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Committee on Environmental and Health crisis  
Governance and solidarity challenges  
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## SYNOPSIS of the meeting held on 23 June 2021<sup>1</sup>

### FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBERS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH CRISIS COMMITTEE

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021, the Committee on Environmental and Health crisis: Governance and solidarity challenges of the Council of Europe's Conference of INGOs organized its first consultation meeting with experts.

Introduction by **Geneviève Laloy**, *vice-president of the Conference of INGOs* who recalled the general orientations and the new operating mode of the Conference of INGOs, wishing to play the role of a "facilitator" between the Standing Committee and the Committee on environmental and health crisis, and by **Anne Marie Chavanon**, *chair of the Committee*.

**Anne Marie Chavanon** recalled the priority objective of a targeted *Building forward better* based on a true practice of democracy according to an ethical, collaborative and participatory approach in the following areas: Environment and health, solidarity and resilience in the face of risks, good governance of territories, in particular metropolitan areas and their regions.

She recalled the need to identify for each of these themes

- components, hotspots and tipping factors
- the relevant international legal instruments (Council of Europe EU, UN - WHO and UNEP, etc.) accessible or to be improved
- (re) construction tools - public and private, governmental and non-governmental - as well as resilience mechanisms
- best practices to be disseminated and necessary recommendations
- lobbying and intervention strategies

After a general introduction, the coordinators of the three working group established within the Committee presented the respective areas of interventions:

- **Anne Marie Chavanon** (*IFHP*) introduced the field related to the ecosystemic approach to the crisis, which requires both a global analysis of the origin and development of the SARS-Cov2 pandemic with an study of the environmental pollution impact on all the living, including the alteration of land and marine waters, the consequences of agricultural and landscape practices, as well as the effects of the sectorization of areas of intervention faced with the interdependence of management in the health, economic and social fields. This

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<sup>1</sup> Synopsis adopted by the Committee – 14 December 2021

approach aims to contribute to a better awareness of the evolution of ecosystems in Europe, to instigate a desire for change on the part of public and private decision-makers, to arouse within civil society the will to seek together the best ways to live in harmony with the planet.

- **Elena Curtopassi**, *Member of the Steering Committee of the ELISAN network, responsible for social policies and European affairs for the Veneto Region office in Brussels*, presented the “Solidarity and social inclusion challenges” area of intervention. This working group will investigate several lines of intervention, such as the reorganization of health and social services according to the new emerging needs, the multi-level, coordinated and multifaceted network approach, and the new challenges for the most vulnerable groups (elderly lonely, minors, women, victims of human trafficking, persons with disabilities, marginalized youth, the victims of violence).
- **Albert Dubler**, *Honorary President of the International Union of Architects*, and **Iamvi Totsi**, *Member of the NGO ISOCARP (International Society of City and Regional Planners)*, highlighted the need for a holistic approach to environmental and health challenges at all territorial scales, from the global and European level to the local level. Among the lines of work, the identification of breaking points and tipping factors, the collection of examples of good governance and effective resilience mechanisms in the face of risks, predominantly in dense urban areas, with particular attention paid to metropolitan areas.

The floor was then given to the invited experts, who were called to provide insights on the current activities and policies aimed at tackling the challenges identified by the Committee and to underline the most compelling emergencies in the aftermath of the Covid crisis.

**Dr Jozsef Gabanyi**, *Medical Doctor, President of the AGGB geriatrician association (France)*, stated that the world after Covid will never be the same as before and, therefore, it is necessary to prepare citizens to the consequences of this crisis and the future ones. He stressed the relevance of networking and cooperation between stakeholders, as well as the importance of the subsidiarity principle. He focused on the importance of the ecosystemic and societal approach of the environmental policies: the interaction among human beings and between human beings and the environment should be considered in decision-making processes and policies. He then provided an insight on the situation of elderly in times of crisis, explaining that pre-existing vulnerability – such as isolation, social exclusion, and health fragility – was further aggravated by the sanitary risks and the confinement measures.

**Nicola Scomparin**, *PROMIS – Programma Mattone Internazionale Salute (Italy)*, stated that the Organization he represents has recently launched a working group on the relations between the Green Deal and Health, focusing on health challenges and regional health systems. He also noticed the central role of energy efficiency and governance in public health environments and buildings.

**Roberto Grande**, *Veneto Regional Council (Italy)*, stressed that there are lessons to be learned from the Covid-19 crisis: the best quality of care for our loved ones and the sick seems to be at home as long as possible. To this end, strong local public service of care and assistance is needed. The role the community plays is crucial, and it involves solidarity, civil society, and voluntary associations. In this context, the Global Covenant of Mayors on climate and energy is a good example of community networking. It brings together 10.000 Local and Regional Authorities from 61 different countries

committed to implement community objectives on climate and energy through bottom-up governance and multilevel cooperation.

**Jean Max Trouillet**, *Union Départementale des Bouches du Rhône 13 (France)*, stressed the peculiar condition of vulnerability that affects the elderly in times of crisis, concerning not only the risks related to diseases, but also disinformation and digital gap. This is why his organization will give birth to an education educational program on health and digital tools. He also recalled the negative effects of the crisis on family with a disadvantaged background, particularly in terms of school drop-out.

**Abdel Belmokadem**, *Président de Nes&Cités (France)*, underlined that his organization is specialized on mediation in disadvantaged areas, focusing on employment, radicalization, and delinquency. He insisted on the need for a targeted intervention on violence to improve the living conditions of these areas. In conclusion, he warned that the health crisis will be followed by a very strong social crisis, a social tsunami expected to hit the most vulnerable ones particularly hard and which absolutely needs to be addressed through joint actions and the construction of a lasting and relevant collaboration.

**Diego Santaliana**, *Polo Tecnologico Alto Adriatico (Italy)*, stated that his organization will be the manager of Friuli Venezia Giulia Region's cluster for life sciences, which includes the health sector, also contributing to the preview of the Ambient Assisted Living Forum to be held in Trieste (18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>th</sup> October). A hackathon will be organized on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> October 2021 to identify the local needs concerning the phenomena of loneliness and isolation, the required intervention by the public services, and the technological devices to be used to help elderly people not to be isolated. These works can feed the post-Covid approach of the inclusion working group of this Committee.

**Teresa Gasparetto**, *Consorzio per la ricerca sanitaria CORIS (Italy)*, in order to address and fight against Covid-19 and future pandemics, she stressed the importance of networking and information sharing. Indeed, it is important to avoid duplication and enhance the impact of research activities. She considered the involvement in such Committee as really relevant in terms of cooperation. She can contribute to the works of this Committee particularly by connecting the research and projects CORIS is doing in relation to Covid-19, environment, and pollution (not only concerning the masks, but also perfluorinated chemicals – PFAS – that are in the water and in the soil). In addition, since CORIS has also a focus on vulnerable people, she can provide field inputs on psychological and social aid, as well as on the new organization of social services. She underlined that, as far as governance is concerned, digitalization has and will have a crucial role in the recovery.

**Leon Dujardin**, *ESAN – European Social Action Network*, is an associated partner with the ELISAN (European Local Inclusion and Social Action Network) with which there are very good collaboration links. He stated that an investigation on the link among poverty, inequalities, and environment is essential. This is why the ESAN network will establish a working group on this subject. An initial diagnosis followed by recommendations is needed. He then highlighted that the crisis and the confinement measures had particularly devastating effects on children and young people living in disadvantaged and degraded areas, where the environmental and social conditions are generally worse, and the risk of isolation is higher. ESAN members will make the link between solidarity and sustainable development.

**Federica Irene Molinaro**, *Veneto Region's Social Services (Italy)*, stated that, in the situation post-Covid, the victims of human trafficking are more than ever at risk, also due to the rise of prostitution and work exploitation experienced during the crisis. To fight against this phenomenon, the Veneto Region chose to engage as leader in the N.A.V.I.G.A.Re. project. Its goal is to implement a single and integrated system of identification and assistance to victims of trafficking and/or severe exploitation, in order to guarantee access to rights to persons, regardless of legal status, age, nationality, gender and type of exploitation (sexual, labour, forced begging, forced criminal activities, forced marriages). This project is a follow-up of the previous N.A.Ve. project coordinated by the municipality of Venice. She suggested to the Committee to adopt multi-agency responses, define multi-stakeholder model of governance, and promote information sharing on ongoing EU-funded projects, such as N.E.x.T. To YOU (Network for the Empowerment, the Social and Labour Inclusion of Trafficked minors and young adults) funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

**Rens Martijn and Jeanneke A.C.M. van der List**, *University of Applied Sciences Rotterdam (Netherlands)*, underlined that their university aims at incentivizing a holistic approach to care, which includes physical, mental, social and environmental health. They promote an international and multicultural approach, based on the care triangle (care practices, studies and research), with the goal to build the path for future care workers ready to face the uncertain challenges ahead. They will contribute to the Committee's work, by giving the floor to the youth and call them to present their innovative ideas. Experiences will be shared in the field of care services in relation to education, as well as to social and environmental challenges.

**Ignacio Socias**, *IFFD, international Federation for Family Development (Spain)*, stated that the crisis has shown the importance of care, that is provided not only by professionals, but first and foremost by families. Moreover, the crisis made clear that the current social, economic and political system is obsolete. The awareness raised by the pandemic offers the opportunity for a positive change. To actually implement such a change, it is necessary to adopt a holistic approach based on the social role of the family. The 2030 Agenda opened the path towards a sustainable development but did not indicate the way to reach it. The proposal that he wishes to share with this Committee is to support and empower families as crucial agents to fight against the pandemic and future crises. He gave example in the field of work flexibility, work-life balance, and intergenerational solidarity.

**Geneviève Reynarde and Miljana Dejanovic** represent the *Conseil départemental du Val de Marne (France)*. Furthermore, they coordinate the ENSA working group on disability, this network collaborates with ELISAN. Reynarde and Dejanovic presented the "Schéma pour l'autonomie (2020-2025)" with the actions directed to persons with disabilities. They believe that the experience of this plan can feed the work of the Committee. The *Schéma* allows persons with disabilities to choose where they want to live and to decide on their future. Moreover, the plan takes a holistic approach considering the main problems faced by elderly and persons with disabilities, with particular attention to the needs generated by the crisis and the specific ones of deprived neighborhoods. Some areas of intervention concern isolation, mental health, employment, and social inclusion. Within the Committee, they suggest working on concrete actions in the field of environment and universal accessibility, meant not only as physical, but also connected to access to information and rights.

**Paolo Stocco**, *Comunità di Venezia (Italy)*, explained that retirement homes were severely hit by the pandemic, both in sanitary and economic terms. This was also due to the fact that the health

workers were not prepared and trained to face the crisis. As a consequence, the confidence in the current system has decreased and policy makers are determined to promote the spread of homecare, telemedicine, and robotic. Indeed, they represent the future of care. However, Stocco highlighted that even though the home care presents many advantages, residential care should not be dropped; as a matter of fact, both models are needed, and they are complementary. As far as residential care is concerned, health workers should be better trained to treat elderly, and the retirement homes should become safer with risk assessment procedures. In the future, new organization models of retirement homes should be developed.

**Jos Sterckx**, *Odisee University College, Youth Care Platform (Belgique)*, stated that the Covid-19 crisis exacerbated a pre-existing dualization in the society: an increasing number of groups of people do not live in good conditions and suffer from poverty and vulnerability. He underlined that it is necessary to become aware of the impact of a similar dualization on the society as a whole, and to work in order not to leave vulnerable groups behind. Both policy and civil society actions should take an active role in this process.

**Brian De Lord**, *Double Helix (UK) and ENSA member*, stated that his organization provides alternative education and therapeutic services to very vulnerable children and families within a community setting. The impact of the pandemic has highlighted the cracks within societies all over the world, but it has also created an even bigger divide. However, the shared vulnerability perceived by the world population, despite economic and social status, may have links to the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. He could contribute to the Committee's work by exploring how the concept of shared vulnerability could act as a driver for societal change.

**Aagje Ieven** is representing *Missing Children Europe*, a network of 31 members in 26 countries that works on runaways (i.e. domestic violence, mental health of young people), parental abductions (i.e. international family conflict) and missing children in migration (often fleeing conflict). She underlined that the crisis has revealed the need for safe and equal accessibility of (family) support at distance, as well as the need for online tools to facilitate access and interactions. Moreover, school closures and restriction of movement and social interactions led to a rise in children runaways. Furthermore, the climate crisis is expected to lead to more children in migration, and more risks of smuggling and trafficking of children in migration. She also stressed the importance of access to information and to digital world for all groups, particularly vulnerable families and children in migration.

**Miltos Sakellariou**, *Alteravita (Greece – Cyclades)*, stated that the pandemic caused serious problems within families, such as an increase in domestic violence and unemployment. However, the crisis also proved to be an opportunity for positive change: in Greece, it helped to promote digitalization and to overcome difficulties related to bureaucracy that negatively affected people's lives. Moreover, the crisis also offered opportunity of exchange: four students from the University of Applied Sciences of Rotterdam went to Greece to work on a telemedicine project. Other study visits could be carried out in the framework of this Committee. In general terms, it is necessary to change the current paradigm and to adopt a bottom-up approach.

Link shared during the meeting:

- <https://moodle.alteravita-cyclades.gr/>
- <https://e-learning.alteravita.eu/>

**Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons**, *Executive Secretary of the European Landscape Convention* at the Council of Europe, stated that the Convention which refers to a broader meaning of the concept of environment, and which includes cultural, social and economic values is particularly relevant in the context of crisis addressed by the committee. She stressed that creativity is key to finding solutions and to restoring, rebuilding and creating jobs, even in situations that seem to be lost.

Concluding remarks were also made by **Geneviève Laloy**, highlighting the inspiring ideas shared during this meeting making links with different levels of governance and generations.

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