



**EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT
AND HEALTH PROCESS**



World Health
Organization

European Region



UNECE

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programme

EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH PROCESS NEWSLETTER

October–December 2023

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1. EDITORIAL

Greetings, and welcome to this new issue of the [European Environment and Health Process \(EHP\) newsletter](#).

As you read further, you will discover more about EHP activities in various countries; benefit from the insights gained through work on health challenges related to climate change, environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and land degradation; and get up to date with newly published materials.

Prepare to be inspired as we showcase the collective dedication and commitment of the [European Environment and Health Task Force \(EHTF\)](#) members.

Best regards,
EHP Secretariat



2. TOP STORY

COP28: accelerating action on climate and health

The 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), which took place from 30 November to 12 December in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, set the pace for a new era in climate action. At this historic moment, when global actors are increasingly recognizing the links between climate change and health, health leaders were at the forefront of the debate at the Conference, giving them the voice they need and deserve.

The COP28 Presidency, in collaboration with WHO and other partners, organized the first-ever [Climate-Health Ministerial](#). Moreover, for the third time, WHO and the Wellcome Trust hosted the COP28 [Health Pavilion](#). This created a watershed moment for climate and health, bringing together a wide variety of actors, including many health ministers, climate and health professionals, and representatives of civil

society, youth and business organizations. WHO, in partnership with members of the [Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health](#) (ATACH), continued to promote commitments to building climate-resilient and sustainable low-carbon health systems. The inaugural ATACH Day on 4 December at COP28 showcased examples of best practice from countries and partners in delivering on health commitments, and inspired further action in building climate-resilient and low-carbon sustainable health systems. Furthermore, the opportunities and challenges for implementation of the climate change and health agenda were discussed, along with the role of ATACH in advancing the COP28 Health Declaration and outcomes of the COP28 Health Day.

Key engagements of the WHO Regional Office for Europe during COP28 are listed below.



The session **“Keep cool in the heat! European action for good health and well-being on a warming planet”** was jointly organized with the European Commission (EC) during the Health Day on 3 December to showcase the efforts being made in the European Region to help everyone keep healthy on a warming planet. The event took stock of the evidence related to heat health and showcased actions at local, national and international levels towards ensuring that all our communities can keep cool and remain habitable. This includes technological and organizational upgrades and better prevention, preparedness and response for extreme temperatures. The session also featured the ongoing work to update WHO’s guidance on heat–health action

planning, powered through a partnership with the EC. Speakers at the event included high-level representatives from Member States of the WHO European Region, the EC Directorate-General for Climate Action, the European Environment Agency, the World Meteorological Organization, and the WHO Regional Office for Europe, while national and local case studies from various countries were also presented.



The **European Regional Dialogue on Accelerating Action on Climate and Health** convened health ministers and other high-level health leaders from the Region and beyond, as well as a delegate of the Youth Health Organization. The Dialogue unpacked the different dimensions of the climate change and health agenda: it focused on regional policy and political commitments; showcased examples of health sector leadership and initiatives; highlighted

success stories in national climate-health policy-making and action taken in the European Region more broadly; and emphasized the need for regional and cross-regional collaboration and partnerships as essential building blocks for advancing climate and health goals, including through the EHP Partnership for Health Sector Climate Action and the Transatlantic Partnership with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.



The first **Climate-Health Ministerial** aimed at reinforcing health as a climate priority, addressing the escalating impact of climate change on health-care systems and presenting country priorities and needs, highlighting opportunities for action and continued collaboration. Ministers from health, environment, finance and other sectors devised a roadmap to tackle this growing burden and capitalize on socioeconomic benefits arising from improved health and well-being through climate action. The event concluded with the adoption of a political **Declaration on climate and health** signed by 132 Member States, including 44 from the WHO European Region and the European Union, intended to serve as a call to action and joint vision from countries.

See the recording of the session [here](#).



The youth side event, **“Vital point: our future, our action”** which took place on 12 December, connected youth engagement, climate change and health. It took inspiration from the [Budapest Youth Declaration](#) and aligned with the establishment of the WHO Regional Office for Europe’s [Youth4Health](#) network, the [EHP Partnership on Youth](#), and the [WHO Youth Council's Working Group on Climate Change and Health](#). The event aimed to shape actionable initiatives, consider future implications and strengthen policy commitments for the intersection of youth, climate change and health. See the recording of the session [here](#).

Catch up on these COP28 news items from the WHO website:

- [Global health community calls for urgent action on climate and health at COP28](#)
- Statement by Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe – [COP28: Climate change is causing suffering, death and destruction – concerted climate action is our only hope for survival](#)



3. COUNTRY ACTIVITIES

Health and climate action plan launched in Belgium

The Flemish Government wants to reduce the impact of a number of environmental factors on the health of its citizens by 2030. This significant initiative, launched in Flanders on 4 December 2023, in the presence of representatives of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, outlines the

integration of health policies into the broader context of climate issues. It tackles challenges related to climate and health; living conditions, including air quality and environmental noise; and hazardous substances. A yearly allocation of €500 000 will support implementation.

Workshop held on Post-Budapest Implementation Roadmap for Climate Change and Health in Croatia

On 28–29 November 2023, a two-day workshop entitled “Post-Budapest Implementation Roadmap for Climate Change and Health” took place in Zagreb. The event, supported by the WHO Country Office in Croatia and the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH), was organized by the Croatian Institute of Public Health; University of Zagreb Faculty of Veterinary Medicine; the Croatian Society for Clinical Microbiology, Virology Section; the Croatian Society for Infectious Diseases,

Zoonoses Section; and the Croatian Society for Environmental Health. The workshop acted as a platform for exchanging experiences and new information, fostering collaboration between policy-makers, experts and researchers. The workshop outcomes will function as a starting point for identifying solutions and involving various sectors and stakeholders in addressing environmental challenges, including climate change, with the aim of implementing the Budapest Declaration.

Report published: Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2023

The [report](#), published by National Health Service (NHS) England in November, reveals that 1 in 5 children and young people had a probable mental disorder in 2023. This report is considered as England's best data source for

trends in children and young people's mental health and how this has changed since 2017 – including topics such as climate change.



France launches its new global health strategy

The new French global health strategy for 2023–2027, launched in October, aims to help reduce health inequalities and strengthen the One

Health approach to better prevent and prepare for future global health emergencies.

Azerbaijan discusses green hospitals initiative

On 27 November 2023, the WHO Country Office in Azerbaijan in cooperation with WHO ECEH convened an information event in Baku for national stakeholders to introduce the concept

of environmentally sustainable, low-carbon and climate-resilient hospitals and to discuss possible steps towards piloting such approaches in Azerbaijan.

First national edition of the Bonn School on Environment and Health held in Georgia

On 4–7 December 2023, WHO ECEH provided a virtual capacity-building course on contaminated sites and health for staff of the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health. Supported by the WHO Country Office

in Georgia, the course provided an overview on approaches and instruments to address the health impacts of contaminated sites for 26 national and subnational staff, including some experts from the environmental sector.

Department of Public Health Laboratories at the National Public Health Center of Hungary designated WHO Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health Risk Management

The Department of Public Health Laboratories was designated a collaborating centre following the Budapest Conference. Its mandate will include work on improving water quality through: auditing of water quality plans; the

creation of advanced-level indicators for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in health-care facilities; environmental surveillance of wastewater; and the monitoring of the indoor school environment.

Country assessment mission and cross-sectoral One Health conference on antimicrobial resistance held in Latvia

The conference, organized on 5–7 December 2023 by the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Ministry of Health of Latvia, was attended by experts and policy-makers from

national and international institutions to share the latest information on One Health approaches and initiatives.



North Macedonia and Uzbekistan join the Protocol on Water and Health

North Macedonia (on 28 September 2023) and Uzbekistan (on 26 December 2023) became the 28th and 29th countries, respectively, to join the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)–WHO Regional Office for

Europe Protocol on Water and Health, thus committing to drive action on WASH and health, while protecting their natural resources and fostering a healthier environment for their citizens.

Post-disaster environmental health needs assessment and training module preparation workshop held in Türkiye

The Ministry of Health and WHO Country Office in Türkiye, in collaboration with WHO ECEH, have joined forces to create a continuous training module for environmental health personnel in the country, focusing on post-disaster environmental health services and

resilience. In October 2023, these partners held a workshop to assess the post-disaster environmental health needs and plan the content of the training module. The workshop's ultimate output will be a report that forms the basis for creating this training module.

Stakeholder meeting on WASH and health held in Ukraine

On 1–2 November 2023 in Kyiv, the WHO Country Office in Ukraine, WHO ECEH and WHO headquarters, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, brought together a diverse group of national and international stakeholders. The purpose of the gathering was to discuss strategies for the wartime response to WASH and health issues and establish long-term priorities for recovery and development. During the meeting,

participants collaboratively formulated a strategic consensus statement outlining specific actions aimed at improving WASH services in communities and health-care facilities. Additionally, there was a focus on ensuring the seamless integration of WASH practices into essential health programming, such as antimicrobial resistance, primary health care and infection prevention and control.



4. RECENT EVENTS

In the past three months several exciting events in the field of environment and health have taken place. Some of these are presented below.

6 October 2023, Brussels, Belgium

In alignment with the [Horizon Europe Mission on Cancer](#), the EC Directorate-General for Research and Innovation successfully organized a [workshop](#) focusing on the environmental determinants of childhood and adolescent cancer. The initiative, supported by WHO ECEH, the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, and the International Agency for Research on Cancer, aimed to address the existing gap in comprehending the impact of environmental exposures on childhood cancer.

10 October 2023, virtual

[World Mental Health Day](#) 2023 was themed “Mental health is a universal human right” and called on WHO Member States to reconsider mental health and to design and invest more effectively in broader environment and health frameworks that are essential for creating a resilient society. The Day offers an opportunity for all stakeholders working on mental health issues to discuss their work and identify what further actions are needed to make mental health care a reality for people worldwide.

12 October 2023, virtual

The final meeting of the project aiming to elicit environmental noise-related disability weights took place on 12 October. This research initiative was focused on eliciting disability weights for both environmental and non-environmental noise related health states at the population level. The Coordination Group of the project contributed their insights and feedback to the project’s final research report.

12–13 October 2023, Berlin, Germany

The event “Breaking barriers: advancing the One Health agenda with a focus on environment” brought together decision-makers, scientists and implementers taking action related to the environmental pillar of the One Health approach to push the agenda towards action. Discussions drew on insights from the Quadripartite’s “One Health joint plan of action” and from the One Health High-Level Expert Panel. The event focused on



the environmental pillar of the One Health approach and provided a space to review the status of implementation, showcase experiences gained, identify guidance for next steps towards action, and shed light on important topics that seem to receive less attention. The event emphasized economic approaches to valuing environmental assets and health, as well as economic drivers of challenges (such as growth-based models, inequalities and inequities)

15–17 October, Berlin, Germany

Under the theme “A defining year for global health action”, the [World Health Summit 2023](#) brought together a wide range of stakeholders from politics, science, the private sector and civil society from around the world to set the agenda for a healthier future by inspiring innovative solutions for better health and well-being for all. The Summit’s results and publications can be found [here](#).

16–18 October 2023, Rennes, France

AirQ+ was officially adopted by the French authorities to run air pollution health risk assessments. Santé publique France and École des Hautes Études en Santé Publique organized a workshop on the use of the decision-making tool, EQIS (L’Evaluation Quantitative d’Impact sur la Santé, or Quantitative Health Impact Assessment), as part of a policy to improve ambient air quality. The training was held in French, in person, for 25 selected representatives of regions, metropolitan areas and cities.

22–28 October 2023, virtual

The focus of 2023’s [International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week](#), “End childhood lead poisoning”, reminded governments, civil society organizations, health partners, industry and others of the unacceptable risks of lead exposure and the need for action to protect children’s health. Advocacy materials and technical guidance to support campaigners in organizing events during and after the week of action can be found [here](#).

23–25 October 2023, Geneva, Switzerland

The twenty-first session of Steering Committee of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) took place in Geneva, preceded by a workshop entitled “Transport Planning for the Future”. During the session the Steering Committee adopted THE PEP communication strategy, discussed the first draft of the Strategy on Transport, Health and the Environment set to be finalized in 2024, and reviewed the results of THE PEP Survey. The Steering Committee also discussed the work of THE PEP Partnerships.



24–25 October 2023, Uppsala, Sweden

A total of 180 chemical pollution and health experts from government, academia, industry and civil society from different countries engaged in science-to-policy dialogues met at the [Uppsala Health Summit: Chemical Pollution and One Health 2023](#) to discuss the critical next steps and how to speed up efforts. Recordings and presentation can be found [here](#).

24–26 October 2023, Astana, Kazakhstan

Delegates from the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region gathered for the [73rd session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe](#) (RC73). The meeting marked WHO's 75th anniversary, celebrated 45 years since the [Alma-Ata Declaration on primary health care](#), and assessed progress in the [European Programme of Work 2020–2025](#). Delegates reflected on the Region's health status, discussed challenges, and commemorated public health milestones. Also, the 73rd session adopted the [Decision](#) endorsing the [Budapest Declaration](#). This was an excellent outcome, showcasing strong Member State support for the environment and health agenda.

26–27 October 2023, Madrid, Spain

THE PEP/EHP Partnership on Healthy Active Mobility was hosted by the Spanish Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda in Madrid, in conjunction with the Global Mobility Call Conference. The meeting convened cycling experts from across the pan-European region. Participants gathered to discuss recent achievements in implementing the Pan-European Master Plan for Cycling Promotion, explore ways to better integrate active mobility with public transport, identify ongoing European Union (EU)-level initiatives for support, and exchange experiences on promoting cycling among countries of the pan-European region.

3 November 2023, virtual

[One Health Day](#), celebrated annually on 3 November, is an international campaign co-ordinated by nongovernmental and civil society organizations. The goal of One Health Day is to catch global attention, increase public awareness and mobilize action.

On this Day, WHO called on world leaders to increase political commitment and action to invest in the One Health approach to prevent and tackle common threats affecting the health and well-being of humans, animals, plants and the environment.



7 November 2023, virtual

Project advisers and the systematic review team of the Update of the Health Risks of Air Pollution in Europe project met to discuss and agree on key questions related to the conduct of systematic reviews informing the project.

13 November 2023, Luxembourg

[The One Health Conference “One Health for All, All for One Health”](#), organized by the EC, provided the opportunity to take stock and discuss the future of One Health in Europe. The Conference provided a comprehensive platform for knowledge sharing and collaboration. Speakers addressed critical topics such as antimicrobial resistance, climate change, environment and health, and surveillance and early warning systems. The conference programme also facilitated discussions on innovative approaches, research findings and policy recommendations in the field of One Health.

13–14 November 2023, Luxembourg

THE PEP Focal Points, stakeholders and other individuals interested in child- and youth-friendly mobility gathered for the [fifth meeting of THE PEP Partnership on Child- and Youth-friendly Mobility](#). Participants discussed “Mobility management” and “Public transportation and multimodality”, explored the discourse on innovative strategies and advancements in these fields, and navigated through the evolving landscape of sustainable and efficient mobility solutions.

13–14 November 2023, Geneva, Switzerland

As the frequency of climate-induced extreme weather events is increasing, countries of the pan-European region took stock and identified key directions and priority actions at a [Strategic Roundtable on Increasing Resilience to Climate Change in the Water and Sanitation Sector](#), convened under the Protocol on Water and Health and co-led by Italy and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The meeting featured a broad range of good practice case studies from Protocol Parties and partners/stakeholders, particularly in relation to adaptation measures to climate change in WASH and water resource management. It also addressed the financial aspects of water-health adaptation measures, as well as the linkages between the WASH agenda and national adaptation planning processes at country level. Participants, in interactive formats, discussed the main challenges in relation to increasing the resilience of WASH services to climate change, while identifying strategic support needs that should be leveraged through the Protocol framework. The Strategic Roundtable allowed over a hundred government representatives and experts responsible for health, environment and climate to exchange good practices and identify key needs across sectors.



14 November 2023, Geneva, Switzerland

The [13th meeting of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting of the Protocol on Water and Health](#) reviewed progress by Parties and other states on setting and revision of the Protocol's targets. As the Task Force meeting was held back-to-back with the Strategic Roundtable on Increasing Resilience to Climate Change in the Water and Sanitation Sector, participants reviewed the outcomes of the Roundtable and discussed how the strategic priorities identified can be reflected in national target setting under the Protocol. Delegates also discussed progress with developing a Protocol online reporting system, and reviewed headway with the implementation of the water-, sanitation- and hygiene-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

14 November 2023, virtual

The online expert consultation meeting “Health impact assessment and assessing health in environmental assessments – What’s next?” brought together Member State representatives and environment and health assessment practitioners to discuss the challenges and opportunities of health impact assessment (HIA) implementation and an enhanced assessment of health impacts within environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA) processes. The consultation served as a follow-up to the meeting organized in 2022 where WHO launched a report “[Learning from practice – Case studies of health in EIA and SEA across the WHO European Region](#)”, and presented preliminary results of an online survey on HIA implementation in countries in the Region.

15 November 2023, Geneva, Switzerland

At its [30th meeting](#), the Bureau of the Protocol on Water and Health continued its strategic discussion on a vision for the Protocol and a strategy for its implementation; reviewed the plans for implementation of the programme of work for 2023–2025; discussed the resources needed for such implementation; and reviewed progress and action needed to increase the number of accessions to the Protocol.

15–17 November 2023, Seville, Spain

The [28th annual meeting of the WHO Regions for Health Network](#) (RHN) brought together 100 representatives from more than 20 regions in Europe and central Asia, to discuss the most pressing health issues for this group of subnational and local authorities. The discussions at the meeting delved into pressing global challenges, with participants offering solutions and sharing experiences from their respective regions. During discussions, WHO ECEH contributed by sharing relevant ongoing work and initiatives with the RHN community. Climate change emerged as a key challenge, highlighting



the urgent need for collaborative, region-specific approaches to address environmental impacts on public health. The Network's commitment is enshrined in the Andalusian Statement, which was endorsed by all the participants. Through the Statement, RHN members commit to “contribute to strengthening the Network as a unique solution-based platform supporting implementation of WHO policy priorities and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

16–17 November 2023, Frankfurt, Germany

The international conference “Towards a global wastewater surveillance system for public health”, co-organized by the EC and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation brought together more than 300 participants from all over the world, including policy-makers, health authorities, researchers, wastewater managers/operators, and donors and foundations active in the field of wastewater surveillance and public health. The conference highlighted the utility and breadth of public health use cases of wastewater surveillance and associated experiences and learnings. It also presented ongoing research and forthcoming global initiatives, including a new global consortium which is to provide a collaborative network to accelerate the development, implementation, alignment and utility of tools for wastewater and environmental surveillance initiatives around the globe.

18–24 November 2023, virtual

[World Antimicrobial Awareness Week](#) on the theme of “Preventing [Antimicrobial Resistance](#) Together” promoted joint action by leaders and communities across various sectors who are working to preserve antimicrobials and protect the health of people, animals, plants and the environment. The event details can be found [here](#). WHO ECEH work in this area, includes a [technical brief](#) on WASH and wastewater management to prevent infections and reduce the spread of antimicrobial resistance.

21–23 November 2023, Utrecht, Kingdom of the Netherlands

At a time of rapid urbanization and a changing climate across the WHO European Region and globally, the [WHO European Healthy Cities Annual Business Meeting and Technical Conference](#) celebrated the role of communities in creating solutions. Participants convened under the theme “Health and well-being for all: [celebrating](#) 35 years of the Healthy Cities movement”, with the opportunity to attend plenary [meetings](#), parallel sessions and workshops to learn about and discuss the latest innovations, strategies and tools for making cities healthy, building on the 2018 Copenhagen Consensus of Mayors. The Conference concluded with participating cities committing to [12 concrete action points](#) for increased sustainability, health and well-being for all residents.



28–29 November 2023, Almaty, Kazakhstan

The regional conference “[Preventing future pandemics, protecting food systems and the environment: central Asia One Health Framework for Action, regional high-level meeting](#)” to endorse the Central Asia One Health Framework for Action was hosted by the World Bank and attended by government officials from the health, environment and agricultural sectors of central Asian countries. This regional cooperation programme will be implemented through a strategic, multisectoral plan and investment structure, using a three-year grant from the Pandemic Fund. At the conference, the WHO Regional Office for Europe highlighted the work of the regional [Quadripartite](#) that serves as a coordination mechanism for One Health.

29 November 2023, virtual

The training session on the Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) for Walking and Cycling attracted about 100 participants. During the session, participants gained a comprehensive overview of HEAT, including its background and methodological approach. International experts answered questions and provided information about its use. Given the high level of interest from Member States, it was decided to organize a series of webinars in 2024 with translation into Russian.

30 November–1 December 2023, Berlin, Germany

The [Planetary Health Forum](#) under the patronage of the German Federal Minister of Health, Professor Karl Lauterbach, and the German Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, Steffi Lemke, was the first conference on planetary health in Germany. It brought together stakeholders from health, climate and environmental protection, representing diverse sectors including politics, industry, academia and civil society. The Forum aimed to forge innovative alliances, foster the exchange of ideas and nurture collaboration.



Photo: Ms Francesca Racioppi, Head, WHO ECEH, giving a speech at the Forum to present the Budapest Declaration and its “Roadmap for healthier people, a thriving planet and a sustainable future 2023–2030” ©Ben Mangelsdorf/CPHP, 2024



4–8 December 2023, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

The WHO Regional Office for Europe held a training workshop on “Air quality and health – strengthening capacities in assessing health risks of air pollution”, to provide environmental and public health experts from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan with training on air quality and health. The sessions, which included small group discussions and hands-on exercises, were attended by 50 participants, who discussed Air Quality Guidelines implementation, and policy and risk communication aspects, and made use of the AirQ+ tool. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) representatives also joined the discussions during one session.

11 December 2023, virtual

The WHO webinar on environmental health inequalities, attended by more than 100 participants from more than 40 countries, was coordinated by WHO ECEH on the occasion of International Human Rights Day, and presented both data and political action on environmental inequalities relevant for health and health equity.

11–13 December 2023, Astana, Kazakhstan

A subregional workshop for central Asian countries on WASH in schools was organized by WHO ECEH and the WHO Country Office in Kazakhstan under the auspices of the Protocol on Water and Health. The workshop aimed to strengthen capacities towards achieving safe and inclusive WASH services in schools, including considerations for preparedness and response to health emergencies based on the lessons learned from COVID-19. It was attended by representatives from ministries of health and education from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, with the contribution of experts from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the School for Health in Europe Network Foundation, and specialists on child and adolescent health, and behavioural and cultural insights from the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

12–13 December 2023, Tallinn, Estonia

The Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia, the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies co-hosted a high-level health systems conference entitled “[Trust and transformation: resilient and sustainable health systems for the future](#)” to commemorate 15 years of the [Tallinn Charter: Health Systems for Health and Wealth](#). The main aim of the conference was to put forward a vision for new and integrated health systems that recognize the key roles of patients and health workers, and capture their voices and needs. WHO ECEH organized a session on climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health systems, which emphasized the necessity of making environmental sustainability, low-carbon service delivery and climate resilience considerations integral to the health systems transformation agenda. For more, see the [outcome statement](#) and [case studies](#).



12–15 December 2023, Geneva, Switzerland

Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment acknowledged the importance of addressing the health implications of plans and programmes as well as policies and legislation by publishing a new information document on [assessing health impacts in strategic environmental assessments](#). The high-level segment of the [ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol](#) was specifically dedicated to the interlinked topics of energy transition, circular economy and green financing.

18 December 2023, New York, United States of America

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a new resolution on “Sustainable, safe and universal water, sanitation, hygiene, waste and electricity services in health care facilities”. The new resolution emphasizes the critical role these services play in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and underscores the gaps in current global services. It encourages Member States to integrate these services into national health planning and calls for improved international cooperation. In addition, the resolution highlights the need for cross-sectoral engagement, national roadmaps, adequate resourcing and regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure the provision of these essential services. The co-chairs of the “[UN group of friends in support of WASH in health-care facilities](#)”, Hungary and the Philippines, led the consensual adoption by the UNGA, supported by WHO and UNICEF. Poland also took part in the core group in support of the resolution.

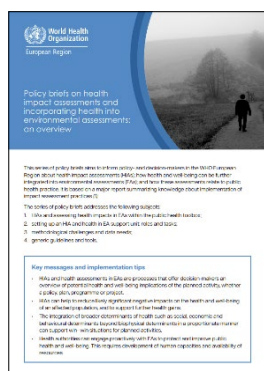
26 December 2023, Belgrade, Serbia

UNEP organized a training session in Belgrade for national and local authorities on green infrastructure and nature-based solutions as a strategic response to challenges in urban areas. The session focused on the UNEP project (in partnership with UN-Habitat) “Nature-based solutions for enhanced resilience to COVID-19 and urban air pollution in the Western Balkans and Central Asia”. In a presentation on “Green spaces and health: challenges at the urban level”, WHO ECEH highlighted how much green spaces provide a beneficial “infrastructure” for cities, the current work by WHO on the main health effects of green spaces, and the availability of evidence and tools for public health specialists and planners.

5. LATEST PUBLICATIONS AND COURSES

Discover the latest WHO publications in the field of environment and health, listed below.

Policy briefs on health impact assessments and incorporating health into environmental assessments



This series of policy briefs aims to inform policy- and decision-makers in the WHO European Region about HIAs; how health and well-being can be further integrated into environmental assessments (EAs); and how these assessments relate to public health practice. It is based on a major report summarizing knowledge about implementation of impact assessment practices.

For further information, please see the [overview](#) of the briefs, which highlights the key messages, offers implementation tips and provides background information.

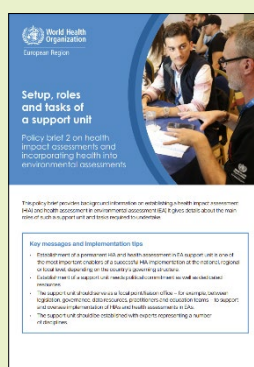
The series of policy briefs addresses the following subjects:

A place in the public health toolbox



This [policy brief](#) aims to inform policy- and decision-makers on the importance of HIAs and incorporating health into EAs, and their the place in the public health toolbox.

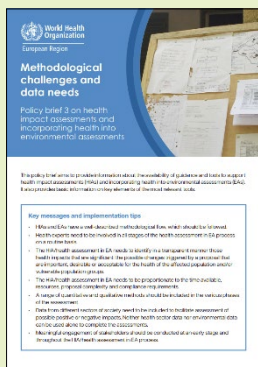
Setup, roles and tasks of a support unit



This [policy brief](#) provides background information on establishing a support unit on HIA and health assessment in EA. It gives details about the main roles and tasks of such a unit.

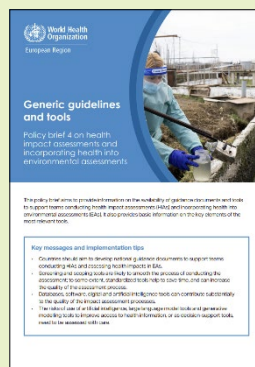


Methodological challenges and data needs



This [policy brief](#) provides information about the availability of guidance and tools to support HIAs and incorporating health into EAs. It also sets out basic information on key elements of the most relevant tools.

Generic guidelines and tools



This [policy brief](#) provides information on the availability of guidance documents and tools to support teams conducting HIAs and incorporating health into EAs. It also offers basic information on the main elements of the most relevant tools.

Human biomonitoring. Basics: educational course



This [educational course](#) on human biomonitoring (HBM), presented in the form of slides with accompanying notes and references, compiles scientific information on HBM as well as practical examples. It was developed to support the training of public-health and health-care professionals; students of medical, biological and other allied sciences; and professionals and decision-makers in health, environment and other relevant sectors.

For more about HBM, please see the [news item](#) on the WHO website.

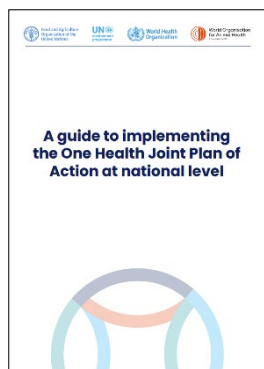
Global status report on road safety



This [report](#) (the fifth edition since 2009) presents findings from a unique vantage point on the road to safe mobility: it provides the first complete overview of progress made during the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020 and sets a baseline for the next Decade of Action, 2021–2030. This report looks at how and where the global burden of road traffic deaths is changing and at how we are responding. A summary of the report is available [here](#).

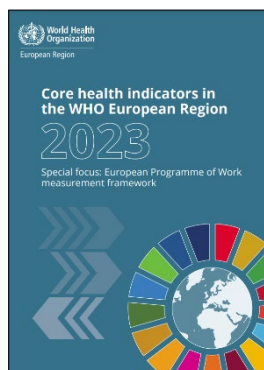


Guide to implementing the One Health Joint Plan of Action at national level



The [guide](#) to implementing the [One Health Joint Plan of Action](#) (OH JPA) at national level provides practical guidance on how countries can adopt and adapt the OH JPA to strengthen and support national One Health action. The guide, launched by the Quadripartite (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Environment Programme, WHO and World Organisation for Animal Health), underscores collective commitment to advocating for and supporting One Health implementation to address interconnected health risks across sectors.

Core health indicators in the WHO European Region 2023. Special focus: European Programme of Work measurement framework



This [publication](#) presents tables, graphs and infographics on each European Programme of Work measurement framework indicator, with disaggregation by sex where possible. It is based on the most up-to-date data available from the Region's Member States and is organized according to the Core Priorities of the European Programme of Work.

Operational framework for building climate resilient and low carbon health systems



WHO released a framework for building climate-resilient, low-carbon health systems. The [framework](#) recognizes health systems' responsibility to both mitigate the impacts of climate change on human health and to reduce their own overall carbon footprint. Its objectives are to guide health professionals in addressing risks through collaboration; strengthen health system functions; support the development of specific interventions to reduce climate risk and emissions; and define roles and responsibilities for health decision-makers.



2023 WHO review of health in Nationally Determined Contributions and long-term strategies: health at the heart of the Paris Agreement



Ahead of COP28, WHO published this [review](#) highlighting the actions needed to ensure that people's health is fully prioritized and integrated into national plans to fight climate change. This report synthesizes information from the latest available Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and Long-term Low Emissions and Development Strategies communicated by Parties to the Paris Agreement.

Environmental health inequalities: fact sheet series

This [fact sheet series](#) documents the magnitude of environmental health inequalities within countries in the WHO European Region. Environmental health inequalities relate to socioeconomic, sociodemographic or spatial differences in exposure to environmental health risk factors and to differences in health status caused by environmental conditions.

At the end of 2023, the following fact sheets were published:

Inequalities in self-reported environmental noise annoyance

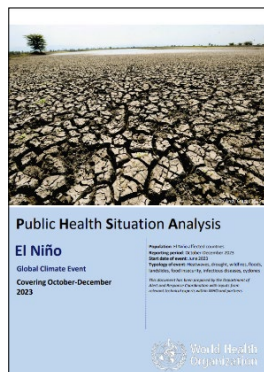


Inequalities in household utility costs and energy poverty



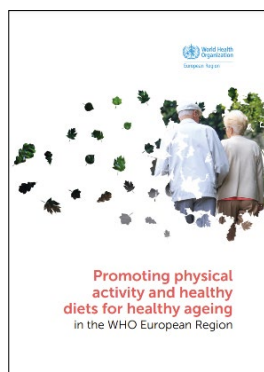


Public Health Situation Analysis: El Niño (October–December 2023)



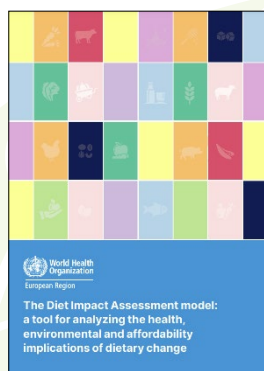
This [analysis](#) identifies the current and potential health impacts that vulnerable populations may face as a result of the global El Niño climate event, and describes health systems' capacities to respond. This document is intended for all health sector partners, including local and national authorities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), donor agencies and United Nations agencies. It provides a common and comprehensive understanding of the event in order to inform health response planning. It is based on key documents and research products from WHO, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), other United Nations organizations, NGOs and research institutes.

Promoting physical activity and healthy diets for healthy ageing in the WHO European Region



This [report](#) advocates for investment in promoting healthy lifestyles in the older population to encourage active healthy ageing and increase healthy life expectancy. Inspiring examples of innovations in promoting physical activity and healthy diets from across the WHO European Region are presented to support implementation and scale-up of interventions by Member States.

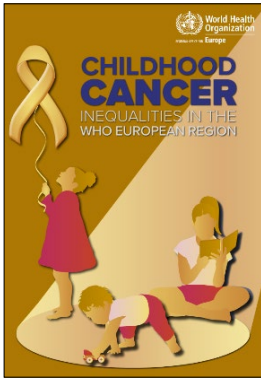
The Diet Impact Assessment model: a tool for analyzing the health, environmental and affordability implications of dietary change



This [manual](#) describes the Diet Impact Assessment model – a new interactive modelling tool for analysing the health, environmental and affordability implications of diets and dietary change. The tool enables countries to analyse user-specific scenarios of dietary change, and to estimate the health, environmental and cost burden of each scenario in terms of diet costs, avoidable deaths, changes in resource use and compatibility with global environmental targets, including those associated with food-related greenhouse gas emissions, land use, water use and fertilizer application.



Childhood cancer inequalities in the WHO European Region



This [report](#) makes recommendations on the key steps that are likely to have the greatest impact in reducing inequalities in childhood cancer care across the Region. It is hoped that these will be of value to decision-makers and politicians from all countries in the Region looking to address such inequalities through targeted improvement activities.

CLIMAQ-H (Climate Change Mitigation, Air Quality and Health)

In the second week of December, the revised version of the [CLIMAQ-H](#) tool was made available to the public. CLIMAQ-H is a tool for Member States to assess the outcomes of climate-driven policies and support decision-making, or for screening “what-if” scenarios – such as different carbon-reduction options – by comparing the potential health co-benefits achieved by reaching their NDC targets.

Webinars on WASH FIT and waste in health-care facilities

- Watch the “Health care waste management” webinar video [here](#).
- Watch “WASH Facilities Improvement Tool (WASH FIT)” webinar video [here](#).

New self-paced courses on the OpenWHO learning platform

- [Water safety planning for urban water supply systems: an introduction](#). In four modules, participants will learn the fundamental principles of water safety planning, practical steps for ensuring a reliable and safe water supply chain and key terms related to urban water supply. The content presents real-world practices.
- [Learning to deliver training in IPC \[infection prevention and control\] and environmental cleaning for health care facilities in low-and-middle-income countries](#). This training package, which comes in two parts including modules and a resource pack, specifically targets health workers who clean health-care facilities.



Make sure to catch up on the following interesting reads:

- The [2023 state of the climate report](#) describes numerous all-time climate records and anomalies along with negligible progress by humanity to reduce carbon emissions or decouple economic growth from environmental harm. If we do not urgently and collectively work for climate justice and a global economy that is centred on human well-being, the authors warn, the planet's natural and socioeconomic systems are at risk of collapsing.
- In November 2023, the “Lancet countdown on health and climate change” published its latest annual report. This international collaboration monitors the health impacts of climate change and independently assesses governments' adherence to commitments made under the Paris Agreement. The 8th annual [report](#) highlights alarming health risks associated with ongoing global inaction in addressing the climate emergency.
- In an [article](#) published simultaneously in multiple titles, over 200 health journals called on the United Nations, political leaders, and health professionals to recognize that climate change and biodiversity loss are one indivisible crisis and must be tackled together to preserve health and avoid catastrophe. This overall environmental crisis is now so severe as to be a global health emergency.



6. EHP CORNER

Here, in our corner, we are excited to share some key highlights of the work accomplished by the EHP Secretariat in the last quarter of the year.



The [Declaration of the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health](#) (7MCEH) was [endorsed](#) by the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and its [73rd session](#). The Declaration was developed through an inclusive and comprehensive consultation with Member States in the WHO European Region led by the EHTF, and adopted at the 7MCEH held in Budapest on 5–7 July 2023.



The [report of the Special Session of the EHTF](#) is now available. The session was convened in Budapest a day before the opening of the Ministerial Conference on 4 July 2023 and hosted by Hungary's Ministry of Interior. The EHTF event resulted in the attainment of a finalized set of Conference outcomes, including the Budapest Declaration and proposals on the EHP Partnerships, alongside a full agreement of the 7MCEH workflow.



The Report of the [Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health](#) is out! This comprehensive report is available in four languages: English, French, German and Russian, enabling a broader audience to access key insights and outcomes. A condensed version of the Conference's discussions and conclusions is available [here](#).

The [28th session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy](#) (Geneva, Switzerland, 1–3 November 2023) was opened jointly by Ms Tatiana Molcean, UNECE Executive Secretary, Ms Francesca Racioppi, Head, WHO ECEH, and Mr Arnold Kreilhuber, Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe. During the session, the EHP Secretariat presented the [EHP progress report](#), highlighting the main achievements of

the past year. Committee members welcomed the outcomes of 7MCEH and reconfirmed their commitment to contribute to the EHP, and the work under [THE PEP](#). The Committee also reviewed progress on the implementation of the UNECE environment agenda, including many areas of joint activity with the WHO Regional Office for Europe.



7. EHP PARTNERSHIPS

The EHP Partnerships is a new mechanism within the EHP to accelerate national and international implementation of commitments made in the Declaration of the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health and its Roadmap. The EHP Partnerships bring together countries and partners with a shared interest in a specific thematic area to facilitate collaboration and leverage progress across the WHO European Region.

Current EHP Partnerships:

- EHP Partnership on Human Biomonitoring in the WHO European Region (led by Germany and co-led by Georgia).
- The first meeting of the EHP Partnership on HBM was organized jointly by Germany, Georgia and WHO ECEH in Tbilisi, Georgia, on 28 November 2023. This EHP Partnership has now grown to 18 members. Participants joined in person from 15 countries and online from 2. Productive discussions on sharing concepts and tools, national HBM programmes, promoting policies and regulations on HBM, and communication of HBM to stakeholders created a basis for planning the Partnership work for the upcoming period. Under the Partnership umbrella, WHO held a two-day training on the basics of HBM, back-to-back with the meeting, addressing mainly experts from Georgia to strengthen capacity in the country. The training, based on the [WHO educational course on HBM](#), was also open to meeting participants.
- EHP Partnership on Health Sector Climate Action (led by Ireland).
- THE PEP/EHP Partnership on Healthy Active Mobility (led by Austria, France and the Kingdom of the Netherlands).
- EHP Partnership on Youth in the WHO European Region (led by Slovenia and co-led by the International Youth Health Organization).

Read more about all four EHP Partnerships [here](#).





8. NEWS FROM EHP STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

Our dedicated partners and environmental health stakeholders have been working tirelessly to make a difference and create a positive

impact. Below you will find a selection of their latest publications and activities.

HEAL celebrates 20 years of work towards a healthy planet for healthy people

In October, the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) celebrated its 20th anniversary in protecting people's health against pollution and climate change. This included a [high-level political event](#) with representatives from the EC and the Belgian environment ministry, a panel discussion on how to use health to connect across communities, and an evening reception.

To find out more about how HEAL has positioned health considerations more firmly in major environmental and climate policies over the past two decades, delve into the special 20th anniversary [annual report](#) or the [editorial](#) from HEAL founder and Executive Director, Genon Jensen, who has been a member of the EHTF since 2000.



“Health engagement has been at the core of HEAL’s mission since the start: with focused efforts on informing health actors, building capacity, working together and bringing the health voice and expertise to environmental and climate policy-making. HEAL was also one of the first organizations to make the economic case for the co-benefits by adopting more ambitious air, climate and chemicals policies, which in turn reduce health-care costs. And our work is far from done. We certainly know enough to act, and we need to act urgently, if we are to achieve the much-needed transformation in this decade.”

Genon Jensen, HEAL founder and Executive Director



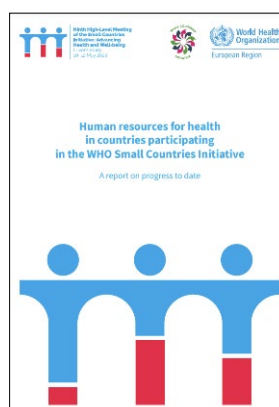
Harm to human health from air pollution in Europe: burden of disease 2023

According to [new data analysis](#) by the [European Environment Agency](#) (EEA) published in late November 2023, air pollutant concentrations in 2021 remained well above the levels recommended by WHO in its [air quality guidelines](#). It was estimated that reducing air pollution to these guideline levels would have prevented a significant number of attributable deaths in EU Member States in 2021: 253 000 from exposure to fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), and 52 000 from exposure to nitrogen dioxide. Furthermore, reducing the short-term exposure to ozone would have avoided 22 000 attributable deaths. Further information on the concentrations of air pollutants, including those for previous years, can be found at the EEA's [statistics viewer](#).

WMO's State of Climate Services report out now

This year's WMO report "[2023 State of Climate Services: Health](#)" focuses on health, showing that extreme heat causes more deaths than any other extreme weather event. Right now, many countries are unprepared to address these impacts, underscoring the need for tailored climate information and services. The report also showcases success stories of climate services improving health, with examples from the European Region.

Human resources for health in countries participating in the WHO Small Countries Initiative: a report on progress to date



In follow-up to the [Ninth High-level Meeting of the Small Countries Initiative](#) in Luxembourg in May 2023, a new progress [report](#) on human resources for health was released. It focused specifically on the 11 members of the [Small Countries Initiative](#) –

Andorra, Cyprus, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, San Marino and Slovenia – shedding light on their status. The report concludes by identifying the current and most pressing human resources for health needs in these countries.



Nature's impact on human health: WHO collaborating centre examines the data

The WHO Collaborating Centre on Natural Environments and Health, based in Cornwall, United Kingdom, continues to compile evidence on the links between the natural environment and human well-being.

Hosted at the European Centre for Environment and Human Health (ECEHH), the recently redesignated collaborating centre supports the WHO European Region in establishing cause and effect between changes in the natural world and human health, and the health benefits and opportunities associated with biodiversity.

Throughout its tenure as a WHO collaborating centre, the ECEHH team, along with colleagues at WHO ECEH in Bonn, has focused on the creation, delivery and dissemination of reports and events highlighting the importance of nature and biodiversity and their impacts on human health and well-being. For more information, please see the [news item](#) on the WHO website.

Health at a Glance 2023: digitalization of health systems can significantly improve performance and outcomes

The 2023 edition of Health at a Glance, from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), provides a comprehensive set of indicators on population health and health system performance across OECD members and key emerging economies. These cover health status, risk factors for health, access to and quality of health care, and health system resources. Analysis draws from the latest comparable official national statistics and other sources. This edition also has a special focus on digital health, which measures the digital readiness of OECD countries' health systems, and outlines what countries need to do to accelerate the digital health transformation. For further estimates, please see the latest edition of [Health at a Glance](#).

Air quality: EU Council ready to start talks with Parliament on new rules to strengthen standards in the EU

The EU Council adopted its [negotiating mandate](#) for talks with the European Parliament on a proposal to set EU air quality standards to be achieved by 2030 and to put the EU on a trajectory closer to its zero-pollution vision for air by 2050. The Council also seeks to align EU air quality standards more closely with WHO guidelines.

EU Parliament approves directive lowering asbestos exposure limit

The directive, previously agreed upon by member states, seeks to better safeguard those at risk of asbestos-related health issues through lowering exposure limits, improving detection methods and enhancing worker protections. Please see [here](#) for more information.



9. UPCOMING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

We have a number of important upcoming meetings and events. Here is a list of the highlights.

High-level Conference on Research Perspectives on the Health Impacts of Climate Change (Brussels, Belgium, 19–20 February 2024).

Global Workshop on Transboundary Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation (of the Water Convention) (Geneva, Switzerland, 26–27 February 2024).

[Meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate](#) (of the Water Convention) (Geneva, Switzerland, 28 February 2024).

Global Meeting of the Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health (ATACH) and Training of Trainers in Climate and Health (Madrid, Spain, 4–8 March 2024) (by official nomination only).

[10th high-level meeting of the Small Countries Initiative](#) (Limassol, Cyprus, 11–12 April 2024).

Meeting of the [Working Group on Water and Health](#) of the Protocol on Water and Health (Geneva, Switzerland, 16–17 April 2024).

Meeting of the Bureau of the Protocol on Water and Health (Geneva, Switzerland, 18–19 April 2024).

[Meeting under THE PEP including a relay race workshop and a meeting of the Partnership on Active Mobility](#) (Belgrade, Serbia, 22–25 April 2024).

12th meeting of the EHTF Bureau (virtual, 22 April 2024).

14th meeting of the EHTF (Bonn, Germany, 26–27 June 2024).



10. CONTACT US

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