



22 October 2026

To: Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission President

CC: Teresa Ribera, Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition

CC: Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth

CC: Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare

CC: Jessika Roswall, Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy

CC: Ministers for the Environment, Climate and Health

Health call for urgent action to strengthen health protection in the EU climate resilience framework

We, the undersigned health organisations, representing healthcare and medical professionals, patients and public health experts from across the EU and beyond, urge you to place people's health at the centre of the European climate resilience framework.

As Europe warms up twice as fast as the rest of the world, effective action on health and climate is more urgent than ever. This summer's record-breaking heat caused at

least 35,000 heat-related deaths in Europe, adding to the [heat toll of over 181,000 deaths](#) for the years 2022–2024. Record-breaking wildfires have had lasting effects on people's health, including from air pollution, the loss of loved ones, homes and livelihoods. Flooding and droughts add to the health toll, including with mental health impacts.

Europe is not adequately prepared to prevent and face the growing health impacts and cost of climate change. Extreme weather events caused [more than 240,000 fatalities between 1980 and 2023](#). New research points to a concerning double risk from air pollution exposure and heat combined, especially for cardio-respiratory patients living in cities. Furthermore, vulnerable groups of the population, including people facing socio-economically related health inequalities, the older people, pregnant women and children, and those with pre-existing health conditions, are at greater risk and with [fewer resources to adapt](#). Climate-health risks are [already at critical levels](#) in some EU regions.

For the upcoming European Climate Resilience Framework, we welcome the emphasis on changing Europe's risk culture, through science-based risk assessments, informed decisions across sectors, and risk ownership and management.

Climate-related health impacts are shaped by decisions in all sectors, including housing, urban planning, energy, transport, agriculture, and environmental policies. Assigning the health risks to the health sector only would mean missing key prevention needs, leaving protection gaps, and would result in inefficiency. The forthcoming Framework has to ensure accountability for these cross-cutting health risks, while also recognizing the specific role of the health sector in preparing and responding to climate impacts.

As health sector organisations, we call for the following:

1. Ensure dedicated financing for health and climate resilience. The estimated investment needed to build climate resilience across Europe is up to €64 billion a year through 2030–2040. Financing needs to be scaled up at all governance levels: the next EU long-term budget should include a dedicated budget line for preventative climate resilience measures. This is especially important at the city level, where the urban heat island effect worsens impacts. In addition, health systems face growing climate pressures but remain largely overlooked in current climate resilience investment: [only 0.5% of adaptation and mitigation projects reported by cities directly addressed health systems and services](#). Dedicated allocations for urban climate-health resilience and resilient healthcare systems can help to unlock further funding at member state level.

2. Increase effectiveness and impact through binding measures. Progress on climate resilience and implementation remains uneven across the EU, leaving vulnerable groups particularly exposed. The upcoming European Climate Resilience Law should establish EU-wide, legally binding, and measurable targets that [explicitly address health](#), drawing on common climate scenarios and health risk assessments. EU-wide targets – following the example of the [Zero Pollution Action Plan](#) – would ensure more consistent implementation and help to scale up investments in prevention and the reduction of avoidable harm.

3. Promote and prioritise measures for a clean and healthy environment. Urban green spaces help [reduce](#) heat exposure, the risk of flooding and improve local living

conditions, while supporting mental health and physical activity. Protecting and restoring nature should thus be a core part of climate and health resilience. In addition, clean air measures are key as they will improve the overall health status of the population, contributing to increased resilience to the growing frequency and intensity of heatwaves.

4. Prioritise the protection of the most vulnerable with targeted support. In 2023, [over 1 million additional people](#) in Europe experienced moderate or severe food insecurity compared with the annual average for the period 1981–2010 due to increased heatwave and drought exposure, with low-income households at much [greater risk](#). While national and local adaptation frameworks are increasingly in place, they [neither systematically address health effectively](#) nor protect vulnerable groups.

5. Strengthening resilience needs to go hand in hand with ambitious climate mitigation. The burning of oil, coal, and gas drive fuels climate change and air pollution, leading to avoidable adverse health impacts and cost. Rapidly reducing emissions and phasing out fossil fuels are essential to limit further health harm and prevent climate risks from overwhelming Europe's capacity to adapt.

Climate action is not merely a necessity; it is a high-return investment for a more just and resilient society. [Every euro invested would return 6x in wider benefits](#).

We count on your leadership to follow the EU Treaties aim of ensuring European's well-being with firmly securing health protection in the upcoming European Climate Resilience Framework.

Yours sincerely,

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Executive Director

Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

On behalf of

European Organisations

- AIM – Healthcare and social benefits for all
- European Academy of Neurology (EAN)
- European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA)
- European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN)
- European Lung Foundation (ELF)
- European Respiratory Society (ERS)
- Health Care Without Harm Europe (HCWH)
- Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)

- Youth and Environment Europe (YEE)

National Organisations

- Asociación Madrileña de Salud Pública (AMASAP), Spain
- Associazione Culturale Pediatri (ACP), Italy
- BRAL - urban movement for Brussels, Belgium
- International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE) Austria / Ärztinnen und Ärzte für eine gesunde Umwelt, Austria
- International Society of Doctors for Environment (ISDE Italy), Italy
- Mutualités Libres/Onafhankelijke Ziekenfondsen, Belgium
- Portuguese Society for Environmental Health (SPSA), Portugal
- Salud por Derecho, Spain
- Sociedad Española de Medicina Preventiva, Salud Pública y Gestión Sanitaria (SEMPSPGS), Spain
- Sociedad Española de Salud Pública y Administración Sanitaria (SESPAS), Spain
- Solidaris, Spain

Health and Environment Alliance aisbl

We are the leading not-for-profit organisation addressing how our environment affects health in the European Union and beyond. Supported by over 70 member organisations, HEAL brings independent and expert scientific evidence from the health community to European and global decision-making processes to inspire disease prevention strategies. HEAL'S EU Transparency Register Number: 00723343929-96