

Intervention by European Eco-Forum,
Sascha Gabizon: Women in Europe for a Common Future

Session 4: working with stakeholders

Thank you for the possibility in this session on stakeholders, for the environment non governmental organisations to contribute to the discussion.

The discussion has been very interesting so far, I would like to continue on what ms Geslain-Lanneelle of EFSA addressed:

The role of citizens involvement in research and development

We see that in many countries decisions are taken in favour of economic interests, against public health interests. Often supported by industry-funded so-called research.

This is for example the case for chrysotile asbestos, which continues to be used as a common building material – for schools, houses, offices – in many of the eastern European, Caucasus and central Asian countries.

The international scientific community has shown that there exists, NO safe use of chrysotile asbestos, nevertheless, national industry-influenced studies in these countries show the contrary,

And thus, the population and local authorities remain entirely uninformed about the certain cancer risk of chrysotile asbestos, and can not protect their and their children's health.

We therefore see that it is essential that we have transparency, on the relationships between research institutes and research studies and industry,

Secondly, citizens should have the full possibility to call for research on their concerns, by independent researchers, funded by public means

Thirdly, citizens should be able to represent themselves in technical and scientific committees

It should not be the scientists or industry which decide on the risks society is willing to take with their children's health!

And finally, NGOs have an important role to bridge between science and society, and policy makers

Let me give one short example,

My organisation, together with the national French consumer institute, have carried out a study "Test your Nest", where parents in 4 EU countries could volunteer to test their newly renovated baby rooms on levels of various VOCs and Formaldehyde – a WHO classified carcinogen.

The results by an independent laboratory – published and read by 350.000 French consumers - showed that 40% of the baby rooms had too high levels, above the guidelines, coming from furniture, carpets, paints, cleaning products and deodorizers.

It also showed that parents could make a difference by better ventilation.

This test was indicative of a problem, but of course we need measures to be taken by member states.

And ahead of these measures, we really need producers to phase out hazardous substances, applying the precautionary principle, -

So we were glad that we have already received calls from companies who produce non-formaldehyde emitting baby products

As NGOs we are committed to working with scientists , policy makers, progressive companies and consumer organisation to move towards a toxic free, healthy children environment.