19 November 2026

To: EU Heads of States and Governments

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

Invest in prevention, protect health: Increase EU funding for climate resilience and pollution prevention

Honourable Member of the European Council,

On 26-27 November, you will be discussing the European Council President Antonio Costa's new proposals for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028-34.

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is an alliance of over 70 member organisations working for better health through a healthier environment. HEAL calls on you to place particular emphasis on increasing public investments for disease prevention, health resilience to climate change and pollution prevention in the next EU budget.

The Lancet Countdown Europe 2026 report confirms that people's health is threatened like never before from the triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Europe's four record-breaking heatwaves of 2026 caused at least 50,000 premature deaths across 854 European cities, with more than 22,000 premature deaths among older people. Climate- and pollution-related risks already cost the EU economy over €738 billion between 1980 and 2023, with climate-related economic losses alone more than doubled since 2010.

Public financing is essential to prevent health impacts and cost from this triple crisis, and health should be at the centre of the upcoming budget negotiations.

The European Commission's proposal includes a horizontal spending target of at least 35% for climate and environment. In view of the health threat and cost of the triple crisis, HEAL considers that this target needs to be raised and complemented by the following:

1. Prioritise climate and clean air investments

Air pollution remains the top environmental threat to health in the EU. The current EU budget 2021-2027 dedicates €185.5 billion to clean air objectives, mostly (70%) allocated under the temporary NextGeneration EU, ending in 2027, and Cohesion funds.

As EU member states will have to implement key clean air requirements (with the revised Ambient Air Quality Directive (AAQD) and the National Emission Reduction Commitments (NEC) Directive), the next EU MFF will be key to help deliver on clean air for health, to provide for major investments for implementation.

HEAL urges you to support a dedicated budget line for clean air financing which would provide an adequate incentive mechanism, transparency, and accountability, and support especially regional and local clean air measures.

Every euro invested in pollution prevention will deliver high-value European public goods, including reduced cross-border risks and economic losses, and increased health resilience of society, especially of the most vulnerable groups.

Clean air is also a prerequisite for a more climate resilient Europe. The European Commission proposed a new climate resilience law that falls short of providing dedicated and increased financing for health resilience. This record heat summer has shown that national, regional and urban authorities need financial support, as they are currently unprepared to address the reality and the scale of the climate-health emergency, which leaves vulnerable groups more exposed to substantial impacts.

HEAL urges you to support a dedicated budget line for EU investments on health and climate resilience to enable the upcoming climate resilience plans to deliver better health protection.

2. End fossil fuel subsidies

The burning of fossil fuels is the leading contributor to the health burden and cost from air pollution, as well as to climate change. Despite political commitments, public subsidies for fossil fuels continue, with 354 billion in 2023 alone. In five EU countries, the amount of net fossil fuel subsidies is over 10% higher than health expenditure.

HEAL urges you to support a clean, healthy transition by phasing out fossil fuel subsidies in the 2028-34 EU budget and **swiftly ending direct and indirect fossil fuels subsidies in the energy sector by 2035.**

3. Keep the EU LIFE programme as a standalone programme

HEAL is one of over 700 civil society organisations, local and regional authorities, and businesses expressing deep concern about the current proposal to integrate the EU LIFE programme on environment and climate into broader funding mechanisms. In over three decades, LIFE has supported over 6,000 projects, many of which have led to tangible health improvements, e.g. through cleaner air.

HEAL urges you to support maintaining LIFE as a standalone programme with a reinforced budget, essential for preventative, resilience and preparedness efforts. This has to include support for all types of beneficiaries, including operating grants to civil society.

HEAL counts on your leadership for decisive public financing decisions to protect health against the triple crisis.

Yours sincerely,

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Executive Director

Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)