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# NEWSLETTER

*International Federation of Environmental Health*

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January 2011 Edition

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## JANUARY EDITION OF THE IFEH NEWSLETTER

### **Happy New Year/ Bonne Annee/ Is-Sena t- Tajba/ Feliz Ano – Nuevo to all Members of the IFEH**

On behalf of the Council and the Board of the Federation may I take this opportunity to wish all IFEH members around the world a Happy and Prosperous New Year. Last year proved to be a very difficult year for all those who work in the public sector and it looks as though 2011 will be just as challenging. When speaking to colleagues around the world over the last year one of the recurring themes raised, along with H5N1 and H1N1, is the current financial crisis facing many, if not all, of the world economies. If you live in the UK, as I do, you could be forgiven for thinking that the current financial crisis facing our country is due, almost exclusively, to those of us who work in the public sector, be it in central or local government, NGOs or other publically funded organisations. On an almost daily basis since the May general election in the UK we have witnessed headlines in the national press such as 'The debt primarily consists of the cost of public sector and state pensions'. Of course the truth of the matter is that the current world recession is due, almost exclusively, to those who work in the banking and financial sectors... the very same people who would regularly lecture the public sector on how to exercise financial control. So the desire to make a fast buck by investors around the world has resulted in what is considered by many economists to be the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Just imagine what the outcome would have been if those of us who work in the public sector, particularly those of us who work in Public Health and Environmental Health, had dealt with the health of the communities we serve in the same cavalier way as the financial sector have dealt with the economy? I would suggest that the recent H1N1 pandemic would have been a mere flea bite by comparison.

## The Forum of Food Law Practitioners (FLEP)

The Directorate for Environmental Health for Malta hosted the 30th meeting of the Forum of Food Law Practitioners in Gozo, Malta on the 8th & 9th November 2010.

The Food Law Enforcement Practitioners' Forum is an organisation open to all EU member states, EFTA countries and candidate countries. The purpose of such a meeting is primarily to update food safety enforcement officers on new practices and legislation, but most importantly as a networking between regulators from different European states.

The Environmental Health Directorate is represented on this forum and its director, John Attard Kingswell, has also been a member on the steering committee of the Forum for the last five years. This year's event was attended by 37 participants which was one of the most well attended meetings, possibly due to the location of this year's venue. Participants have praised the organisation and most have expressed their enjoyment of their visit to the beautiful island of Gozo. The meeting was funded by the Ministry for Gozo with the assistance of the Gozo Tourism Authority.

Promotional material on Eco-Gozo, one of the Government's vision for 2015 was well received by the delegates who asked various questions on this matter. The Minister for Gozo, the Hon. Giovanna Debono addressed the gathering. Whilst thanking the Forum for selecting Gozo to hold this year's meeting, she outlined the work performed by the Gozo branch of the Environmental Health Directorate in enforcing food safety. The Hon. Debono emphasised the importance of food safety particularly for a small island like Gozo which is dependent on both foreign and internal tourism. She explained that the Government is heavily committed in ensuring the safety of the public and consumers' rights. Mr. Hans Jeuring, chairman of the Food Law Enforcement Practitioners' Forum thanked the Minister for her and her Ministry's assistance. He said that the beauty of Gozo has been recognised by all participants and remarked that they are now ambassadors for Gozo and many intend to return as tourists in the near future.



The agenda had presentation on the following:

1. Food Control in Malta (John Attard Kingswell, DEH Malta),
2. The Impacts of budget reductions on food safety controls – Expectations of the Commission (Carmen Garau, DG Sanco)
3. The use of private sector organisations to assist official control authorities ( Jan van Kooij, Netherlands)
4. Annual Control Plans and the consequences of budget reductions (Sarah Appleby, UK)
5. The role of Laboratory Analysis in Food Control (Glenn Taylor, UK)
6. Import Controls (Hans Jeuring, Netherlands)
7. Food Fraud (Jenny Morris, UK)
8. Crisis Management (Malta, Czech Republic, UK)
9. E-Commerce: Introduction and proposal for a Working Group (Yvonne Huigen, Netherlands)

## Membership News

### The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS)

held their Annual Awards Ceremony and Annual General Meeting in Edinburgh on the 17 and 18 November. Alistair Thomson, Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards, Highland Council, was elected President and took over from Rod House. Paul Bradley and Bernard Forteath were elected to the posts of Senior and Junior Vice President respectively.

### The Portuguese Society of Environmental Health (SPSA)

recently sponsored the first International Congress on Environmental Health in Coimbra, from 4-6 November. This event was organized by the School of Health Technology of Coimbra assisted by the School of Health Sciences of Beja and the Schools of Health Technology of Lisbon and Oporto. Over three days, experts and researchers from 40 countries, made more than 120 presentations to 500 participants, where the study of relationships between environment and human health, one of the greatest challenges of our times, were the focus of debate. On this occasion delegates celebrated the hoisting of the Eco-Schools flag in the host school, which is the only one in the world to hold this award.

The Second International Congress will be held in 2012 administered by the School of Health Technology of Lisbon.

Also worthy of mention was the participation by leaders of the SPSA at the I Environmental Summit of Local Axis Galicia (Spain) - North of Portugal and at the XLV Course on Environmental Health, by invitation from the head of the Galego Program for Healthy and Sustainable Cities 2000 – 2010. This event took place between 18 and 22 October in the Bayonne city. At this happening the importance of joining with politicians, businessmen, scientists, educators, experts, journalists, and the active participation of citizens was stressed to ensure good environmental health conditions for all Galician and Portuguese.

The SPCA has participated in the National Health Plan 2011-2016 designed by the High Commissioner of Health and, as a member of the Advisory Council, endorses the following ideas:

1. Establish a system of environmental health observatory based on the conceptual model called DPSEEA (Driving Forces - Pressures - State - Exposure - Effects - Actions).
2. Establish a framework of environmental health indicators. In the current NHP indicators of this nature are scarce which certainly hinder the assessment and monitoring the result of the actions outlined in the chapter “Environment conducive health”.
3. Improve the system of collecting information for Portugal in order to provide complete and timely information to the European Environment and Health Information System.
4. Define a strategy for coordination with other ministries based on the assumption that issues of environmental health should be coordinated by the Ministry of Health
5. Define a strategy to adapt the teaching in health (nursing, medicine, health technology, other health workers) that allows more balanced skills in areas more focused on health rather than disease.



6. Create a national system of Impact Assessment in Health. The IAH has proved an indispensable tool to inform and influence decision-making processes on policies, plans, programs and projects, contributing to that they consider effectively the protection and promotion health.
7. Define a strategy for action in Housing and Health, in line with the guidelines of the World Health Organization, in particular as regards the issue of conservation and rehabilitation, cross the themes: institutionalization of the elderly, childhood obesity, food safety, quality indoor air, thermal comfort - heat and cold waves, energy efficiency, among others.
8. Provide a plan for risk communication in environmental health for the process of empowerment of the population has a genesis of scientific evidence from the Ministry of Health, and less influenced by the profiles of the editorial media.

### **Malawi Environmental Health Association (MEHA)**

It gives me great pleasure to advise that Mr Humphreys Masuku, Malawi's Chief Environmental Health Officer in the Ministry of Health, has been appointed to the position of Deputy Director for Preventive Health Services with responsibility for Environmental Health Services. This is the highest office ever filled by an Environmental Health Officer within the Ministry. Tom Bell, Chief Executive, REHIS, and I met Mr Masuku during the 2nd All Africa Environmental Health Congress which was held in Lilongwe, Malawi earlier this year and were impressed with his commitment to improving and protecting the health of Malawi's people and to the development of the Profession. Mr Masuku is a member of MEHA and his appointment will have been especially well received by the environmental health community in Malawi.

### **Association of Public Health Inspectors, Cyprus (APHIC)**

It is with deep regret that we announce that Nicos Paspallis, the Vice President of the APHIC, has died suddenly from a heart attack at the age of 58, at his home in Paphos, Cyprus. Nicos was born in Paphos and qualified as a Health Inspector in 1974. After he graduated he worked for the Municipality of Paphos where he remained for all his career, latterly as head of the environmental health service.

He was a founder member of the APHIC and he worked tirelessly for the environmental health profession in Cyprus. He was well respected by both colleagues and politicians alike.

He was a keen sportsman, particularly football, and played for a number of first division teams in Cyprus. He was capped for his country when he played for the Cyprus national team against Bulgaria in 1974. Following his retirement from senior football he coached a number of teams and he also managed, and played for, the APHIC football team until his untimely death at the end of September. On Saturday 4 December the APHIC football team played a team of former professional footballers in a match held in his honour. The match ended with a 2 – 1 win for the Health Inspectors, something of which I am sure Nicos would have been proud.

Nicos was a good friend and colleague and had the ability to make everyone around him feel important. He was dedicated to his family and his profession. He is survived by his wife Ellada, two children and two grandchildren to whom we extend our sincere condolences.



## REHIS International Essay Competition

Earlier this year the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS), a Founder Member of the International Federation of Environmental Health, celebrated its 135th birthday and decided to mark the occasion by launching an International Essay Competition for students of Environmental Health across the world. The aims of the competition were to raise the profile of international environmental health issues, to encourage student Environmental Health Professionals to consider Environmental Health in a global perspective, and to promote the work of the Federation as the global umbrella organisation for environmental health. The set topic was: How would you raise the profile of environmental health and make its delivery more relevant to government and policy makers over the next five years? Competition entries were assessed by a panel of distinguished international environmental health academics and the panel has determined that the winning entry was submitted by Claudette Parker-Allotey from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Claudette was presented with the winner's award at the 11th World Congress on Environmental Health in Vancouver by Rod House, REHIS President and Bernard Forteath, President of the International Federation of Environmental Health. Claudette is a final year undergraduate student at Concordia University College of Alberta on the Environmental Health After-Degree programme. Claudette received £500.00 and a personalised certificate and her submission will be published in the winter edition of the REHIS Journal Environmental Health Scotland. The runner-up was Gwyneth Kerwin from Stoneyburn, West Lothian, Scotland. John O' Connor from Edenderry, Co. Offaly, Ireland and Sammy Wafula Simiyu from Nairobi, Kenya received commendations. REHIS offers its congratulations to Claudette and takes this opportunity to thank Koos Engelbrecht (South Africa), Barbara Delaney (Ireland), Harold Harvey (Northern Ireland), Tony Grimason (Scotland) and Steve Konkel (USA) for acting as the competition assessors.

## HSE publishes statistics for 2009/10

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published its annual accident and injury statistics for 2009/10. The new figures confirm that Britain has the lowest rate of fatal occupational injuries in Europe and one of the lowest levels of work-related ill-health. In Britain between April 2009 and March 2010 there were 152 workers fatally injured (down from 179 in 2008/09), 26,061 major injuries (down from 27,894) and 95,369 injuries serious enough to keep people off work for three or more days down from 105,261). Further information is available from the HSE website [www.hse.gov.uk/press/2010/hse-statistics2010.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/press/2010/hse-statistics2010.htm).

**Finally** the next edition of the Newsletter will be published in April 2011. If you have any news for the Newsletter from your organisation please send it to me by the first week in March. My thanks go to Hadrian Bonello, Rogerio Nunes, Tom Bell, Andrew Forteath and Henning Hansen who have assisted in the production of this issue.