



World Health
Organization

European Region

WHO European Centre for Environment and Health

Bonn, Germany

With more than 30 years of experience, the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH) in Bonn, Germany, is a centre of scientific excellence that provides state-of-the-art evidence on existing and emerging environmental health risks. As an integral part of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, it assists its 53 Member States in identifying and implementing policies to address these risks and supports the environment and health workforce in building capacity.

The ECEH develops policy advice; globally relevant guidelines, such as for air quality and environmental noise; and tools on various environmental and health topics to support countries' decision-making processes at the national and local levels. The ECEH works with leading experts, stakeholders and other partners to encourage a culture of transdisciplinary collaboration to achieve a common goal of technical excellence and innovation in the WHO European Region and beyond.

As the "triple crisis" of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss is becoming an increasingly frequent source of health emergencies, the ECEH plays a crucial role in the response by giving concrete guidance for such events, helping countries prepare, strengthening resilience and providing support when environment-related emergencies happen.

Our vision

***Safe and supportive
environments for healthier
people, a thriving planet and
a sustainable future.***

Our areas of work

ECEH accomplishes its mission by understanding how environmental exposures affect health and well-being and increase inequalities, assessing and reducing environmental risk factors for health, generating evidence for sound policy development, and developing and implementing training in key technical areas:

- tackling impacts of climate change on health, including strengthening health systems, supporting adaptation, and advocating mitigation measures;
- reducing the impacts of pollution and improving air quality;
- integrating nature and biodiversity in environment and health policies, and implementing the One Health approach;
- providing universal and equitable access to safe drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene for all in all settings;
- promoting safe, healthy and sustainable transport systems;
- preventing injuries and promoting road safety;
- strengthening sound chemical management to reduce exposure and the risks of adverse health effects of chemicals;
- promoting a safe, healthy and resilient built environment across all settings;
- rehabilitating contaminated sites for safe human use and addressing waste management;
- promoting health impact assessment and integration of health into environmental assessments;
- strengthening environment and health advocacy, risk communication and capacity-building.



Why our work matters

Environmental pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss are significant threats to health, disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable in the European Region.

- Around 1.4 million people die annually due to environmental risk factors like pollution and climate change in the Region.
- About 570 000 deaths could be attributed to ambient air pollution in 2019.
- About 34 000 annual deaths are due to inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); 75 million people lacked access to safely managed drinking water in 2022.
- At least 62 000 people died in 2022 from heatwaves in 35 countries.
- About 269 500 deaths were attributed to selected chemicals in 2019.
- Almost 70 000 people were killed due to unsafe road environments in the European Region in 2019.



A strong mandate for a healthier future

In the late 1980s, European countries initiated a process to eliminate the most significant environmental threats to human health. This European Environment and Health Process (EHP) became a unique intersectoral policy platform that brings together relevant sectors from the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region and stakeholders representing international, regional, and nongovernmental organizations, including youth. The WHO Regional Office for Europe provides the functions of the EHP secretariat, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Environment Programme. A series of ministerial conferences shape priorities and actions for environment, health and well-being in the Region. The Ministerial Conferences have been held in Frankfurt (1989), Helsinki (1994), London (1999), Budapest (2004), Parma (2010), Ostrava (2017) and Budapest (2023).

The Budapest Declaration: the way forward

The Budapest Declaration was adopted with a roadmap for the European Region at the Seventh Ministerial Conference in 2023, and endorsed by a Decision of the 73rd session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe. It tackles pollution, addresses threats posed by climate change to health, ensures everyone has access to safe WASH, integrates nature and biodiversity considerations into health policies, and promotes a clean, safe and healthy built environment by 2030.

By adopting the Budapest Declaration, countries committed to preventing, preparing for, detecting and responding to environmental and health challenges, including emergencies, ensuring that their health systems are more environmentally sustainable and resilient to climate change. Investment in human resources, generation of knowledge and innovation, tools, transdisciplinary approaches, and more robust oversight and intersectoral governance are essential to achieve these commitments.

The Budapest Declaration describes a specific set of actions that countries can take to implement their commitments, for example, by improving the climate literacy of health workers, decarbonizing health systems, implementing appropriate waste management, promoting the use of human biomonitoring to assess chemical exposure, promoting safe active mobility and zero-emission transport systems, and implementing approaches such as One Health and nature-based solutions. It also emphasizes the empowerment of youth organizations to make their actions more relevant in policy-making and implementation. A new mechanism – Environment and Health Process Partnerships – was also launched to facilitate the implementation of these commitments.



For more information about WHO ECEH, visit:
[www.who.int/europe/teams/who-european-centre-for-environment-and-health-\(bonn-germany\)](https://www.who.int/europe/teams/who-european-centre-for-environment-and-health-(bonn-germany))

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