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# DETOX

## Campaigning for safer chemicals



WWF, January 2007





# WHITE PAPER

## Strategy for a future Chemicals Policy

### **DETOX Campaign: breaking the unknown about chemicals**

After years of chemicals mismanagement resulting in the widespread contamination of wildlife, humans and the environment, the reform of chemicals legislation in Europe offered a unique opportunity to secure safer chemicals for the future. DetoX was developed by WWF's International Toxics Programme. Its main aim being to ensure that the newly proposed legislation on chemicals, REACH, would deliver WWF goals to identify and phase out the most hazardous chemicals and ensure that safety information on all chemicals on the EU market be publicly available.

WWF saw REACH as a unique opportunity to close the knowledge gap on chemicals and secure a safer management system for chemicals in Europe. Influencing the content of the mammoth REACH legislation and fighting one of the biggest and most powerful industries in Europe for over 3 years was certainly a challenge!

WWF's DetoX campaign supported policy and lobbying through an ambitious communication programme. This was designed to create awareness amongst decision makers and the public on chemical contamination with mainly unknown effects, the proven negative effects of some chemicals, the fact that an important decision making process was ongoing and the need to take action.

WWF's DetoX campaign was highly successful in making European citizens and decision makers aware of the shocking lack of safety information for the large majority of chemicals used in daily life. Co-operation with scientists and medical experts and their research on chemical contamination in wildlife and people helped put the issue under the spotlight.

The campaign team successfully engaged most WWF European national organisations. It was also supported by activities outside the EU, such as the "US Declaration of independence of hazardous chemicals" which was organised by WWF US. Also, close partnerships with other environmental and health NGOs, consumer groups and trade unions assured a powerful platform from which to raise our concerns and become a leading voice in the REACH debate.



DetoX team. From left to right (top), Justin Wilkes, Karl Wagner, Sandra Jen. In the bottom, from left to right, Ninja Reineke, Noemi Cano, Elizabeth Drury, Suzanne Natelson.



## Chemicals out of control!

To highlight the presence of chemicals of very high concern in our blood, food and environment, DetoX and WWF national offices organised 8 biomonitoring surveys testing more than 350 people across Europe, including politicians, celebrities and three generation families. By literally getting under the people's skin, everyone realized the intimate global nature of the problem. REACH became everyone's issue.

WWF UK initiated the process in 2003, testing over 150 volunteers in the UK including politicians and journalists in partnership with the Cooperative Bank. With the debate on REACH entering full speed and an ever growing interest from key decision makers to be associated to the campaign, WWF organised the testing of 40 Members of the European Parliament, 14 Ministers across Europe, doctors and scientists, journalists and celebrities. This culminated, in the spring of 2005, with the impressive study "Generations X", testing 3 generations of 13 European families. In all cases, results showed that people were contaminated with a chemical cocktail whose long-term effects remain largely unknown.

The European launch of the family blood-test results just before the First Reading vote on REACH in the autumn of 2005 obtained unprecedented media coverage, including prime time news. The issue of chemical contamination had definitely touched a public nerve. Expectations were being placed firmly on EU decision-makers to secure a strong European chemical legislation.

In September 2006, at the start of the official Second Reading negotiations on REACH, DetoX presented a new insight into the global chain of contamination: the presence of man-made chemicals in food, the most important human exposure for many persistent, bio-accumulative and endocrine disrupting chemicals. Food items from dairy to olive oil, honey, fish and meat purchased in supermarkets in the UK, Italy, Spain, Greece, Sweden, Finland and Poland were analyzed for eight different groups of man-made chemicals. Results found potentially harmful synthetic chemicals in all of the analysed samples. This study was backed by Cascade, the European network of scientific excellence on chemicals in food. Prime time television and radio news programmes brought the story to the attention of the public in Europe and beyond. The following week, in the Parliament's Environment Committee, a large majority of Members voted again in favour of substitution of the most hazardous chemicals.

Left: Finnish family daughter participating in the "Generations X" biomonitoring. | Right: Spanish environment minister Cristina Narbona testing her blood for chemicals.  
Top: Arctic fox asleep, Canada. © WWF-Canon / François PIERRELL.





Left: A 77.000 signature petition was presented in Brussels by WWF UK and the National Federation of Women's Institutes. | Right: EU Commissioner, Stavros Dimas, receiving the mother of the Greek family blood tested for chemicals.

## A truly European campaign

Operating from the heart of EU decision-making, DetoX ran in parallel in 13 European countries, giving it a truly European impact. With the leadership of the core team in Brussels, WWF's national offices managed to place the need for a stronger EU regulation on chemicals in the media, with politicians and ultimately, in the minds of the people, thereby increasing the pressure on EU decision-makers. The global media success achieved with the involvement of most WWF European offices in the biomonitoring studies, and the report on contamination of the food chain, were crucial in making a Europe-wide breakthrough on the political debate front and in the public's awareness.

Some national highlights include:



Having taken part in WWF's biomonitoring survey, the mother of the Belgian family tested (a doctor herself) started a strong personal campaign to persuade the medical community, the media and the Belgian politicians of the need for a strong REACH.



In May 2006, after strong pressure from WWF and other Danish NGOs, Danish Members of the European Parliament sent a letter to the REACH "rapporteur" supporting the substitution of hazardous chemicals. The campaign also attracted huge media attention.



In Finland, the family blood testing became such a hot topic of conversation that people could be overheard talking about it on public transport and in supermarkets. Very good cooperation was established with Finnish Members of the European Parliament, which has now been extended to other environmental issues.



In France, following an event in the European Parliament with French companies in favour of substituting harmful chemicals for safer alternatives, WWF is now working with the French Environment Ministry to persuade other companies to choose safer chemicals.



In Germany, the family blood testing and reports about wildlife contamination resulted in good media coverage about the problem of chemical contamination.



In Greece, DetoX put together a strong coalition of consumers, trade unions, professional organizations and media that effectively influenced the national debate on REACH.



In Hungary, WWF built a coalition of NGOs on REACH and was chosen to represent their points of view in the Hungarian REACH ad-hoc committee. The TV spot featuring a Hungarian Member of the European Parliament was run on 24 TV channels.



After testing the blood of 18 Italian celebrities and politicians, an on-line chemical contamination self-test attracted more than 22.000 visitors in a week. Numerous street actions, joint petitions and email campaigns targeted Italian Members of the European Parliament and placed the toxics issue high up on the political agenda.



In Latvia, two years of street actions, many publications, discussions, lectures and contacts with top officials brought chemical contamination into the public arena.



In Poland, DetoX engaged celebrities and generated one of the most intensive media campaigns in Europe, including a television spot with Polish celebrities that was shown in cinemas and a widely played song created by famous Polish pop stars.



In Spain, getting the Minister for Environment to test her blood for chemicals and the launch of several chemical contamination reports were key in attracting the attention of citizens, media and politicians. WWF/Adena forged good relationships with key MEPs and worked closely with other Spanish organisations to put REACH on the Spanish government's political agenda.



In Sweden, DetoX has been the most successful WWF campaign ever. It has generated extensive media coverage on the toxics issue and kept the pressure on Swedish politicians to vote for a strong REACH



In the UK, the excellent media coverage of campaign activities and reports increased public awareness of the campaign. Intense political contacts and media pressure made UK Tory leader, David Cameron, join the ranks for a strong REACH and cross-party support for the substitution of hazardous chemicals was achieved in the European Parliament's Environment Committee vote.



## An integrated media campaign

DetoX used innovative communication tools to hold the public's attention and rally campaigners and decision makers to its key battles. Over three years of campaigning, DetoX organised several press conferences and put out more than 200 press releases, position papers and internet features on the issue of chemical contamination and the REACH political process. This helped to position WWF as one of the key NGOs on REACH.

DetoX's biomonitoring studies and wildlife contamination reports obtained unprecedented media coverage all over Europe. Top newspapers and broadcasters such as the BBC, Financial Times, CNN, Reuters and Associated Press – as well as hundreds of national media - covered WWF's biomonitoring studies and main campaign reports. In many cases, the strong media pressure translated into direct positive political moves.

In September 2006, building on the success of a TV spot that WWF Poland prepared with national celebrities, DetoX made an international version featuring 4 key Members of the European Parliament. The spot was launched in the European Parliament when the second round of discussions on REACH was starting. It was also broadcast on Euronews and many national TV channels. At the same

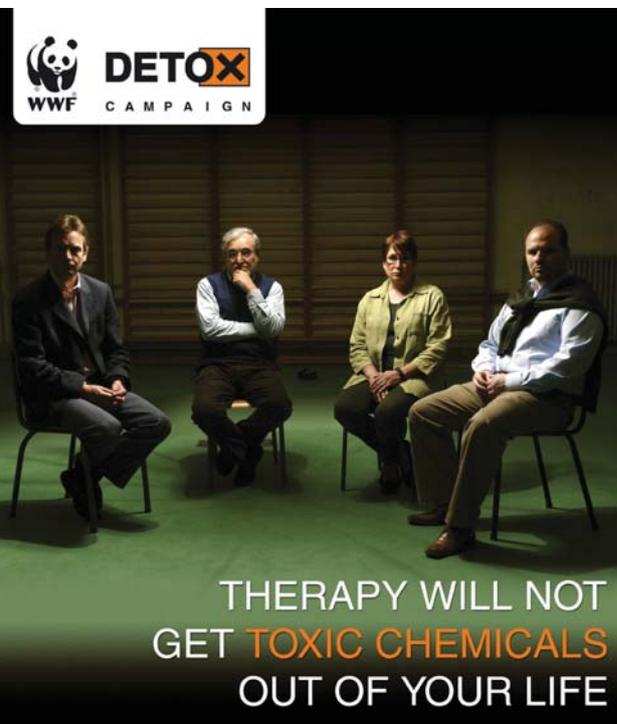
time, and as part of an integrated approach to communications, a printed version appeared in European magazines, poster-size prints were displayed around the European area in Brussels and an online version was downloaded by thousands of viewers from video portals such as youtube.com.

DetoX also made full use of Internet and web-based communications. Creative web animations were used to explain, for instance, how industrial chemicals travel to the Arctic. Educational games, such as an "on-line chemical contamination test" that was successfully launched by WWF Italy, were spread across EU countries.

Street stunts, launched during key political moments, also attracted significant media attention. Vampires in many EU capitals ventured into daylight to demand clean blood. A "toxic family" approached European ministers during a meeting in Brussels equipped with a "chemical detector", demanding strong protection against toxic chemicals.



Left: key Members of the European Parliament confess they have been in contact with toxic chemicals. | Right: DetoX Campaign Director, Karl Wagner, at the press conference launching WWF's biomonitoring results. | Top: Vampires take the streets in different European cities demanding "clean blood".



# 2001

13.02.2001

Commission adopts a White Paper outlining the REACH principles

May 2003

"The Social Cost of Chemicals", a report for WWF-UK by David Pearce and Phoebe Koundouri says REACH will generate *net benefits*. A month later, WWF UK launches the biomonitoring tests (over 150 volunteers). Results reveal a chemical cocktail in each participant.

23.09.2003

Chirac-Schroeder-Blair letter on REACH says that REACH needs "substantial changes" and that "we must ensure that we do not place unnecessary burden on industry". The same month, Science and Technology Policy Research presents a new report for WWF UK on how REACH will bring *Innovation in the Chemicals Sector*.

29.10.2003

A watered down draft proposal after Internet consultation on REACH is published by the European Commission

02.12.2003

Some 40 Members of the European Parliament, representing 17 EU countries, join WWF's biomonitoring initiative. Results, launched in April 2004, show that 76 man-made chemicals were present in their blood.



January 2004

After 6 months of preparations, the DetoX campaign kicks off! The report *Causes for concern*, highlights the widespread chemical contamination in species such as seals, whales and birds.

29.04.2004

*Cry Wolf*, a report by the International Chemical Secretariat, sponsored by WWF, proves industry has overestimated the cost of implementing environmental legislation to persuade politicians to weaken REACH.

12.07.2004

14 EU Ministers sign up to WWF's ongoing Chemical Check Up and discover their blood is contaminated with a total of 55 industrial chemicals.

July 2004

WWF welcomes newly elected Members of an enlarged European Parliament with a DetoX exhibition.

29.10.2004

One year anniversary of debate on REACH- vampires venture into the daylight to protest about the widespread contamination of blood.

# 2004

25.01.2005

A new WWF report, *Clean Baltic within REACH?*, reveals that fish from some areas of the Baltic Sea are so contaminated that they may be too toxic for EU markets.

17.02.2005

A new WWF report warns that the Arctic and its wildlife are increasingly contaminated with chemicals.



Driftice, Norway, Arctic archipelago. © WWF-Canon / Wim VAN PASSEL

08.09.2005

WWF/Greenpeace report *A Present for Life* reveals that harmful chemicals present in everyday household products are entering babies' bodies through the umbilical cord.

04.10.2005

Parliament's Environment committee backs strong substitution principle in REACH but falls short of guaranteeing safety information.

# 2005

February 2001

January 2003

February 2003

March 2003

April 2003

May 2003

June 2003

July 2003

August 2003

September 2003

October 2003

November 2003

December 2003

January 2004

February 2004

March 2004

April 2004

May 2004

June 2004

July 2004

August 2004

September 2004

October 2004

November 2004

December 2004

January 2005

February 2005

March 2005

April 2005

May 2005

# 2001

# 2003

# 2004

# Timeline

06.10.2005

The first Europe-wide family bloodtesting survey finds 73 man-made hazardous chemicals in the blood of 3 generations of 13 European families. A week later they come to Brussels to urge Members of the European Parliament to support a strong REACH. Commissioner for Environment receives the mother of the Greek family tested.

17.11.2005

Parliament's First Reading plenary vote on REACH in Strasbourg. WWF and a coalition of environmental groups display two 40 meter orange banners calling for a strong REACH. The Parliament votes to strengthen substitution provisions, establish a duty of care and provide information to consumers.

07.12.2005

With *Panda Passport*, more than 11.000 emails calling for a strong REACH flood the email boxes of the President of the European Commission and Commissioners for Industry and Environment.

13.12.2005

A disguised 'toxic family' meets Swedish and Danish Environment ministers and hands them a 'toxic gift' on the occasion of the Competitiveness Council's vote on REACH. The UK presidency proposal on REACH finds unanimous agreement in Council.

09.05.2006

Despite official government opposition to REACH, pressure is mounting in the US for a reform of its own chemicals policy, says a new report by WWF and CIEL.

15.06.2006

A new WWF report, *killing them softly* shows growing evidence that harmful chemicals are already affecting the health of many Arctic mammals. A week later, representatives of the Arctic indigenous peoples come to Brussels to share their concerns with MEPs about chemical contamination.



29.08.2006

WWF detects for the first time the presence of brominated flame retardant chemicals in Mediterranean swordfish from the Italian coast.

05.09.2006

Four leading Members of the European Parliament, from the three larger political groups, feature together in a WWF TV spot on REACH.



21.09.2006

A new WWF report, *Chain of Contamination: The Food Link* finds industrial chemicals in food consumed throughout Europe.

10.10.2006

Parliament's Environment Committee reiterates its will to have hazardous chemicals replaced by safer alternatives whenever available.

18.10.2006

New paper by top UK scientist, Andreas Kortenkamp, and WWF points at hormone disrupting chemicals as a potentially crucial factor behind breast cancer increases.

25.10.2006

The postcard 'A toxic Europe? No thank you!' is sent to EU ministers and Commissioners.



20.11.2006

38 leading scientists on hormone disrupting chemicals call in an open letter for REACH to effectively regulate these chemicals.

13.12.2006

European Parliament Second Reading vote. REACH is a first step towards safer chemicals. NGO scrutiny on implementation will be crucial to make REACH a success.

18.12.2006

European Environment Ministers sign off REACH at their Environment Council meeting.

2006

June 2005

July 2005

August 2005

September 2005

October 2005

November 2005

December 2005

January 2006

February 2006

March 2006

April 2006

May 2006

June 2006

July 2006

August 2006

September 2006

October 2006

November 2006

December 2006

2005

2006



Left: WWF DetoX demonstration in front of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. | Right: Ex-Commissioner Margot Wallström visiting a DetoX exhibition with Tony Long, WWF EPO Director. | Bottom left: Bloodtested families during a photo opportunity with Members of the European Parliament.

## In the political arena

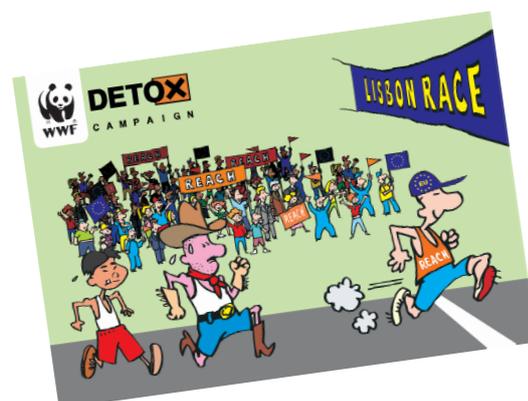
The close coordination of WWF's policy and advocacy work between the European and national levels was crucial to the successes of DetoX. At European level DetoX engaged with all three EU institutions - the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the European Commission - with the support of WWF national organisations. Offices at national level also undertook crucial work to influence the position of their national governments.

DetoX managed to build up cross party support for its priority demands in many key national delegations of the European Parliament. This has particularly been reflected in the results of the votes in the Environment Committee and at Parliament first plenary vote on the control of the most hazardous chemicals.

DetoX also had a fundamental role in countering industry's fierce attacks against the establishment of the REACH system as a whole and its endless attempts to water down its key provisions.

With this sustained work at each step of the process, WWF managed to establish itself as a highly respected voice in the REACH debate. Many of the communication initiatives were also great opportunities to engage politicians in campaign actions and secure real sympathy for the priorities WWF was promoting.

Policy briefings, fact sheets, publications on the socio-economic aspects of the legislation and informative events, often organised in the European Parliament, have all been crucial tools in helping politicians to understand the complex issues at stake in the REACH legislation.



## Highlighting new evidence

WWF used its scientific expertise to reveal the chemical contamination that humans, wildlife and the environment are being increasingly exposed to, thereby making the case for a strong REACH all the more pressing.

WWF's DetoX campaign successfully contributed in highlighting the fact that many scientists are becoming increasingly concerned about the mounting evidence linking hormone disrupting and bio accumulative chemicals with negative health effects. Several declarations calling for a precautionary approach to hormone disrupting chemicals have been signed by doctors and scientists from all over the world, such as the Prague Declaration on endocrine disruption in 2005.

New scientific insight shows that long-term low-level exposure during early life may result in unexpected effects, which only become apparent many years later. Moreover, chemicals can act together in an additive way, and fetuses and young children are particularly sensitive to chemicals. In this light, the WWF blood testing results from European families and unborn babies are extremely worrying and, all the more important, show the need for better protection from hazardous chemicals.



Alongside the human story, the presence and effects of man-made chemicals in wildlife was also the subject of many DetoX campaign reports. The WWF Arctic programme made key contributions to the DetoX campaign with two reports on Arctic contamination. Due to the transport of chemicals via air and water currents the Polar Regions face a high level of pollution despite their remoteness. A WWF report in 2006 summarized new scientific evidence showing that the presence of man-made chemicals, such as perfluorinated chemicals and organochlorines, already leads to health effects such as immune suppression, hormone disturbances or behavioural changes in species such as polar bears, beluga whales, seals and sea birds.

Equally alarming signals from research in other parts of Europe were included in the report, carried out together with the WWF Baltic Programme, *Clean Baltic within REACH*. It concluded that fish from some areas of the Baltic Sea were so contaminated that they may be too toxic for EU markets. Scientific news from the Mediterranean Sea reported the first detection of a certain type of brominated flame retardants in Mediterranean swordfish off the Italian coast, a WWF DetoX report by WWF Italy in collaboration with the University of Siena showed.

Left: Tagging of polar bears to monitor their development. Arctic, Norway, Svalbard © WWF-Canon / Tanya PETERSEN | Right: Ross's Gull (*Rhodostethia rosea*) © WWF-Canon / Hartmut JUNGIUS. | Top right: Children playing. © WWF-Canon / Martin HARVEY





Left: Representatives of the Arctic Indigenous Peoples, invited by WWF, explained Members of the European Parliament (with Lena Ek here) the increasing chemical contamination of the Arctic. | Bottom left: The Women's Institute supporting WWF's call for safer chemicals in front of the European Parliament in Brussels.

## Partnerships

From the outset, DetoX invested in building partnerships with the social, medical, and scientific communities across Europe. Continuous scientific work and legal and political analysis allowed DetoX to get the public support of organisations such as Cascade (the European network of scientific excellence on chemicals in food), the Women's Institute in the UK, the Co-operative Bank, the European Community of Consumer Cooperatives (Eurocoop) and the EPHA (European Public Health Alliance)-Environment Network (EEN) for its key initiatives.

Numerous renowned scientists supported WWF calls to take action on the most hazardous chemicals, particularly those that persist and accumulate, or can cause cancer, or are toxic to reproduction, or affect DNA or the hormone system. These partnerships were crucial for media coverage of DetoX publications and underlined the scientific basis of WWF's work.

Experts from the WHO (World Health Organisation) and some of Europe's most prestigious universities came to the European Parliament to meet with MEPs. Leading experts signed open letters to request changes in the draft REACH text, and specialists in cancer have agreed to take part in WWF press conferences for the launch of the biomonitoring results. Representatives of Arctic indigenous peoples came to Brussels with the support of DetoX to explain to Members of the European Parliament their concerns about the impact of chemical contamination in their daily life. A group of ladies from the Women's Institute from the UK did the same, following on from their participation in the chemical check up.

WWF national offices also engaged in partnerships with progressive companies who are keen on promoting safer chemicals for their products and who see REACH as an opportunity for improved innovation and competitiveness in Europe.



## What DetoX achieved

On the policy side, the DetoX campaign achieved its greatest success by ensuring REACH will mean the start of a paradigm shift in chemical legislation:

- industry will now have to provide safety information and recommendations for safe uses for all chemicals produced or marketed in the EU as from 10 tonnes per year, thereby placing the burden of proof on companies. For an estimated 10-30% of chemicals between 1-10t (including all new chemicals) basic safety information will have to be provided, for the rest only available information will have to be submitted.
- Chemicals of very high concern will need an authorisation and companies will not be allowed to continue manufacturing, using or selling chemicals that have persistent, bio accumulative and toxic properties or very persistent and very bio accumulative properties if there is a safer alternative or if the risks of using the substance outweigh the benefits it brings.
- A list of the most hazardous chemicals will be publicly available. This will allow retailers and other companies to avoid using and selling such chemicals and allow retailers to insist that their suppliers find –and start using– safer alternative chemicals or technologies.
- Consumers now have the right to know whether very hazardous chemicals are present in consumer products. Companies will be required to answer such questions from consumers within 45 days.

Due to intensive industry lobbying, REACH still has loopholes. This means work must continue for many years. For instance, a review of the authorisation system for hormone disrupting chemicals is scheduled to take place in 6 years, in other words 2013. The watch dog function of the NGOs will still be important to safeguard the achievements and make sure REACH finally delivers on human health and wildlife protection.

More generally, the Detox campaign was highly successful in changing the debate on industry costs to a debate about protecting wildlife and health. WWF's blood testing got under the skin of decision makers and the public: the issue of chemical contamination cannot be ignored anymore. Due to the change in public awareness we should see increased market demand for safer products and other countries outside the EU starting to copy elements of the REACH legislation.

The high media visibility and public success of the campaign helped to move WWF to the centre of the REACH debate. The combination of sustained media work and high level policy and advocacy work carried out over the last three years has also shone a spotlight on the wider operations of WWF's national organisations and that of the WWF European Policy Office in the European Commission, Parliament and Council. This offers enormous benefits to WWF's ongoing and future work on climate change, forests, species, marine, freshwater and our field projects around the world.

Left: Polish celebrities engaged in the DetoX Campaign. | Right: Polar bear (*ursus maritimus*) in blue ice. ©WWF-Canon/Wim van Passel.





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© WWF-Canon/Wim van Passel



Over three years, the DetoX Campaign has benefited from the enthusiasm and commitment of the policy and communication experts from WWF national organisations and of its core team in Brussels:

- Directors:** Karl Wagner and Sandra Jen
- Senior Toxics Programme Officers:** Michael Warhust and Ninja Reineke
- Toxics Programme Officer:** Justin Wilkes
- Communications Managers:** Julian Scola and Noemi Cano
- Advisors on European Parliament Affairs:** Elizabeth Drury, Delia Villagrasa, Sandra Jen
- Information assistants:** Suzanne Natelson and Emma Bagyari



For more information on the DetoX Campaign and REACH please visit: <http://www.panda.org/eu>