

Name of Exercise: Public Participation in NEHAP and LEHAP Process: experiences with the preparation of the local health action program in the city of Győr, Hungary

Location: Győr, Hungary

Participation Exercise under which Article? *Article 7*

Purpose of Participation Exercise:

Public participation in the preparation of a National Environment and Health Action Plan and Local Environment and Health Action Plan.

Background:

This exercise involved co-ordination with national programs such as: the SO₂ Reduction Program, the National Compensation Program, the Ambrosia Program, and the WHO Environment Mind Forming and Educational Program.

It also involved initiating local programs, monitoring contaminated areas, extending the waste disposal network, preparing a waste management plan and an environmental impact study on the new waste sites, implementing a micro-climatic analysis of inner spaces, and extending the environment and health information system.

Participation Techniques Used:

Apart from the civic forums, the programs of the Environment Protection Club ensured an opportunity to discuss environment and health problems, in preparation for the Action Program. These programs were made available for the inhabitants through brochures and publications in the local papers. Approximately 60-80 people visited the programs. In this way, there was success in collecting proposals from the inhabitants for inclusion in the Schedule of the Action Program. Colleagues of the NEHAP Secretary were invited to Győr in order to inform the public about their experiences, difficulties, successes and failures.

Who participated:

An election of the representatives was carried out within the frame of a civic forum, in which 80 managers and members of 40 NGOs (non-governmental organisations) took part. Based on nominations, six people were elected to represent civic organisations in the Project Steering Committee.

Committee Members

- The Chairman of the Committee (a former assemblyman, head physician of the county hospital and the politician responsible for the project)
- The Chairman of the Health Care and Social Committee (a representative of the local government, and Head of the Office of Health Care and Social Policies)

Representatives of the following committees:

- Health Care and Social Committee, Representative of the Local Government
- Secretary of the Educational, Cultural and Sport Committee
- Head of the Education Office
- Office of the Main Architect and Environmental Protection, Chief Engineer of Environment Protection
- Head of Sport Management
- Representative of the Basic Health Care of the city of Győr
- Representative of the Local Government and County Head Physician

Social institutions

- Head of the Family Support Service
- Hospital superintendent of the Joint Social Institution (from the day nursery to support of elderly people)
- Head of the Aid Centre (support for homeless)

External organisations, institutions

- Hospital Superintendent of the County Institute of State Public Health Care and Medical Official Service
- State Public Health Care and Medical Official Service
- Chief Medical Officer of the City
- Health Education Officer of the city (leader of a civil service as well)

Representatives of non-profit organisations

- United Way Kisalföld Foundation
- Union for Children suffering from asthma and allergy
- Union of Diabetics
- Regional Organisation of Hungarian Charity Service of Malta
- Economic Workshop for Health
- Reflex Environment Protection Association

The following people were invited from the Mayor's Office depending on the agenda:

- The Mayor as well as vice-mayors
- Head of the Office of the Main Architect and Environmental Protection as well as the Main Architect of the city
- Settlement Development Committee
- Cultural Office
- Other guests from institutions and organisations.

Stage at which public participated in the process:

At the time of the project's inception, the campaign was supported by the public health system, and by 1992, the project had been confirmed. At the end of the same year, the Project Steering Committee started working, acting primarily to promote co-operation among different branches and sectors. The organisational work continued, and since 1993, the Committee has been extended to include the representatives of the communities in the city.

What Information was made available?

- information about the state of the environment
- information on the town planning schedule
- information on the concept of waste management, development of green areas, and energy management
- information on the existing Industrial Park for setting up new industries
- introduction to environmentally protective technologies
- information on investments aimed at emission reduction of industrial units

What was the outcome of the public participation exercise:

A broad spectrum of ideas was obtained by organising common committee meetings and initiating social discussions. As a result, a close co-operation was formed among the authorities, local government offices, civic organisations, experts, representatives working in environment and health and related areas, and the inhabitants.

Note: This case study is based on a more elaborate case study: "Experiences with the Preparation of the Local Health Action Program in the City of Győr, Hungary," published in REC, "Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environment and Health Matters," Background Document, Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, London, 16-19 June 1999 (12 April 1999), at Annex F, pp 383-88. Please consult that publication for further information.

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REC view on participation exercise:

The case contains many positive elements, including the active participation of a wide range of experts, authorities and representatives of organisations. The relevant public authority has met the literal interpretation of Article 7, moreover, by identifying the participating public and issuing invitations. The organisation of civic forum meetings to elect representatives is an interesting example as both a means of disseminating necessary information and to encourage participation of the interested public. However, it is not clear whether all interested or concerned members of the public may have had an opportunity to participate.

Significant omissions from requirements of Article 7:

None, under the current case description.

This case study pertains to public participation in policy-making as well as public participation in plans and programs. Policy-making is also covered by Article 7, but a different standard is applied. As Article 7 is vague on the necessary content of public participation in the development of policies, the subject case study should be judged on its overall effectiveness, at least with respect to policies. This case appears to involve a working arrangement among many major stakeholders in the city. Certain plans and programs may have been elaborated under this system, however, in which case the more specific requirements of Article 7 apply.