A new report claims European policy makers can save millions of lives through wiser environmental decisions, but will they find the political will to make it happen?

Europe’s delicate hold on
HUMAN HEALTH

GMOs set to flow, but many say ‘no’
Biotech firms and NGOs race to Europe’s back doors.

Greek Games fall well short on environmental efforts
Preparations for the Athens Olympics are coming under heavy attack from green watchdogs.

Slovakia flashes encouraging signs of sustainability
REC study shows Slovakian municipalities fare well in many areas against EU counterparts.
At DHL, we know that the world is a fragile place. That’s why we are doing our best to minimise the impact we have on the environment not just from our transport but from our building emissions too. And we are committed to the environmental standard ISO 14001 - because we believe that Corporate Citizenship isn’t just about doing good, some of the time. It’s about doing our best, all of the time. For more information, visit www.dhl.com
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Green light for Green Horizon

It is probably much easier to launch a brand new magazine from scratch, rather than change the look and title of an existing one. This rule holds even truer when the magazine is the single voice of a multifaceted and multi-voiced organisation like the REC, with its dozens of experienced and knowledgeable professionals, each of them a guru in their own field. A complete overhaul and clear break from the past is what REC’s Information Programme head Jerome Simpson insisted on, his mind open by default to discovery and new technologies.

“The Bulletin works just fine as it is, so why fix something that isn’t broken?” posed a sceptical Entela Pinguli, the region’s best known NGO grants manager. A third option would be gearing the look towards a younger audience, which no one knows better than REC junior fellows’ coordinator, Adriana Craciun. Strong, creative voices throughout the REC helped to forge this spanking new magazine—a mix of experiences, information, knowledge and care about the environment and sustainable development in Central and Eastern Europe. The Bulletin’s readers will undoubtedly notice the new style. Our ambitious aim is for Green Horizon to be nothing less than the most reliable source of information for professionals.

Those who see the magazine for the first time should realise that it has a 14-year history behind it. Although there is a new outlook and title, Green Horizon continues to carry the REC’s trusted Bulletin inside. With its knowledge and care about the environment and sustainable development in Central and Eastern Europe, the magazine maintains its focus on successes and failures in nature protection.

Every new beginning is exciting, despite the hard work and stress. The launch of this magazine, says Marta Bonifert, the REC’s executive director, “falls in line with the REC’s gradual transformation into a sustainability think tank. We are happy to offer this improved information product to all of the REC’s partners and stakeholders.”

One major difference is that the magazine is now open for advertising and sponsorship as a way to secure its financial stability. This is done with great caution to see that our independent editorial content and quality information remain uncompromised, for the trust of the readers is the greatest asset of the REC’s Bulletin that we shall take into our Green Horizon.

A killing environment

A few weeks ago I had a strange experience arguing with a leading environmental campaigner from Central Europe. The point of the argument being: could you please not smoke while we are together?

Arguing with cigarette smokers is tough. They will first try to convince you that there is no problem: remember the lady next door/block/village who smoked like a chimney until she was 95? Then comes the “everyone-has-to-die” line linked to the individual freedom and choice of lifestyle — or deathstyle in this case.

Both arguments have been long and ultimately proved wrong by science. It is public knowledge today that smoking is an unhealthy addiction with lethal consequences for smokers, as well as for those around them. But as real addicts, smokers keep arguing, and, what is worse, keep smoking. And smoking and smoking, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, where tough anti-smoking rules are mostly unheard of.

Nicotine smoke is one of the major environmental factors that seriously threaten human and — particularly — children’s health, according to a survey presented by the World Health Organization (WHO). Conservative estimates attribute 15-26 percent of the episodes of lower respiratory disease in young children in Europe to exposure to environmental tobacco smoke at home, the WHO says. The survey provides striking evidence that 800,000 people die prematurely every year due to outdoor air pollution. Indoor air pollution, lead, water and sanitation are also listed as vital environmental health factors.

The messages will reach environment and health ministers from more than 52 countries across Europe at their meeting in Budapest, June 23-25. Central and Eastern Europe’s ministers will be there as well, providing a great opportunity for stronger political commitment action to foster environmental health measures and policies in the region.

The ministers of Europe are particularly concerned that the burden of disease due to environmental hazards continues to have serious impact on public health. They agree on specific measures and policies, including a special children’s environment and health action plan for Europe. The business sector, academia, the media and other partners, including the REC, are called on to join the effort to solve the problems of environment and health, in Eastern Europe and throughout the continent.

But the greatest difficulty is to enlist each and every person’s involvement. I personally failed: that night I could not convince my environmental friend to stop smoking. His last argument — that we were outside in the open air — was insurmountable, not to mention discouraging. The connection of environment to human health is the strongest argument of environmentalists, used to convince others to quit consuming genetically modified food, sell their cars, and conserve natural resources. Indeed tobacco smoke is not traditionally seen as a hazard to the environment. But it becomes part of it and kills you, the people you know and, tragically, your own children. And if that isn’t reason enough to quit...
It is politically unacceptable for Western politicians to advocate, say, a 20-30 percent reduction in the standard of living, which will still not be sustainable.
**WATER MANAGEMENT**

**Kazakhs could lose largest lake**

Kazakhstan may face an ecological disaster on the scale of the drying out of the Aral Sea if it does not adopt better water management practices and win Chinese cooperation, the United Nations has warned.

A 1960s Soviet plan to re-direct water for cotton irrigation from rivers that fed into the Aral Sea starved what was once the world’s fourth largest lake, leaving two separate bodies of water in a wasteland of salty mud.

Central Asia’s second biggest lake, Lake Balkhash, is now also in danger, according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Forty times the size of Lake Geneva, Balkhash lies 250 miles north of the Kazakh commercial city Almaty.

The Ili River, the principal of seven tributaries leading to Lake Balkhash, flows from northwestern China’s Xinjiang province into Balkhash, which lies wholly in Kazakhstan.

The lake, half salt and half fresh water, has already suffered from industrial pollution, but too much usage of the Ili’s water in China could seal its fate, the UNDP said.

Kazakhstan also misuses its water. Farms do not pay market rates, and as many as one in three rural residents do not have access to clean drinking water.

Although cleaning up drinking water requires investment, the UNDP has said the solution is mainly a question of changing attitudes and behaviours.

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**CYANIDE POLLUTES ROMANIAN RIVER**

Romania’s Agriculture, Forestry, Waters and Environment Ministry reported in March that toxic waste containing cyanide had spilled into a river in the northeast of the country and could pose health hazards and kill fish.

Cyanhydric acetone, used in the production of detergents, leaked from a storage tank at the Metadet chemical plant in Falticeni, 500 km north of Bucharest, into Somuzul Mare, a tributary of the Siret River, which flows into the Danube.

The plant has been out of operation since 2000 but still houses tanks storing chemicals. “We estimate that 10 tonnes of toxic substances leaked into the river,” the ministry’s Ioan Jelev told Reuters. He said, however, that several tonnes had been drained out of the river.

Shortly after the spill, a team of experts took samples to determine the concentration of cyanide downstream from the plant. A ministry official said the police were investigating the causes of the incident. “Samples of water taken from various areas of the Somuzul Mare showed that the river has been polluted around the plant,” Jelev said.

Preliminary data showed a concentration of about 3.0 milligrams per litre (the EU’s permissible level is 0.005 milligrams). A similar incident occurred in 2001 in the same place, poisoning fish. The ministry advised residents not to use water from the river or wells or eat fish from the river.

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**NATURE PROTECTION**

**Saving storks**

This spring the directorate of Bulgaria’s Rusenski Lom nature park built a new nest for a pair of rare black storks whose previous home had been destroyed by poachers.

With the help of volunteer alpinists, a handmade wooden platform was elevated to the nest location, upon which branches were arranged.

The two storks observed the operation from a distance, but later accepted the contraption as their new home. The pair have been using the nesting site for more than 10 years.

Black storks, Egyptian vultures, and other rock-nesting birds make their nests in caves or small caves in the canyons of the park.

Rusenski Lom natural park covers 3,408 hectares south of the town of Ruse, Bulgaria. It includes the canyons of the rivers that form Rusenski Lom, the Danube River’s last tributary on its southern side. It was proclaimed a natural park in 1996.
Bulgarian nuclear project moves forward

The Bulgarian government has released an environmental impact assessment (EIA) on a proposed nuclear power plant at Belene. According to Karbolka, the environmental ministry has given its stamp of approval. Bulgarian NGOs have formed a coalition against the project, and a website was launched by the BlueLink Information Network to help fight the proposal.

Bulgaria has one nuclear power plant at Kozloduy on the Danube River. Another plant, which would consist of four VVER-1000/320 units, has long been planned at Belene, but construction was halted in 1991 because of opposition by local residents, Bulgarian scientists and environmental groups. The Belene site is also on the Danube and has raised concerns because of seismic activity in the area. The government has revised the proposal in recent years. A petition in favour of the project, which officials say will help ensure the country's energy independence, has collected more than a million signatures.

The Bulgarian government has given a positive evaluation of the Environment and Water has to renewable energy alternatives and energy-efficiency measures. A report on the necessary investment, and the five foreign interests that hope to build the plant, was due out in May. According to official sources, communities near the project site favour the plan.

Radiation victims paid

Three residents of the Russian city of Karbolka have won judgments awarding them small compensation for health problems stemming from a half-century-old nuclear catastrophe. The court awarded each of the three plaintiffs just USD 8 a month allowances, plus an annual stay at a Russian spa. But the verdict represents the Russian state’s first admission of responsibility for a disaster that has been covered up since 1957.

The plaintiffs were children when they were assigned to help clean up after an explosion at the Mayak nuclear research facility that raised radioactive waste on a quarter million people. They were among some 1,500 ethnic Tatar farmers, including children from the fourth-grade and up, who were sent into “hot zones” to do the dirty work, which included the burial of dead livestock, the cleaning-up of contaminated building materials and the disposal of crops rendered inedible.

Many of the “young liquidators,” as the children came to be known, died from radiation-related diseases soon after the explosion, which few people know about even today. The children and grandchildren of the liquidators inherited an array of congenital health problems, and they, too, have begun filing damage claims.

Today, just 520 or Karbolka’s original 2,900 residents remain. According to one of the surviving liquidators, most are too sick or old to press their claims against the state.

EU pledges funds for Baltic Sea

The European Commission has announced it will support a four-year project to improve the environment and sustainable development of the Baltic Sea. The EU pledged EUR 3 million for the initiative. The Baltic Sea is Europe’s largest internal water basin, but its nine bordering countries have never coordinated their research. The EU’s BONUS project will help to better address challenges such as pollution, regional development, protection of natural resources and marine sciences. The project brings together 10 research-funding organisations from eight of the countries on the Baltic Sea and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), according to www.bonusportal.org. It will enable joint oversight of national or international research programmes through the pooling of resources and the consistent planning of projects to complement policies.

Slovakia backs Germany on lorry fees

Slovak transport minister Pavol Prokopovic has agreed to support Germany in EU debates over heavy-lobby charging and weekend lorry bans. His German counterpart, Manfred Stolpe, visited Bratislava in May to promote Germany’s wish for weekend bans to apply to all lorries over 7.5 tonnes. Germany wants EU lorry charging rules to be based on true costs of road and environmental damage and for income to go exclusively to transport infrastructure, including railways, the Environment Daily reported.

Plastic recycling guide released

A new recycling guide has been released to help local authorities cope with the ever expanding volume and types of plastic waste. The Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling (ACRR) — an association of more than 70 European cities and regions — produced the guide in cooperation with several plastics industry associations.

Waste plastic can be difficult to recycle for technical or economic reasons. As a result, plastics are often neglected when local authorities plan a recycling campaign. The new guidelines argue that waste plastics can and should be better collected, recovered and recycled. ACRR’s “Good Practices Guide on Waste Plastic Recycling, a Guide by and for Local and Regional Authorities,” seeks to help local authorities in this respect.

The guidelines aim to answer several questions faced by local authorities seeking to improve plastics recycling, including:

• Why recycle plastics?
• How can local/regional authorities improve waste plastics collection?
• How can local/regional authorities improve sorting and related activities?
• How can the development of supply and demand for recycled plastics be promoted?

Copies of the guide are available at: <www.acrr.org/news>.

Emissions deadline missed

The European Commission announced proceedings against six EU member states for not submitting allocation plans on climate emissions trading, according to the Environment Daily news service. Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain missed the spring deadline. Seven new EU members also missed it but will get grace periods. Many of the plans received “go for a rather high quantity of allowances,” including those from the new member states, said EU Environment Commissioner Margot Wallstrom.
UN member nations should promote longer-lasting computers and recycling of old hardware to avoid high-tech environmental hazards, revealed a UN study published in March.

Manufacturing a 24 kg desktop computer with its screen requires 10 times its weight in fossil fuels and chemicals, the study said.

In comparison, a car or a refrigerator requires just twice its weight in natural resources.

The UN study found that manufacturing a computer and screen takes at least 240 kg of fossil fuels, 22 kg of chemicals and 1.5 tonnes of water — totalling more than the weight of a rhinoceros.

Microprocessors are a top culprit “because of their extremely light weight in relation to the enormous quantities of energy and chemicals needed for their manufacture,” one of the study’s authors, Ruediger Kuehr, told the French Press Agency, AFP.

Thirteen countries, mostly European, have passed laws on computer recycling, said Eric Williams, co-author of the study, which recognised the efforts of Japan and Taiwan.

The government of the United States, the biggest producer and consumer of personal computers, has taken no steps to limit the environmental impact of these machines, according to the study.

“The environmental consciousness is definitely lower in the United States,” Williams said. He noted the tendency of President George W. Bush’s administration not to favour regulation.

US sales of office computers increase annually by 10 percent while, worldwide, 130 million computers are sold each year.

“Most of the computers are made in the United States,” Kuehr said. “It is a matter of economics.”

A critical report on the European Investment Bank (EIB) lost much of its bite during an April reading in the Economic and Monetary Committee (EMAC) of the European Parliament. The report from MEP Monica Ridruejo addressed issues such as good governance, transparency and accountability at the EIB, the EU’s house bank. At the end of the meeting, Ridruejo voted against her own radically altered report and withdrew her name from it.

Five members of EMAC proposed 125 amendments, which asked for the deletion of 14 of the report’s 32 paragraphs. Leading the way, MEP Robert Goebbels (PSE, Luxembourg) wanted to delete 28 of 32 paragraphs.

“It is extremely alarming that the European Parliament has voted against all of the recommendations calling on the EU house bank to live up to international governance and transparency standards,” said Magda Stoczkiewicz, leading the EIB reform campaign for CEE Bankwatch and Friends of the Earth International.

Martin Koehler, from the Italian Campaign to Reform the World Bank, commented, “What MEP Ridruejo demanded of the EIB could have been drawn from a corporate handbook. No shareholder in a private company would object to such demands, and no corporation would do less in order to make its shareholders remain confident.”

In an e-mail, Goebbels’ office charged that Ridruejo’s report contained several false allegations, and, because she would not redraft the report, following the request of all political groups, Goebbels introduced amendments to delete certain paragraphs.

“Mr. Goebbels is not against more transparency, and neither is the EP,” wrote Goebbels’ assistant Veronica Ferro, adding that the new European Parliament will be obliged to hold a public hearing on the matter next autumn, during which the president of the EIB is obliged to report on the bank’s policies.
In the contest between man and machine on the congested streets of Budapest, cyclist Jeff Taylor finds it useful to know karate. On a recent trip, Taylor was riding along one of the city’s more bike-friendly streets, and upon entering the marked cycling lane, he came suddenly upon a parked car. Taylor braked — but not too hard. As he often does when encountering vehicles on bike paths, he intentionally hit it, smacking its rearview mirror with his handlebar. This time, however, two people were inside. A young man jumped from the driver’s side and charged at the cyclist in a rage. But Taylor, 190 centimetres tall with an athletic build, put a quick end to the scuffle with a mae geri kick to the motorist’s stomach.

If this had happened a decade earlier, Taylor would have been well advised to leave it there. Back then, many transport experts regarded bikes as recreational vehicles that presented a hazard and hindrance to traffic flow. The law clearly favoured motorists.

But as Taylor discovered during his standoff in Budapest, things may be changing. Taylor and the young driver shouted back and forth, the cyclist saying the collision was accidental and the driver not buying a word of it. Finally, they agreed to call the police.

“The police arrived after a few minutes,” said Taylor, an American who has lived in Hungary 10 years and speaks the language fluently. “Two young, well-spoken officers got out. We tell our story. The young man tells his. At which point one of the police officers gives a short speech: ‘During the summer I work as a bicycle cop. And I also find it irritating when drivers park across the bike path. Now, as I can see that no permanent damage has happened to your car, I’d suggest that everybody go their own way and forget about it.’

“And the young man interrupted here: ‘And you damage cars that park on the bike path too?’ And the police officer just smiled and said, ‘Hmmm … ’”

Anyone who has cycled in the cities of Central and Eastern Europe would take heart in this story. Although cycling is gaining in popularity and cities are expanding bike-path networks every year, cyclists know that cars still command a comfortable lead in the struggle for territory.

Bumper to mudguard

In the 1990s, car ownership in the then EU accession states rose on average by more than 30 percent per person. Cities such as Bratislava and Parnu, Estonia, expanded their car fleets by more than 50 percent.

The trend is reflected in increasingly congested city streets, with cars clogging up roadways, sidewalks, bike paths and anywhere else that is not fenced off with metal barriers. Cars have offered convenience to millions of individuals who once could not afford it, but only in recent years have people seen the environmental tradeoffs.

“Cities in countries in this region are in the 1980s of Western development and thinking of local politicians,” observed Daniel Mourek, a cycling advocate who works for the Czech Environmental Partnership for CEE Foundation. “Prague is a good example of this mentality — people think cycling is for recreation, not for transport. There is a long way to go …”

Mourek cites some telling figures. In total, Czechs own 4 million bicycles compared to just 3.5 million registered cars. Each year, the country’s prided Skoda autoworks sells 37,000-40,000 cars.
whereas Czech manufacturer Author sells 100,000 bikes. Nevertheless, Prague Municipality devotes just 0.02 percent of its transport budget, about CZK 20 million (EUR 615,000) a year, to bike paths.

According to the Prague city government, about 2 percent of commuters ride to work by bike, better than Budapest and Warsaw, both below 1 percent, but well below Copenhagen, where about a third of all trips in the city are by bike. In Amsterdam, bike traffic hit a nadir in the 1970s at 25 percent and today is carefully managed to fall no lower than 35 percent.

Culture shock

The capitals of CEE have good models of cycling culture much closer to home — in their own countryside. Across the region, a tradition of man-powered transport survives in smaller towns and villages out of economic necessity. In the largely rural region of southeast Hungary, for instance, an estimated 15-20 percent of workers commute by bike, according to Gabor Balogh, a spokesman for the Hungarian Cyclists Club. In Czech villages, the figure nears 100 percent, says Mourek.

A good example is the Hungarian village of Tahitoffalu, located just north of Budapest on a difficult-to-access Danube island. There the moneyed class gets around in Socialist-era, two-stroke sedans while virtually everyone else goes by foot or bicycle. Local establishments lack car parks, but not bike racks. Out front of the Tahitoffalu’s Kekdunu (Blue Danube) tavern there are normally a half dozen weather-beaten bikes. No indexed Shimano gearshifts on these, although one has a handbrake consisting of a pair of hinged rods that press directly onto the tire tread. This vestige of cycling culture is part of what makes riding in the countryside a pleasure. “In smaller towns, literally everybody cycles to work or school,” notes Mourek. “But in larger places the car is taking over.”

The difference in the West, particularly in northern Europe, is that even in tight urban spaces where every square metre counts, communities have prioritised the bike, even at the expense of motorists. This past April, a group of German teenagers accustomed to a strong cycling culture tested the waters in CEE during a two-week tour down the course of the Danube. Embarking at the river’s headwaters in the Black Forest, the group enjoyed a pleasant enough ride until they came to their first large settlement in CEE, the Hungarian city of Gyor.

The designated cycling path through town was on a sidewalk, one with steps built into the inclines. For an unencumbered mountain bike, it would have been a mere annoyance, but for fully loaded touring bikes, the steps were a hazard. One of the chaperones on the trip, Daniel Bugert, plucked on a broken spoke and began venting about the local riding conditions. “The biking is awful here,” Bugert said. The riverside bike path ran almost continuously through Germany and Austria, but became segmented after crossing into
Hungary. On the highway from Visegrad, a popular tourist stop on the Danube Bend, the cyclists were forced to share the road with motorists who would race by them less than a handlebar’s width away.

**Shifting gears**

There are signs that cities are moving in the right direction. Budapest’s mayor, for example, has designated several car-free zones in the downtown core, and for several years the city has employed a full-time administrator to look after cycling affairs.

In the Czech Republic, the government has adopted a national strategy for cycling based on the UK model. Coalitions of cyclists there are succeeding in developing intercity bikeroutes through the Greenways programme. They are lobbying municipalities and the federal government for funding to ensure that reasonable corridors run through large cities.

In Gdansk, Poland, transport authorities are finishing up a USD 2.5 million project funded by the Global Environment Facility that creates 52 km of segregated bike paths and an additional 60 km of bike friendly roads with traffic-calming measures. The goal is for bikes to make up 5-10 percent of all trips in the city, compared to 2 percent now.

Cycling advocates take heart in the fact that EU structural funds can help their cities develop cycling infrastructure. The city of Krakow, where bikepath spending was a professed priority of every candidate in last year’s mayoral campaign, is using EU money to flesh out its intracity cycling grid.

“The process of introducing the cycling culture is faster here than it was in the Western countries,” said Dominika Zareba, Greenways coordinator for the Environmental Partnership for Central and Eastern Europe. “In most Central European cities, local governments know that cycling paths will be an inevitable part of the transport system and infrastructure.”

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**THE PATH TO BECOMING A BIKE CAPITAL**

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<th>PRAGUE</th>
<th>BUDAPEST</th>
<th>COPENHAGEN</th>
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<td>Percent of trips made by bicycle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&lt;1.0</td>
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<td>Km of bicycle trails</td>
<td>220 (mostly marked lanes)</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>367 (97% purpose built)</td>
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<td>Bicycle trail budget</td>
<td>EUR 600,000</td>
<td>EUR 100-400,000</td>
<td>EUR 1.3 million</td>
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Sources: Hungarian Cyclists Association (MK); Czech Environmental Partnership for CEE Foundation; Danish Cyclists Federation

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**London Calling**

The Hungarian Cyclists’ Federation trumpets the signing of the London Charter, which stresses the links between the environment, transport and health, by the four Visegrad countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia). The charter is an EU guideline that provides NGOs with a framework for positive change.

**Rim Benders**

Hungary’s cycling woes typify the region’s problems. New bike paths and lanes are poorly planned, constructed and maintained, and conditions for transporting bicycles on trains is deteriorating rapidly.

**Getting the Grease**

Cycling organisations must strengthen their communication and cooperation for initiatives to succeed. Local strategies must also be developed through a national network, along with an aggressive effort to post signs, especially along national routes such as Eurovelo.

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**Towards Carfree Cities IV**

**July 10-24 2004**

Humboldt University
Berlin, Germany

TCFC IV brings together people promoting practical alternatives to car dependence - walking, cycling and public transport, and the transformation of our cities into human-scaled, pedestrian environments rich in public space and community life. www.worldcarfree.net/conference
DUMPED: A brother and sister breakfast on scavenged bread outside of Tirana, Albania. At right, poor Roma children pose amid piles of rubbish in the run-down neighbourhood of Stolyino in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

time to focus on

Kids’ Stuff
emember the story about the girl who never wanted to grow up? One reason was that it’s more fun to be a kid. While children grow, play and learn, adults deal with mostly boring things and forget about children. Policy making is just one of these things that adults do, often without remembering that children are different and deserving of special attention. They deserve this consideration not only because they will outlive us, but also because they depend on us for everything, including their health and environment.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced that children, from before conception to adolescence, are more vulnerable than adults to a variety of environmental hazards. A major conference of Europe’s ministers of health and environment in Budapest this June aims to change things in favour of the kids.

One in three deaths of young people in Europe is attributable to environmental threats, according to WHO’s European Burden of Disease Report. The report estimates the burden on children of disease and injury attributable to different environmental risk factors.

The study is based on 2001 data. It groups children into the ages of 0-4, 5-14, and 15-19. Europe is divided into three regions. The Euro A region includes countries with very low mortality rates for children and very low rates for adults: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Euro B consists of countries with low rates for children and low rates for adults: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Tajikistan, FYR Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Euro C includes states with low mortality for children and high rates for adults: Belarus, Estonia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine.

WHO has estimated that worldwide outdoor pollution causes 800,000 premature deaths every year through lung cancer and cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. Particulate matter is a major culprit. A significant burden of mortality in children is attributable to outdoor air pollution, particularly in the B and C regions, according to the report. If particulate matter concentrations in Euro B and C decreased to the European Community guideline level of 40 milligrams per cubic metre by 2005, then the lives of 3,217 children ages 0-4 would be saved in Euro B and 1,340 in Euro C annually.

To illustrate the value of the findings, the researchers counted the “healthy life years” lost due to environmental factors. This universal measurement unit called DALY, or disability-adjusted life year, takes into account not only deaths caused by environmental threats but also disabilities. The measurement allows for a comparison of human health across geographical regions and different population groups.

In the European region, the estimated burden of disease due to lead poisoning in children under five accounts for around 480,000 DALYs, or 4.4 percent of all DALYs in children in this cohort. Levels vary across the region: estimated percentages of children in urban areas with elevated mean blood-lead levels (greater than 10 micrograms per deciliter) ranged from 0.1 to 30.2 percent in 2001. Lead is a particularly pernicious enemy of children. Sources include car exhaust, the use of old lead water pipes, old paints, industrial emissions, contaminated air and soil, and improperly glazed ceramic cooking pots. Over 9,000 deaths and 320,000 DALYs could be prevented every year in the Euro B region if children were no longer exposed to indoor smoke from the burn...
CIS children three times more likely to die before age of five

People in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) tend to die 10 years younger than western Europeans, and their children are three times as likely to die before age five, according to the Caucasus Environmental NGO Network. Although contamination from the Chernobyl accident was particularly disastrous to Belorussian children like these seen above, the health effects do not stop there. People in the CIS suffer more from poverty, contaminated water, soil and air; traffic pollution; and serious health and safety risks at the workplace. Meanwhile, their societies are less regulated than they were in the 20th century and more subject to economic pressures. A WHO-organised meeting in Malta in March suggested that sectoral reforms are needed to strengthen the steering role of health authorities in the region. Efficient surveillance systems that monitor infectious diseases, both in terms of long-term trends, as well as alerts and response to outbreaks, will need to replace the outdated SanEpid system, a relic of the Soviet Union.

Alcoholism and poverty afflict children of Serbia and Montenegro

According to a study sponsored by UNICEF’s Belgrade bureau, the Canadian Embassy in Belgrade, and the Amiti NGO, one-third of Serbia’s 2 million children under the age of 18 live in poverty and have no chance to experience a happy and normal childhood. The study was carried out in seven districts between May and November 2003. In neighbouring Montenegro, up to 20,000 of the republic’s 600,000 citizens can be regarded as alcoholics, said Jelena Radulovic, a social scientist at Podgorica’s Institute for Health, in an interview with the Tanjug news outlet. Radulovic warned that one-fourth of the country’s high school students say they drink alcohol every day and that many school-age children drink alcohol on a regular basis.

The report points out the high potential of savings in deaths and DALYs through simple improvements in personal hygiene. Providing a regulated water supply and sanitation services, including partial treatment of sewage, for children in Euro B would save approximately 3,700 lives and 140,000 DALYs, the report says.

The environmental burden of disease (EBD) study represents the first attempt to assess the overall impact of the environment on children’s health in the European region.

There are three main steps to offset the health risk from lead pollution, according to Leda Nemer from WHO’s Regional Office for Europe. First, governments must continue enacting legislation on lead content in petrol and building materials. Second, governments must develop and enforce regulations to minimise risks from hazardous building materials such as lead, asbestos, wood preservatives (in particular creosote and arsenic), polybrominated flame retardants, radon and volatile organic compounds. Third, bio-monitoring of lead, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and chlororganic pesticides must be carried out regularly in at-risk infants and mothers.

A healthy environment is becoming a privilege of the wealthy, the report suggests. According to Tomas Kosatsky, epidemiologist at WHO’s Global Change and Health European Center for Environment and Health, wheezing is now more frequent among children from poorer families. Although ailments like asthma can be decreased by curbing air pollution, parental education about the benefits of decreasing allergens, reducing indoor furnace smoke and eliminating tobacco smoke is much more effective, Kosatsky explains.

The WHO report provides a framework for policymakers and the public to compare the impact of selected environmental risk factors on the health of the population. It serves as a basis for priority setting, and, when combined with an analysis of cost effectiveness, it shows how to best allocate resources.

According to WHO, 5 million children worldwide die every year because of unhealthy surroundings. Responding to this alarming statistic, the WHO Regional Office Europe has adopted “the future of our children” as the theme of the conference. The event will focus on how to ensure a healthier environment for coming generations, not only in Europe but the world over. In Hungary, European ministers are expected to reach a consensus and make political commitments to ensure safer environments for children through the adoption of the Children’s Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE).

CEHAPE is a science-based political commitment developed by member countries of the European Union to harmonize priority action and policies to protect and enhance children’s health with respect to environmental hazards, said Roberto Bertollini, Director of Health Determinants at WHO. According to WHO, CEHAPE will outline measures to reduce environmental exposures linked to a wide range of ailments afflicting children, including asthma, injuries, neurodevelopmental disorders, cancer, and food-borne and water-borne diseases. It will target environmental threats such as indoor and outdoor air pollution, environmental tobacco smoke, road traffic, the effects of global climate change, contaminated food and water, contaminants in toys, unsafe buildings and radiation.

CEHAPE has suggested a menu of
effective measures to protect children’s health and environment, said Bertollini. These were developed by WHO’s member states, international organisations and NGOs, and they aim to provide guidance to national and local health and environment authorities in developing national CEHAPEs.

According to Bertollini, the declaration, to be adopted by the ministers in Budapest, ensures strong political commitment to ongoing processes since the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, held in 1999 in London. The statement highlights new issues such as extreme weather events and housing and health, and describes tools for policy making such as environment and health information systems. The declaration targets the impacts of environment on children’s health and shines a spotlight on the countries from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) as well as South Eastern Europe.

A five-year work plan accompanies the declaration, though NGO representatives find it vague and therefore of little use. In line with established tradition, civil society organisations have organised their own event to run parallel with the ministerial conference: the Healthy Planet Forum.

The Budapest conference is the fourth in a series that started in Frankfurt in 1989. The aim was to eliminate the most significant environmental threats to health as quickly as possible, believing that it is better to prevent problems before they happen. Environmental health issues cross sectors, and the conferences are unusual in that they bring together different stakeholders to take decisions, working with and across ministries and involving intergovernmental organisations, civil society organisations and other groups.

By Anita Vojnovska

They like to play football in the streets, run and hide in the labyrinth of old alleyways, and fish in the Topolka River, just where it flows into the Vardar. They often count the eagle nests lining the walls of Babuna Canyon, and sometimes climb up to them, clear to the top of Solunska Glava peak.

Like other children, the youngsters of Veles, FYR Macedonia love their town and dream of exploring the rest of the world. Their town, however, does not always love them back. In contrast to the scenic aerial photo seen above, for more than three decades Veles and its surroundings have been contaminated by the nearby lead and zinc smelter factory. High concentrations of sulphur dioxide in the air caused the WHO to declare Veles a dangerous place in 2001.

Concentrations of lead and other heavy metals, including cadmium, mercury and arsenic, pervade the town’s atmosphere, although to what extent is anyone’s guess. The state doesn’t even measure them. Scientific reports conclude simply that the contamination of Veles directly harms the health of its citizens, especially the youngest.

Physician Velimir Stojkovski examined the umbilical cords of 86 women after childbirth and found concentrations of lead and cadmium that were three times higher than those in Skopje, itself one of the most polluted cities in the country. Stojkovski’s colleague Snezana Janevska tested the blood of newborn children in Veles and found much higher concentrations of lead than in Skopje newborns.

The facts point to a source: the nearer children live to the smelter, the higher the concentrations of heavy metals in their body tissues.

After receiving their academic titles, however, the two physicians refused to announce their work in public. Their sudden modesty at a pollution conference in Veles last year puzzled the local public and NGOs. Some said they were protecting the results from scrutiny. “These people received Ph.D. degrees off the torment of the people of Veles, and now they do not want to speak in public or to present the facts,” said Sonja Gardovska, president of the Veles Society of Parents for Healthy Generations. But with health care completely dependent on government funding, the scientists’ reluctance to step into the spotlight surprised few.

Foreign researchers have confirmed the findings. The Centre of Biotic Medicine in Moscow studied hair strands from 70 Veles children. High amounts of lead were discovered in 45 percent of the samples and cadmium in 21 percent. Meanwhile, vitally important magnesium concentrations were deficient in 51 percent of the samples. According to the leading Russian researcher, a close correlation exists between heavy metal contamination and illnesses among Veles children. A high presence of heavy metals harms their health. High concentrations of lead and cadmium, in particular, deprive the body of useful metals.

Anita Vojnovska is editor at www.eko.net.mk
THE ITALIAN TRUST FUND
una mano per l'Europa

From renewable energy to sustainable agriculture; from climate change to hot spots; from NGOs to national officials; the Italian Trust Fund supports sustainable development in Central and Eastern Europe.

A targeted contribution to the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe by the Ministry for the Environment and Territory of Italy, the Italian Trust Fund is committed to a sound environment. The ITF offers expertise on risk assessment, environmental management and best practices, while championing partnership on critical issues such as climate change mitigation, strategic environmental assessment and waste management. The Italian Trust Fund — a helping hand for Europe.

www.rec.org/rec/programs/itf
With genetically modified products one of the thorniest trade disputes between the United States and Europe, antagonists in Brussels may well have hoped for a boost with EU enlargement in May. However, many of the 10 new member states have not yet committed themselves on GMOs. Several are adopting EU directives and global protocols on GMOs. Yet every country is moving ahead at a different pace, with some considering relevant legislation for the first time. And in those states left out of the first round of expansion, the biotech industry is fighting hard to get a foothold before the second wave of EU enlargement.

Bulgaria is probably stretched hardest in this transatlantic tug-of-war; this spring its parliament is considering draft legislation on the regulation of GMOs and the release of genetically engineered crops into the environment. The biotech industry, meanwhile, is striving to make Bulgaria its strongest outpost in Europe. The United States Department of Agriculture has given funding for the establishment of the Biotech Information Center, closely linked with the Agrobiotech Institute in Sofia. Generally promoting biotechnology, this centre is a unique phenomenon in all of Central and Eastern Europe.

Bulgarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who oppose the spread of genetically engineered crops in their country say it has been difficult to mount a united resistance against biotechnology. Five NGOs formed a consortium called the “Bulgaria – GMO-free Zone.” This consortium called on the country to issue a moratorium on all genetically modified products. Furthermore, it opposes the new draft law regulating GMOs.

Mark des Marets, an American from the NGO NW RAGE, supports the coalition stance, saying that the draft law does not follow EU laws closely enough, and would permit the cultivation of genetically modified crops.

Mora estimates that up to 50,000 hectares of genetically modified soybeans are being cultivated in Romania, and that these find their way to the market without any system of labeling or any public say in the matter. Mora, an authority on the subject from the Hungarian NGO Okotars. Mora estimates that up to 50,000 hectares of genetically modified soybeans are being cultivated in Romania, and that these find their way to the market without any system of labelling or public say in the matter.

Iza Kruszewska, who has dealt extensively with the Romanian situation in her work for the Northern Alliance for...
The Athens Olympics had the potential to showcase the cutting edge of sustainable development. Instead, preparations are raising environmental concerns — both in Greece and South Eastern Europe

Nature finishes last

By Elinda Labropoulou

There’s facelift and improvements to its transport system may help clear the air of the smoggiest European capital, but the Olympics’ overall eco-performance has fallen short of world-class. Olympic projects are not only affecting the environment of Greece, with opening ceremonies set for August 13, preparations are monopolising the government’s attention to the detriment of long-overdue projects around the country. Environmentalists complain the setbacks could have disastrous effects that reach across borders into South Eastern Europe.

Sacrificial lake

Olympic projects, plagued by delays and extraordinary increases in the overall budget, largely due to post 9/11 security considerations, may be responsible for a delay in action plans to save Lake Dojran, the quickly disappearing lake on the border between Greece and FYR Macedonia. Lake Dojran, or Doirani as it is called in Greek, is in serious danger of drying up, along with the Greek funding for its replenishment.

The lake’s water level has dropped significantly over the past decade. That, coupled with increased agricultural runoff, has produced an acute rise in pollution levels.

Replenishment is a top priority for the lake’s survival, and both countries have pledged to work in that direction. Maria Katsakiori from the Greek Biotope and Wetlands Centre, a non-profit institute involved in the Dojran projects, says that funding has not matched officials’ promises.

There are delays in many regional projects, not just Doirani,” Katsakiori says. “There is much talk among environmentalists that money originally set aside for regional projects is now going to Olympic works. This is, of course, impossible to prove as the government dismisses such claims but carries on delaying funding. At the same time it is evident that a lot of public money is going into Olympic preparations.”

Any links between Olympic projects and delays in funding for regional projects are dismissed by the Environmental Ministry. Athina Mourmouri, head of the Ministry’s Environment Management department, denies that the Olympics are causing delays. “They have nothing to do with Olympics projects. What is causing delays is that additional planning is required before new projects are implemented.”

A victim of circumstances, Dojran is running the risk of turning into a black hole as fish production has dropped by one fifth in the last 10 years.

Judges unimpressed

But even where money is being directed, it is doing more harm than good, environmentalists claim. Greenpeace gave Greece a score of 1 out of 10 for its attempts to take environmental policy seriously during Olympic preparations.

That compares to the rating of 5 garnered by Sydney for the 2000 Summer Olympics. From an environmental viewpoint, the Athens Olympics will be remembered as the games of lost opportunities, Greenpeace CEO Nikos Haralambidis said. “The Olympics are the biggest international sports event in the world,” he added. “It is also a platform for promoting new ideas and technologies, which, if proven effective, can then be used elsewhere. This is why Athens’ failure to explore and promote greener ideas through Olympic projects is a great loss. Not only for Greece but for everyone supporting sustainable development.”

As part of promoting “Greener Games,” Greenpeace was involved in the design of several Olympic projects in Sydney, including the Olympic Village. It is therefore appropriate that it chooses the Olympic Village in Athens as a showpiece of what “lost opportunities” entail. According to Greenpeace, almost none of the environmentally friendly rules originally included in the tender were implemented.

Despite receiving the green light for the extensive use of sustainable energy sources and avoidance of toxic construction materials, the Public Workers Building Organisation, responsible for the construction of this large green team development undertaken in Greece, ignored the original plan. The electric air-conditioning units and boilers, which were installed for the purported purpose of saving money, are there for everyone to see.

Yet EU funds were available for environmentally friendlier planning, argues Greenpeace. The result is that the long-term running costs for the Olympic Village, which will be turned into apartment blocks after the games, are now higher and more environmentally damaging. By contrast, about 75-80 percent of water in the Olympic Village in Sydney was heated through solar power. This will not be the case in Greece, one of Europe’s sunniest nations.

Row, row, row you don’t

The Greek capital’s congested city centre made it imperative that a number of the large scale venues would be constructed in Greater Athens’ less spoiled natural spots. The dramatic landscape in Markopoulo, until recently covered in olive trees and vines, has been compromised to cater for the needs of the Equestrian Centre. The surrounding hills have been destroyed to create space for hundreds of horses and thousands of visitors, and a highway has been built to connect the venue to the Athens Centre.

Environmental concerns about the Olympics rarely appear in the Greek press, but the decision to build one of the most prestigious Olympic venues in an area of both great archaeo-logical and environmental importance has made the Schinias Rowing Centre this Olympics’ worst environmental blunder.

The Schinias basin on the Marathon plain, some 45 km from downtown Athens, is where one of antiquity’s most celebrated battles took place in 490 BC. The Battle of Marathon is taught in Greek schools with great pride. Here a small Athenian army employed clever tactics to defeat a great army of invading Persians. Schinias is also a sensitive coastal wetland area, boasting one of three remaining stone pine forests in Greece and home to 176 bird species, many of which use the marshlands of this rare ecosystem for rest, freshwater and marine habitats as a migration stopover.

When the decision to build the rowing centre was announced in 1998, historians, archaeologists and environmentalists joined forces to push for a change of location. History repeated itself in a battle against all odds, but this time the underdogs lost to the international sports industry. Although a presidential decree designated the area a national park, construction of the rowing facilities nevertheless proceeded at the location.

Two artificial lakes with grandstands for...
14,000 spectators and viewing for another 30,000 more on the lakesides, a helicopter pad, a dock for motorboats and a petrol station, are all part of this national park. Restaurants and parking spaces for busses complete the picture, making Schinias a much noisier place.  

“Piles of rubbish, uprooted trees and vandalised nature are all you find a little beyond the rowing centre in this so-called national park,” says Theodota Nantsou, conservation manager of Worldwide Fund for Nature in Greece. “It is disgusting.”  

WWF has been one of the strongest opponents of building the rowing centre in this location. “Schinias is not only a beautiful beach. It is part of the natural and cultural heritage of Greece and one of the last representative examples of the classical landscape of Attica,” Nantsou says.  

The problems go on. Among the chief issues raised is the inadequacy of local water sources to simultaneously supply the lakes and sustain the freshwater marsh. Ecologists also warn that after the Olympics, the diversion of local freshwater supplies for the rowing pools will reduce both surface and groundwater levels, resulting in the intrusion of salt water and leading to the rapid degradation of the wetlands and the stone pine forest.  

With all eyes turned to Athens, environmental concerns can now only be postponed till the day after. When it all goes quiet in September, the Greeks will be called again to decide what opportunities remain and how many of these they can afford to lose. It is a shame, ecologists argue, that the country known as the cradle of civilisation failed to win a place in modern history as an environmental pioneer.
Enlargement leaves GMOs up in the air

Continued from page 17

Sustainability (ANPED) agrees with Mora, saying that if nothing changes, the GMO situation could become an obstacle in Romania’s bid to join the European Union. Unregulated, GMO-ridden agriculture would fly in the face of EU laws and prevent Romanian farmers and food processors from participating on the common European market. GMO content like the antibiotic resistance marker gene, which must be completely phased out by genetically engineered crops by 2008, would also pose a problem, as Romania has no mechanism in place to do this.

In Serbia and Montenegro, where laws on the cultivation of genetically engineered crops do exist, complaints have been raised that soy crops are being smuggled into the country. Bosnia and Herzegovina has refused a donation of StarLink corn from the US, a genetically modified, pest-resistant strain that caused an outcry in the US, a genetically modified, pest-resistant strain that caused an outcry in the US, and consumer opposition is quite strong.

But according to Ricarda Steinbrecher, a biologist and genetic scientist from the UK, no foolproof method exists to prevent cross-pollination or other means by which genetically modified crops can affect the surrounding environment. She cites field tests of genetically modified potatoes in which 35 percent of ordinary potatoes grown 1.1 km away were contaminated with the manipulated gene. Butterflies, beetles and bumblebees can carry pollen five km or even further. Wind is much harder to contend with: tree pollen has been found on the Shetland Islands, despite the fact that their shores lie 250 km from the nearest tree. Many scientists agree that the question is no longer whether genes will escape, but what will happen when they do. They fear the spread of engineered traits will slowly but surely enter the gene pool of many other species. Some predict the evolution of superweeds or superbugs: pests that have no enemies, natural or manmade.

EU (in)action

As the European Union’s five-year moratorium on licensing GMOs has run out, a framework of rules and regulations has gradually come into place. A law stipulating labeling requirements and traceability of food products entered into force on April 18. No one knows how this will affect the distribution of genetically engineered foods in the European market, but the law does prescribe a long and difficult process for biotech companies to register their product. Even then European consumers will still have the right to say no, as labeling has been made mandatory.

On April 26, the EU Agricultural Council blocked the approval of Bt-11 maize, a genetically engineered sweet corn. The European Commission’s approval on May 19 greenlighted the first new genetically modified food in Europe since the five-year moratorium began in 1999. Yet Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth trust that GMOs will be in favor of a GMO-free country, yet mixed signals abound: After 31 tonnes of genetically modified products were destroyed in a four-month period, officials refused to identify those products that tested positive for GMO content.

After 31 tonnes of genetically modified products were destroyed in a four-month period, officials refused to identify those products that tested positive for GMO content.

genetically modified products were destroyed in a four-month period, officials refused to identify those products that tested positive for GMO content. Minister of Health Andrija Hebrang gave the matter-of-fact explanation that “publishing their names would seriously imperil the future of the (biotech) business.” Ljiljanka Mitos of the NGO Osijek Greens characterised the situation as “a tragicomic state of affairs.”

After 31 tonnes of genetically modified products were destroyed in a four-month period, officials refused to identify those products that tested positive for GMO content.
The REC has devoted a decade of environmental work for the sake of better health

Causes that go hand in hand

By Oreola Ivanova

Integrating work on the environment with work on human health has been our business for more than a decade. At the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), we’ve encouraged politicians, civil servants, NGOs and the private sector to make sure their efforts in these two areas go forward hand in hand. In June the REC welcomes Europe’s ministers of environment and ministers of health for a meeting in its city of origin: Budapest. We have a lot to share with them — experiences, field-tested practices and a clear vision for the coming decade.

The REC has made significant contributions to the last ministerial meeting in London in 1999, especially in the areas of water and health. The Third Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment focused on the theme “action in partnership,” which was a perfect fit for the REC’s multi-stakeholder approach. The REC embraced the inextricable link between environment and health, and followed this principle in its work throughout CEE. It shaped our work in the Balkans — as part of the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme — and in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Since London the REC has further developed the methodology for strategic environmental assessment (including health aspects), promoted sustainable urban transport, environmental education (with emphasis on health problems), and assisted countries in making more efficient use of pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs).

We facilitate

In its work, the REC aims to institutionalise health impact assessment and move it higher on the policy agenda. The REC’s experts worked to develop common tools that facilitate integration, such as guidelines for policy makers and project implementers based on pilot projects. Intensive training and networking are among the REC’s main tools.

We have worked hard to integrate health aspects into environmental impact assessment. When health considerations are introduced at a strategic level, problems are avoided at a project level. This kind of planning avoids duplication between different types of assessments. Public participation should be dealt with at an early stage and throughout the process.

Inclusion of health in strategic environmental assessment is a challenge. We must strike the right balance between environment and health components. There is clear need for flexibility and adaptation to different contexts and sectors. Guidance and procedures on how and when to involve health authorities are still needed.

The REC promotes the integration of environmental concerns into other policies, especially public transport. REC projects increasingly support sustainable transport in urban areas of CEE. Regional cooperation is facilitated among municipalities and public transport operators in the new EU member states and candidate countries. The current problems and needs are addressed through the exchange of experience and best practices, mutual dialogue, study trips and information on available international assistance.

Health has been a key message in the REC’s work in education. The Green Pack, the REC’s multi-media environmental education curriculum, covers various aspects of environmental protection and sustainable development with a strong focus on health. Each national version has been developed with local experts to contain country-specific environment and health information. The Green Pack has been launched in Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland and will soon be introduced to the Czech Republic and Slovakia. An English-language master version has been created to assist the pack’s adaptation outside the targeted countries.

Keeping a sharp eye

The REC promotes the urban transport benchmarking initiative in CEE, which compares the performance of public transport operators against common indicators. After the assessment, participating organisations can work to improve their marks by adopting identified “best,” “innovative,” and “interesting” practices.

Pollutant release and transfer registers are powerful tools to protect the environment and health. The registers allow the public to obtain information on releases and transfers of at least 86 pollutants responsible for problems such as acid rain and atmospheric ozone depletion. They also include heavy metals and carcinogens such as dioxins.

The REC’s work focuses on capacity building to assist authorities in the Czech Republic, the most advanced of the new EU member states, to set up an operational PRTR register and to provide guidance and information for users. In Hungary and Slovakia, the activities promote the development of PRTR systems in harmony with the EU requirements through a more gradual process, including assessment of legal, institutional and practical aspects, as well as multi-stakeholder dialogue with NGOs and businesses.

During the Budapest ministerial meeting on environment and health, a side event will demonstrate the link between the UNECE Protocol on PRTR developed under the auspices of the Aarhus Convention and the proposals for pan-European environmental health information systems.

Oreola Ivanova is REC Deputy Executive Director for Strategy and Development
Health and environment are not only a ministerial concern. As the advance interest in the Healthy Planet Forum shows, the health effects of a degraded planet are everyone’s business.

The Healthy Planet Forum has been scheduled in Budapest June 23 to 25 parallel with the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. Its purpose is to open the discussion to regular people.

According to the organisers, the Healthy Planet Forum will complement the more political ministerial agenda of the World Health Organization conference to ensure participation of “all non-political and non-governmental groups.”

The forum will take up the issues of air quality, water and sanitation, inadequate dietary intake, food contamination, mobility and transport, noise, emergencies, radiation and occupational risks. It will have a special focus on children.

According to Laszlo Perneczky of REC Country Office Hungary, registrations came in from more than 30 countries, including some from Africa. But because the event failed to attract the attention of donors, financial difficulties mean that key participants without their own means to get to Budapest will be left out.

Nonetheless, Perneczky hopes that the more than 50 activities lined up for the forum will bring about greater integration of environment and health in terms of governmental policy in Hungary and the rest of Europe.

In addition to the forum’s efforts, the Ministry for the Environment and Territory of Italy will collaborate with the REC in presenting the results of its project Clean Environment, Better Future for Our Children. According to Minister Altero Matteoli (pictured at left), the initiative “is aimed to contribute and realise international partnerships and sustainable initiatives towards the protection of children’s environmental health.”

The Italian project concerns the prevention of respiratory diseases in children and aims at transferring awareness-raising initiatives that have succeeded in Italy to Hungary and other countries participating in the conference. Under the auspices of this project, a National Breathing Day will be organised for the first time in Hungary. The occasion, which has been observed annually in Italy since 1994, takes place on June 24.
Slovakian municipalities have embraced modern principles of sustainable development, with many already employing specialised staff for their realisation.

So concluded a recent survey carried out by REC Country Office Slovakia with support from the European Union’s PHARE fund. In the 2003 study, the office sent out questionnaires to 137 municipalities and received expressions of interest from 30, all but two with populations under 50,000.

Eighty-three percent claimed they were familiar with the concept of sustainable development and followed its principles in their work. Fifty-three percent of the respondents said their municipality has a special department responsible for carrying out sustainable development.

From a list of 30 interested cities, CO Slovakia picked three for a deeper analysis — Rimavska sobota, Sala and Puchov. The towns were to be gauged on their current success in sustainability according to 10 common European indicators, including such things as general satisfaction of citizens with the municipality, the town’s emissions of greenhouse gases, the accessibility of local services and green spaces, and levels of noise pollution.

Although the authors reported that they could not obtain all the information they needed for a complete analysis, they succeeded on a few points. Among their findings:

- Residents of the surveyed cites are generally less satisfied with the running of their city government than people in the EU.
- Per capita emissions of CO₂ were lower than the EU average in two of the three cities, which reflects the overall situation in Slovakia.
- Children in the surveyed cities were more likely than their cohorts in the EU to get to school by bicycle or foot, and much less likely to do so by car.
- Green areas were slightly less accessible to residents of the surveyed cities than in the EU.
- Land in the surveyed communities was much less developed the EU average.

The governments involved in the evaluation were unanimously pleased they had participated in the study, citing the following concrete benefits:

- It provided them with an in-depth analysis of their community environments.
- Public participation and open discussion improved.
- They found out what citizens believed were the main problems in the towns.
- The study’s result could help with the development of city master plans and other documents.
- Study results helped in decision-making processes and internal communication between municipal departments.
- The results could guide private initiatives such as trash recycling.
Agreement paves way in Montenegro

An agreement about the legal status of the REC in Montenegro was signed between the Government of Montenegro’s Ministry of Environmental Protection and Spatial Planning and the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe’s head office Board of Directors on April 5, 2004. The REC’s senior adviser Janos Zlinsky (pictured right) looks on as Montenegrin Minister of Environment Boro Vucinic signs the agreement.

The agreement provides a favourable legal framework to the REC’s office in Montenegro, which will contribute to the reconstruction of the environment in the country through different projects and activities, Clini explained. Immediately after the signing, the opening of a REC office in Podgorica was announced. This agreement and the imminent opening of a local field office will assure the REC a larger presence in Montenegro. In the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, each republic maintains its own ministry of environment.

EDUCATION

Decision makers study sustainability

More than 100 high-level officials from environmental ministries in CEE received advanced instruction on sustainability during an academic programme launched this spring by the REC and partners in Italy and Hungary.

Dubbed the “Course for Sustainability,” the programme enlightens public officials in CEE working directly in the field of sustainable development. The course aims to enhance their ability to create policies that promote sustainable environments, societies and economies.

Two of the sessions of the first course have already been carried out, one in April focusing on the global environmental situation and strategies for sustainable development and one in May dedicated to developing policies, laws and institutions for sustainable development.

Sixty officials participated in each session, all from Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia.

Integrating the environment into today’s economic and social agenda is the biggest challenge ahead for policy makers in this region, said Katalin Szili, Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament. Szili, pictured above, announced the inauguration of the course to the media with Professor Maria Lodovica Gullino of the Turin University and REC Executive Director Marta Szigeti Bonifert.

Szili noted that the Hungarian government is implementing its second environmental programme, which will expire in 2008. “But it is my personal dream to see a longer term sustainability strategy for my country, and talks among parties are underway,” Szili said in an interview with Green Horizon.

The Italian Trust Fund allocated EUR 850,000 for the project, implemented in cooperation with the Venice International University, Agroinnova (Turin University) and the Central European University. It is hoped that the course will establish a high-level network of CEE government officials that will be able to work with course organisers toward more rational policy making.
New staff
Eniko Artić — project officer, Environmental Financing, Environmental Policy and Local Initiatives Programme
Erzsébet Aszalos — project assistant, NGO Support
Gergo Horváth — civil servant
Iordanca-Rodica Iordanov — project manager, Public Participation Programme
Katalin Ivés Nagy — cashier, Finance Department
Lorenzo Rilasciati — project manager, Italian Trust Fund
Sibel Sezer — regional director, Turkey
Akos Sziliágyi — travel officer, Conference Department

Departures
Mihály Bonifert — porter, Administration Department
Janos Gelencser — travel officer, Conference Department
Agata Miazga — project manager, Environmental Policy and Local Initiatives

Other changes
Jennifer McGuinn — became head of the joint Environmental Policy and Local Initiatives Programme
Radoje Lausevic — became regional director for South Eastern Europe and remains country director of REC

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The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) is a non-partisan, non-advocacy, not-for-profit international organisation with a mission to assist in solving environmental problems in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The center fulfills this mission by promoting cooperation among non-governmental organisations, governments, businesses and other environmental stakeholders, and by supporting the free exchange of information and public participation in environmental decision-making.

The REC was established in 1990 by the United States, the European Commission and Hungary. Today, the REC is legally based on a charter signed by the governments of 28 countries and the European Commission, and on an international agreement with the government of Hungary. The REC has its head office in Szentendre, Hungary, and country offices and field offices in 16 beneficiary countries which are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, FYR Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey.

Recent donors are the European Commission and the governments of Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as other inter-governmental and private institutions.

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Recent donors are the European Commission and the governments of Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herze...
CLASSIFIED ADS

First Biennial Central and Eastern European Environmental Health Conference
October 24, 2004 to October 27, 2004 • Prague, Czech Republic • English Language

Objectives:
• To gather scientists and students from the US and Central and Eastern Europe to discuss the magnitude of the problem in specific regions of Central and Eastern Europe
• To discuss improved methods for assessing exposure, including biomarkers of exposure and integrated methods for predicting doses
• To discuss specific health effects associated with exposure to chemicals at these sites, with a focus on developmental and reproductive health

Contact: Ms Nancy White • Texas A&M University • (979) 845-0203
E-mail: CEEHC04@cvm.tamu.edu • www.fi.muni.cz/ceehc/

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Study tour
Environmental Permitting and Inspection in Practice
for environmental inspectors and regulators

Under the project
Strengthening the Environmental Implementation and Enforcement in the SEE Countries forming part of the Stabilisation and Association Process — Support of the Activities of the Balkan Environmental Regulatory Compliance and Enforcement Network* funded by the European Commission’s assistance programme CARDS

The study tour will be organised in cooperation with the Polish Chief Inspectorate for Environmental Protection.

Participants: environmental inspectors and regulators from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro.

Contact: Mihail Dimovski • mdimovski@rec.org

Green Power
The Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Meeting Place
September 27, 2004 to September 29, 2004
Budapest, Hungary
English Language

Key issues:
• Regulatory challenges in the CEE renewable energy market
• Ministerial Roundtable
• Financing Renewable Energy Projects: What works in the CEE and why?
• Understanding the Market Drivers for Renewable Energy Financing
• Opportunities for International Co-operation & Joint Implementation
• How are utilities & DH integrating renewable into their energy mix?

Contact: TERRA Mileniul III
Tel/fax: (40-21) 312-6870
E-mail: terra@fx.ro
http://terraIII.ngo.ro

2nd International Workshop on Integrated Soil and Water Protection: Risks from Diffuse Pollution
June 28, 2004 to June 29, 2004
Prague, Czech Republic
English Language

This workshop focuses on the risks arising from man’s continuous pressure on soils, leading to damage of crucial soil functions such as:
• Bases for ecosystem quality, sustainable land use and safe food production
• Filters for drinking water
• Key compartments in global biogeochemical cycles (carbon, nitrogen, water, etc.)
• Sinks/sources of anthropogenic and natural pollutants

Contact:
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June 21-25, 2004
Warsaw, Poland
Businesses are often afraid of the word “environment.” But the experience of the Czech Republic’s Kovohute Pribram metal works shows that environmentally friendly methods can bring benefits not only to the surrounding environment but also to the company’s balance sheets and positioning in the enlarged European market.

Kovohute a.s. is a joint stock company located in Pribram, a town of 40,000 about 80 km from Prague. It recycles various products with metal content, including used electronic appliances, and manufactures some 2,000 products containing lead, antimony and other non-ferrous metals. The company, which dates back to 1786, is part of the Pribram’s long history as a mining-based community, and its processing of silver and lead ores has exerted considerable pressure on the environment. Pollution and growing concern and protest from local people in the early 1990s were followed by privatisation in 1994.

An environmental audit carried out together with a risk analysis led to the decision for a substantial upgrade in technology. New management made a conscious decision that the firm could remain competitive in the EU market only by bringing an end to the environmental damages wrought by inefficient processes and a high rate of pollution. The company took a series of environmental measures, including amelioration of the damage done.

A Varta blast furnace was built with a special after-burning system and modern dust removal technology. Oxygen refining of lead was introduced. An up-to-date wastewater treatment plant employing biotechnology was installed. Dust and intermediate products are now captured and processed in rotary furnaces equipped with natural gas and oxygen burners with efficient gas de-dusting. Ground-level dust has been reduced through technology improvements and road sprinkling; rain runoff is treated in the wastewater treatment plant.

Metallurgical activity nowadays is limited to secondary lead-materials recycling, mainly of lead batteries. Company representatives say the technology has brought the plant up to European standards and has benefited the surrounding environment greatly.

The company has followed up with the gradual introduction of management systems for quality, environment and safety. The improvements now work in concert as an integrated management system (IMS).

Over the past five years, some 60 percent of Kovohute’s investments have been dedicated to improving its environmental performance. The company’s management has made the environment a priority and permanent goal. Kovohute’s lead emissions are 1/300th to 1/500th of what they were in times 1973. Sulphur dioxide (SO2) emissions have dropped to 1/30th their 1973-level. In the mid 1990s, the factory wastewater that flows into the river had 10 to 30 times more lead and cadmium in it. These days some of the pollutant levels fall well below legal limits.

In December 2000 Kovohute Pribram a.s. was among the first 25 companies in the Czech Republic to win the Safe Company certificate. It received a Health, Safety and Environment Award in 1998. It was honoured at the seventh annual Health and Safety Environment Awards, organised by the Business Leaders Forum foundation. It was recognised for its contribution to improving the Czech Republic’s recycling of vehicle batteries and was named Best Company of the Town of Pribram by the local chamber of commerce.

This sustainability success story is from the REC Business and Environment Programme, and was made possible by a project supported by the government of the Netherlands.

Company representatives say the technology has brought the plant up to European standards and has benefited the surrounding environment greatly.
Two-hectare footprints!

On-line calculators reveal the gargantuan tracks of human activity

The success of a business cannot be measured by economic performance alone. These days, a firm’s social responsibility and environmental impact are increasingly scrutinised, and sometimes charged for.

“Sustainability calculators” are software utilities that help quantify the environmental impacts of various human activities and identify the actions that most effectively compensate the environment. Often the solutions are given according to the user’s budget. These calculators rely on emerging environmental quantification concepts that allow easy comparisons between environmental impacts of such diverse activities as traveling by plane, recycling aluminum cans or insulating a house.

The calculators are easy to use: the user enters data on, for example, home energy use, recycling, eating habits or traveling. The software calculates the environmental impact of each activity and adds them up. A careful study of these figures can inspire changes in individual behaviour and business planning.

About a dozen such calculators can be found on the Internet, most of them using simple on-line forms. One of the first calculators that appeared on the Internet was developed by “Redefining Progress” — the developer of the methodology and applications of ecological footprint. This calculator is based on 13 simple questions, grouped into sections about food, transport and housing.

Other calculators were developed by government agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency of Australia. Independent organisations have developed others, including SafeClimate’s carbon footprint calculator for the World Resources Institute. The business sector is also active — the UK’s ClimateCare Ltd. was among the first to launch an on-line utility that enables users to calculate greenhouse emissions from flying, driving and home energy use.

The REC’s Business and Environment Programme is developing an Eco-efficiency Toolkit, which will give practical advice to Central and Eastern European small and medium-sized enterprises.

There are three principle methods for measuring environmental impact: the ecological rucksack, the ecological footprint and the CO₂-equivalent.

The ecological rucksack quantifies natural resource consumption by calculating the overall weight of natural resources consumed by human activities, services and product manufacturing. For example: 1,000 kilograms of minerals are needed to produce a five-gram gold ring (this figure doubles if you add the converted value of energy and chemical consumption at production). In a similar way, your toothbrush will easily measure 1.5 kilograms if you consider its entire environmental burden.

The ecological footprint provides a figure in hectares. These calculators compute the area of arable land needed to supply a certain amount of food or energy. They also show how much land is needed to absorb waste and how much physical space is needed for necessary infrastructure. Considering the total biologically active area on Earth and the global human population, our planet allows two hectares of “ecological footprint” for each of us. Yet, on a global scale, according to the Living Planet report of the World Wide Fund for Nature has already reached 2.3 hectare per person, and that figure is much higher for residents of industrial countries.

With the growing concern over the emission of greenhouse gases and the resulting global climate change, there are now calculators that convert resource consumption figures into CO₂ emissions. These “carbon calculators” focus on the climate change potential of different modes of transport, heating, electricity use and waste generation.

Gabor Heves is an electronic networking projects manager for the REC’s Information Programme

Some sustainability online calculators:

- www.lead.org/leadnet/footprint/intro.htm
- www.co2.org/calculator/index.cfm
- www.safeclimate.net/calculator/
- www.clearwater.org/carbon.html
- www.environment.govt.nz/footprint/input.html

COURSE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

STRATEGIES, METHODOLOGIES, POLICIES AND ACTIONS FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Call for applications

The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), on behalf of the Ministry for the Environment and Territory of Italy, is inviting senior governmental officials from national ministries and regional agencies from Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia to submit applications for the second round of the Course for Sustainability: Strategies, Methodologies, Policies and Actions for Central and Eastern Europe, which will start in October 2004.

Course structure

The Course for Sustainability is designed for senior government officials responsible for the “three pillars” of sustainable development: economic growth, social progress and environmental protection. It provides members of various ministries — not only environmental — with the opportunity to examine the major approaches to sustainable development. The course is composed of five modules, of which each participant is expected to take part in three (the first and fifth modules, and their choice from the second, third or fourth). The modules are:

1. Introduction to Sustainable Development as a Political and Governance Concept
2. Developing Policies, Laws and Institutions
3. The Administration of Sustainable Development
4. Economy
5. Environmental Management and Practices of Sustainable Development

Lectures will be given by an international team of academics and professionals from Venice International University, the REC, Agrinnova, Central European University, the Italian Ministry for the Environment and Territory, and other international organisations and universities.

For more information on the course and the application process, visit the project website: www.sustainabilityee.net
The Mediterranean countries from South Eastern Europe are gearing up for the imminent entry into force of an international legal instrument that will help protect the sea from the hazards of ship traffic and toxic payloads.

The instrument is the Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in Cases of Emergency, Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea.

Adopted in 2002, the protocol will enter into force in 2004, having been ratified by six contracting parties. Ratification has come comparatively swiftly, demonstrating the importance of the issue to countries that border the sea.

“This is extremely encouraging,” says Lucien Chabason, who coordinated the United Nations Environment Program’s Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) from 1994-2003. “Much of this can be attributed to heightened levels of regional and sub-regional awareness.” Chabason spoke in Pula, Croatia at a workshop where more than two dozen experts and government representatives convened for an international conference on implementation of the protocol. The event was organised by the Croatian Ministry of Environmental Protection and the REC.

Dana Romanescu, a lawyer with the REC’s Environmental Law Programme, agrees with Chabason and adds: “Croatia’s government has been particularly active in raising levels of awareness and working towards achieving MAP goals.”

The Prevention and Emergency Protocol is the result of a process initiated in 1998 by the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC). Working closely with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), UNEP and national legal and technical experts from contracting parties, REMPEC pushed for the adoption of a new protocol to address growing concerns about maritime accidents.

REMPEC could hardly have been more prescient. In 1999, the *Erica* tanker disaster in the Atlantic off France’s Brittany Coast spilled heavy fuel over 640 kilometres of coastline and resulted in untold losses of fish and bird wildlife. Losses were covered through insurance funds established for such disasters, but the failure of the owner and operator of the *Erica* to observe technical and operational standards made it clear that more needed to be done to protect our seas, especially vulnerable ones such as the Mediterranean.

The protocol spreads responsibility for incident notification beyond the flag state to include also the coastal state and port state. Other innovative provisions concern reimbursement of costs for those parties granting assistance to other parties and encouraging cooperation between states to address the problem of a lack of adequate port reception facilities for collecting oil residues and other ship-generated wastes. Monitoring activities have also been strengthened.

The protocol establishes a comprehensive implementation strategy and involves the participation of the three principals: coastal states, flag states and port states.

The Mediterranean comprises just one percent of the earth’s water surface, while an estimated 30 percent of international shipments originates or is directed to the sea’s ports and bottlenecked passage-ways, including 20-25 percent of the world’s oil tanker traffic. And for countries like Croatia, whose economies depend on fishing and tourism, vibrant coastal environments are vital.

“There has been growing concern about the large number of tankers travelling north into the Adriatic,” says Chabason. “Spills are an obvious concern, but so are other related hazards. I remain, however, optimistic about the progress being made.”

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**SAFE PASSAGE**

**A protocol to protect the Mediterranean from shipping accidents enters into force**

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Budapest, Hungary

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Length of study - MS: 11 months; PhD: three years (full-time); six years (part-time)

The Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy provides education in a variety of fields related to environmental policy, management and science. It emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach to solving environmental problems. In order to maintain a proper cultural balance, leading environmental academics from the region, Western Europe and North America contribute to both taught curricula and fieldwork. The department is a recognized center of excellence in research on environmental policy and management as well as a focal point for a network of collaborating scientists and environmentally-trained professionals in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and other regions.

The Environmental Sciences and Policy programs are registered by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York (US) for and on behalf of the New York State Education Department. The MS program is also validated by the University of Manchester (UK). The department’s PhD program runs in collaboration with the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. A number of fellowships are offered both for MS and PhD studies.

Successful applicants must have at least a Bachelor’s degree in subjects related to environmental sciences and policy. Typically these include sciences, engineering, law, geography, economics and political science. Other first degrees such as, for example, journalism, history, linguistics and computer science are also considered.

For further information go to http://www.ceu.hu/envsci
Goods that aren’t bad
New guide gives earth-friendly tips to the conscientious consumer

Good Stuff? A Behind-the-Scenes Guide to the Things We Buy
Worldwatch Institute, 2004. 30 pages
At <www.worldwatch.org/pubs/goodstuff>

The choices we make as consumers provide us with daily opportunities to support alternatives that are better for our health and for the environment. Unfortunately, most consumers do not know what to be concerned about or what alternatives to look for.

Good Stuff is an action-oriented companion to Worldwatch’s annual State of the World report, which was devoted to the consumer society. Good Stuff traces what goes into the production, use, and disposal of 25 common consumer items, including furniture, cell phones, baby-care goods and chocolate. The guide includes practical suggestions for living a “greener,” healthier life.

There are simple things we can do, the guide says. For example: “Instead of using a standard drain cleaner, which likely contains lye, hydrochloric acid, and sulfuric acid, try pouring a quarter cup of baking soda down the clogged drain, followed by a half cup of vinegar. Close the drain tightly until fizzing stops, then flush with boiling water.”

Cautious consumption presumably should change the way things are made and used by others. Additionally, there are more straightforward ways in which we can each help change in the system.

Electromagnetic Environments and Health in Buildings

Electromagnetic fields are an intrinsic part of the universe. However, the last 100 years brought electrification and diverse technologies that fostered a rapid increase in human-made electromagnetic fields. “We are now surrounded by unnatural pulsing electromagnetic signals millions of times stronger than were present only 50 years ago,” writes Clements-Croome.

Various types of cancer, neurodegenerative ailments such as Alzheimers Disease and miscarriages have been linked to low-frequency electronic and magnetic fields (EMF), according to several contributors to the book. On the other hand, the text notes that “there is no established scientific evidence that mobile phones or base station emissions cause adverse health effects in humans.”

The book is based on materials presented at the international conference Electromagnetic Environments and Health in Buildings, which took place in London in May 2002. The book also covers emissions and standards, and covers sources such as high-voltage power lines and mobile phones. It discusses product liability and safety, the precautionary principle, the interaction of electromagnetic fields with the human body, and electromagnetic hypersensitivity among certain individuals.

European Union Activities on Environmental Matters: Round-up and Forecast 2004

This publication includes an analytical overview of the major achievements in EU environmental legislation in 2003 in the fields of chemicals, industrial policy and environmental assessment, climate and air quality, waste, nature, water, and genetic engineering. A comprehensive list of pending and existing European environment legislation, arranged by sector, and a directory of contact people in European Community institutions dealing with environment are other useful chapters in this yearly update.

The author states that the four key dossiers in 2003 will remain at centre stage in 2004: climate change, GMOs, a new environmental climate regime and the future EU chemicals strategy.

Join us in the Training for Young Environmental Leaders Programme!

The Training for Young Environmental Leaders Programme is the right step towards professional work for environmentalists between 20 and 30 years of age that are active in NGOs as volunteers or employees. The programme is designed for youth interested in contributing to the development of NGOs through improving their own management and leadership skills.

CEE Youth: Remaining sessions for 2004 will take place:
September 6-October 2 and October 18 – November 13.
For more information visit: http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/JFellows.html

NIS and SEE Youth: Remaining session for 2004 will take place:
November 15-December 10.
For more information, visit: http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/YoungEnvLeaders.html

For further information, contact Adriana Craciun at (36-26)504-000 or acraciun@rec.org

Ready to take a big step forward?
For environmental news, in-depth features and expert opinion, turn to the new *Green Horizon quarterly magazine.*

Go ahead, scan the horizon for a better source of information on the events that shape Central and Eastern Europe. *Green Horizon* alerts readers to environmental degradation, developments in policy, changes in society and innovations in business and technology.

Subscribers to the REC’s *Bulletin* will automatically receive the *Green Horizon quarterly magazine.*

For subscriptions or advertising information, write to editor@rec.org

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**In the next issue:**

- **Turkey seeks environmental solutions along the road to EU accession**
  An interview Sibil Sezer, the REC’s new regional director for Turkey

- **Eastern Europe explores improved environmental technologies for ore mining**

- **Bonn conference ends with strong support for renewable energy**
RIMINI CONFERENCE

XXVth MEETING for FRIENDSHIP among PEOPLES

Join us in Rimini, Italy
August 22-28, 2004

For more information, contact Adriana Craciun at adriana@rec.org or call (36-26) 504-068, or Gabor Heves at gheves@rec.org or call (36-26) 504-000

THE REC AND L’UMANA DIMORA GO TO RIMINI

One of the most well-attended summer festivals in Europe, the Rimini Conference has welcomed an average of 700,000 participants every year since 1980. The Italian Ministry for the Environment and Territory (IMET) are showcasing their environmental projects in Central and Eastern Europe. A special conference will be devoted to environmental cooperation among countries from Central and Eastern Europe and Italy. The Regional Environmental Center (REC) and L’Umana Dimora, with the support of IMET, are invited to join this year’s festivities in Rimini, Italy with the two following projects:

ELECTRONIC MEDIA & TEA

The South Eastern European environmental NGO electronic networks will provide a visually attractive and interactive programme. A “Balkan Cyber Tea House” will be installed in the exhibition space consisting of two computers with free Internet access, as well as a display running a multimedia demonstration of the networks. The multimedia presentation will include a slide-show prepared by each network and merged/synchronised by the REC. Free tea, representing each Balkan country, will be served.

YOUNG ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS

Young environmentalists of Central and Eastern Europe who attended the REC’s “Training for Young Environmental Leaders” during 2003 and 2004 will meet again in Rimini. The REC and L’Umana Dimora will evaluate and use the results of the 2003-2004 programme to design its continuation for 2005-2006. A new training opportunity for former fellows, the “Young Experts Programme” will also be announced during the meeting. The IMET offers financial support for both projects.