

BRUSSELS, 24 June 2025

To: EU Heads of States and Governments

CC: Council President Antonio Costa, Commission President Von der Leyen, Parliament President Roberta Metsola

Strengthening health protection on climate change and pollution as part of EU preparedness, security, and financing efforts

At the end of this week, you will be exchanging on EU defence, competitiveness, and preparedness matters as part of the European Council.

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), a non-governmental alliance of over 70 organisations working for better health through a healthier environment, urges you to strengthen health protection and disease prevention as part of [EU preparedness](#) and [financing priorities](#).

People's health is threatened like never before from climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), this triple crisis is responsible for almost 20% of all deaths in the European region. Everyone's health in the EU is at risk, but some people are more vulnerable than others, including children, pregnant women, the elderly, those already sick or those facing socio-economic health inequalities.

Place health protection at the centre of EU climate efforts

The health costs of climate change in Europe are rising fast, and so is the human toll. In the summer of 2023, [more than 47,000 people lost their lives from the heat](#). The EU's first ever [climate risk assessment EUCRA](#) details the key health risks especially from heat and wildfires as one of five priority areas.

HEAL urges you to make health protection front and centre of EU climate efforts on mitigation, adaptation and preparedness. This includes integrating health into upcoming science-based risk assessments.

Strengthen legislative efforts to reduce chemicals pollution

The health burden and cost of pollution – air pollution, chemicals, and pesticides pollution – is unacceptably high. The health-related costs of exposure to PFAS – the so-called forever chemicals - are estimated to be [up to €84 billion](#) every year in the EU, which is only the tip of the iceberg.

HEAL calls on you to ensure that the upcoming revision of the EU REACH law on chemicals management will deliver the [long-awaited improvement for human health](#). It will be key to include addressing chemicals mixtures, to better reflect people's everyday exposure to a cocktail of chemicals. We also encourage you to take swifter action to reduce the risk from [PFAS linked to different health impacts including cancers](#), thyroid disease, immune dysfunction and hormone disruption. These measures would also be a stepping stone for any EU preparedness measures.

Step up investments in better health, not pollution

Public financing is essential to prevent health impacts and cost from the triple crisis. For the next EU budget cycle (MFF), significant investments for the further implementation of EU environmental and climate legislation for better health are needed.


HEAL urges you to [allocate at least 50% of the next EU budget to address climate, environmental, and pollution challenges](#), with 10% earmarked for zero pollution objectives. In addition, a phase out of fossil fuel subsidies is overdue.

[Civil society organisations play a unique role in EU policy deliberations](#), bringing forward independent science and

representing the public interest. Civil society engagement is at the heart of the European project. Yet for months there have been [attempts at EU level to damage civil society reputation](#), limit involvement in EU policy dialogues and cut public financing.

HEAL calls on you to show your commitment to a vibrant European civil society, including by supporting public financing for civil society in the next EU budget cycle.

Yours sincerely,



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Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is the leading not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects human health in the European Union (EU) and beyond. HEAL works to shape laws and policies that promote planetary and human health and protect those most affected by pollution, and raise awareness on the benefits of environmental action for health.

HEAL's over 70 member organisations include international, European, national and local groups of health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, patients, citizens, women, youth, and environmental experts representing over 200 million people across the 53 countries of the WHO European Region.

As an alliance, HEAL brings independent and expert evidence from the health community to EU and global decision-making processes to inspire disease prevention and to promote a toxic-free, low-carbon, fair and healthy future.

HEAL's EU Transparency Register Number: 00723343929-96