris

Georgia
Nino Giuashvili
Adviser to the Director
National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC)
Tbilisi
Maia Javakhishvili
Deputy Head of Environment and Climate Change Department
Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia
Tbilisi

Germany
Karin Höppner
Senior Scientific Advisor
Federal Ministry of Health
Bonn
Jutta Maria Litvinovitch
Head of Division "Health in Climate"
Bonn
Cornelia Marschel
Head of Division Environment and Health
Berlin
Barbara Werschkun
Senior Officer
Berlin
Twelfth meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force 23–24 November 2022

Ute Winkler
Head of Division
Federal Ministry of Health
Berlin

Greece
Vasiliki Karaouli
Director General
Ministry of Health
Athens

Hungary
Tamás Pándics
Head of Department
National Public Health Centre
Budapest
Márta Vargha
Senior Expert
National Public Health Centre
Budapest

Ireland
Colin OHehir
Head
Climate Change Unit
Department of Health

Israel
Isabella Karakis
Head
Environmental Epidemiology Department
Ministry of Health
Jerusalem
Orna Matzner
Senior Manager, Science and Research
The office of the Chief Scientist
Ministry of Environmental Protection
Jerusalem

Italy
Alessandra Fidanza
Senior Expert
Italian Ministry for the Ecological Transition
Rome

Manuela Iadevaia
Italian Ministry of Health
Rome
Pasqualino Rossi
Directorate General of Health Prevention
Director Office 4
Ministry of Health
Rome
Carla Ancona
Department of Epidemiology
Lazio Regional Health Service
Rome

Kyrgyzstan
Ainura Djumanaliyeva
Programme/Project Manager
Climate Finance Center under the Ministry of Natural resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision
Bishkek
Gulnara Sariyeva
general hygienist
Department of Disease Prevention and SES
Bishkek

Lithuania
Kornelija Bajelytė
Chief Specialist, Health Safety Division
Ministry of Health
Vilnius
Grazvyde Norkiene
Environmental Health Promotion Unit
Institute of Hygiene

Luxembourg
Laurence Wurth
Environmental Health Specialist
Ministry / Direction of health
Luxembourg

Malta
Roberto Debono
National Focal Point
Office of the Superintendent of Public Health
Guardamagia
Kristina Cassar
Trainee in Public Health Medicine
Ministry for Health
Valletta

Monaco
Herve Raps
Physician Delegate for Research
Scientific Centre of Monaco
Monaco

Montenegro
Borko Bajić
EHTF member
Institute of Public Health
Podgorica

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The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations created in 1948 with the primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health conditions of the countries it serves.

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