

People's health at the centre of EU climate policy beyond 2030

Dear Minister,

At your upcoming informal ministerial meeting on 10-11 July, you will be considering the ambition of the European climate policy for the next two decades.

The [Health and Environment Alliance \(HEAL\)](#), an alliance of over 70 member organisations, urges you to put people's health and disease prevention at the centre of your ongoing critical deliberations.

The impacts of climate change on people's health are mounting: the summer of 2023 saw [47,000+ deaths from heat](#), which is the second highest number since 2015. Wildfire smoke worsens air quality, [affecting vulnerable groups especially](#). One in three Europeans has allergies, [now worsened by longer seasons](#). Fossil fuels drive climate change, pollution, and early deaths.

The decisions you make today will either increase the health burden from climate change or help prevent health impacts. As such, HEAL is concerned that the European Commission's proposed 2040 target—while aiming for a 90% reduction in domestic emissions—leaves the door open for up to 3% to be met through international carbon offsets. This and other so-called 'flexibilities' risk undermining the dual goal of cutting emissions *and* protecting people's health in Europe.

Allowing third country carbon offsets to meet the EU's climate target undermines pollution-reduction and efforts to protect public health in Europe. The majority of greenhouse gas emissions in the EU are the result of fossil fuel burning in transport, energy or industrial processes. In these combustion processes, together with CO₂, high amounts of air pollutants are being released which worsen air quality locally and regionally, leading to significant health impacts and cost.

HEAL calls on you to step up in placing health protection at the centre of EU climate policies. According to a [recent Eurobarometer survey](#), most Europeans also consider addressing climate change should be a priority to improve public health and quality of life.

In 2023, EU member states committed to take action on climate change in the [World Health Organization Europe Budapest Declaration](#). The EU's [8th Environment Action Programme](#) sets forward a range of legally binding commitments, including the commitment to phase out fossil fuel subsidies.

To this end, HEAL's science-based recommendations for your consideration include:

1. PREVENT POLLUTION OUTSOURCING THROUGH CARBON OFFSETS

HEAL urges you to prioritise tangible, verifiable domestic emission reductions across all sectors, particularly those with direct health co-benefits as energy, transport, agriculture, and housing. Refrain from supporting loopholes that delay and weaken pollution reduction at home, such as offsetting emissions through third-country credits or intra-sector flexibility mechanisms.

2. RAISE EU CLIMATE MITIGATION AMBITION TO PROTECT HEALTH AND PREVENT IRREVERSIBLE HARM

HEAL urges you to commit to ambitious, science-aligned greenhouse gas (GHG) domestic net emission reductions in line with the commitment to 1.5 degrees. This means advancing the goal of climate neutrality to 2040, ensuring 2035 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) align with the 1.5 degrees pathway, and prioritising climate actions with proven benefits to health (e.g. active transportation).

3. END FOSSIL FUEL SUBSIDIES

HEAL urges you to support an EU-wide roadmap to swiftly phase out all direct and indirect fossil fuel subsidies in the energy sector by 2027. The post-2027 EU long-term (MFF) budget should not include fossil fuel subsidies and instead support a clean transition by fostering public investments into renewable energy, pollution reduction, and climate resilience.

We look to you to lead with ambition and place the health of people at the heart of climate policymaking.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Stauffer

Deputy Director

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