



World Association of Girl Guides & Girl Scouts  
Association mondiale des Guides et des Eclaireuses  
Asociación Mundial de las Guías Scouts

### JOINT PRESS RELEASE

**ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, THE EUROPE REGION OF THE WORLD ASSOCIATION OF GIRL GUIDES AND GIRL SCOUTS (WAGGGS) AND THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC HEALTH ALLIANCE (EPHA) CALL FOR A GENDER SPECIFIC COMPREHENSIVE EU STRATEGY ON THE WELL BEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Brussels, 8 March 2006 – According to the Global Adolescent Health Survey, key areas of concern for girls and young women are HIV/AIDS, healthy eating, adolescent pregnancy and sex education, drugs, smoking and self-confidence and self-esteem.

The survey was carried out by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts and involved more than 6,000 participants in 100 countries.

The girls were asked about adolescent health issues that are important to them.<sup>1</sup> The results for the Europe Region of WAGGGS show that 74% of girls and young women think HIV/AIDS is an important issue. 72% of the participants are concerned about adolescent pregnancy. 51% of girls and young women interviewed did not think that there is a general understanding of the dangers of drug addiction (alcohol and drugs), with 81% of the girls and young women supporting a ban of smoking in public places. Regarding nutrition, 47% of those who responded said it was not easy to have a clear idea of what a healthy diet was.

Heather Roy, Regional Director of the Europe Region WAGGGS said “What our survey shows is that girls and young women in Europe are calling for good quality education and information on health issues. Girls and young women’s health and well-being are important for two reasons: firstly, they are citizens in their own rights whose voices are rarely heard in the policy arena and secondly because their health determines the health of the future population. There is a need for the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the creation of supportive environments for girls and young women to develop attitudes and behavior in the early stages of life, so that they can develop their potential and make a positive contribution to the world around them.”

<sup>1</sup>

[http://www.waggsworld.org/en/issues/adolescent\\_health](http://www.waggsworld.org/en/issues/adolescent_health)

But health concerns need to be understood in a broader context. From the onset of puberty, girls can feel more pressure with regards to body image, social relations and school – they have to cope with more conflicting socialization tasks, and may be more vulnerable to poor health.<sup>2</sup> Addressing the specific health concerns of girls and young women can help them to maximize their potential and to improve the quality of their lives by fostering well-being as a concept inclusive of confidence, empathy, pro-social behaviour, creativity and a sense of achievement, at the same time as preventing emotional and behavioural problems.

Lara Garrido-Herrero from EPHA stated that “children and young people are not adequately supported and protected within the EU framework. Across Europe there are significant challenges in the health and wellbeing of children and young people but also examples of good practice and evidence. Some countries have lessons to share on tackling specific issues, for example reducing teenage pregnancies, delaying onset of drinking, nutrition education, reducing accidental drownings, etc. The EU has a wide range of policies and programmes that can be used to achieve a consistent and coherent gender-specific approach to children and young people's health across the EU.”

The Europe Region of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (Europe Region WAGGGS) is the European umbrella organization for national Girl Guide and Girl Scout Associations in Europe, providing non-formal education programmes, enabling 1.2 million girls and young women to develop life and leadership skills in 38 countries across Europe. The document “Let's talk about adolescent health” contains seven key messages and action points from the WAGGGS' survey:<http://www.wagggsworld.org/en/resources/documents/84>

The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) represents over 100 non-governmental and other not-for-profit organizations working on public health in Europe. EPHA's mission is to promote and protect the health of all people living in Europe and advocate greater participation of citizens in health-related policy making at the European level.

The results of the conference “Future Europeans - the right start in life for children and young people in Europe” organised by EPHA in November 2005 demonstrate that a number of EU policy initiatives address children and young people but there is a need for joined-up thinking: <http://children.epha.org>

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<sup>2</sup> The Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children" (HBSC) study, international report from the 2001/2002 survey Currie C et al (eds) 2004 WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen.