

14 October 2025



To: EU leaders

CC: Commission President von der Leyen, Executive Vice President Ribera, Commissioners Hoekstra, Varhelyi

Health call for ambitious EU climate action to prevent disease, strengthen preparedness and reduce health cost

Dear Presidents and EU Heads of States,

At the next European Council on 22-23 October 2025, you will be considering the EU's climate ambition beyond 2030.

We, the undersigned health sector organisations, representing healthcare and medical professionals, patients and public health experts from across the EU, urge you to place people's health at the centre of your agreements on the EU's climate mitigation ambition beyond 2030.

Your leadership is key to protect people all across the EU from climate-driven health emergencies, which keep getting worse.

Today, Europe is not prepared for the growing health impacts of climate change. The [2025 State of the EU Environment and Climate report](#) confirms what public health experts have long warned about: the health costs of climate change in Europe are rising fast, and so is the human toll.

Extreme weather events caused more than [240,000 fatalities](#) between 1980 and 2023, with vulnerable groups – children, the elderly, people with pre-existing conditions, and people facing health inequalities – bearing the highest burden. The summer of 2024 saw over [62,700 heat-related deaths](#) in Europe, a 23 per cent increase compared with the year before. Climate and pollution-related risks already cost the EU economy over [EUR 738 billion](#) between 1980 and 2023. Conservative estimates show that in the summer of 2025, extreme weather events causing economic losses of at least [EUR 43 billion](#) to the EU economy, with long lasting losses expected to rise to [EUR 126 billion by 2029](#).

The burning of fossil fuels, the main driver of climate change, also creates pervasive air pollution that cuts lives short and deepens socio-economic inequalities. Intensifying wildfires worsen air quality, aggravating health impacts. In cities, heat and poor air quality are a particular threat for people living with respiratory and cardiovascular disease.

Your leadership on the EU's climate ambition for 2040 will directly shape health outcomes for decades. Ambitious climate mitigation measures are also needed to support effective climate adaptation and preparedness.

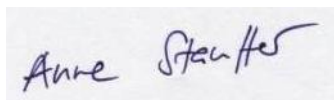
Faster emissions cuts next decade will significantly reduce the health risks of climate change, from deadly heat stress to the spread of climate-sensitive infectious diseases. Failure to increase ambition would lock in higher temperatures that surpass Europe's capacity to adapt, with increasingly severe, irreversible impacts on health and well-being.

As health sector experts, we recommend the following:

- 1. Agree on an ambitious goal for EU mitigation for 2040**, to prevent and reduce health harm and health system cost, in line with the Paris Agreement commitment to 1.5 degrees. Climate mitigation actions with proven benefits to health should be prioritised.
- 2. Prevent pollution outsourcing through carbon offsets** to prioritise verifiable domestic emission reductions across all sectors, particularly those with direct health co-benefits in the energy, transport, agriculture, and housing sectors. Offsetting schemes that allow countries or companies to “compensate” for continued emissions by paying for reductions elsewhere risk outsourcing pollution instead of eliminating it at the source. Such approaches can delay the urgent domestic emissions cuts needed, while communities at home continue to suffer the health impacts of pollution.
- 3. Support an EU-wide roadmap to swiftly phase out all direct and indirect fossil fuels** in the energy sector by 2027, with a phase out of fossil fuel subsidies in the 2028-35 EU budget, in support of a clean transition, including public investments into renewable energy, pollution reduction, and climate resilience.

We count on your leadership to ensure the highest possible climate ambition, commensurate with protecting the health of current and future generations.

Yours sincerely,



Anne Stauffer, Deputy Director
Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

On behalf of:

Association Internationale de la Mutualité (AIM)
EuroHealthNet
European Lung Foundation (ELF)
European Respiratory Society (ERS)
Health Care Without Harm (HCWH)
Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)
Aéma Groupe
Associazione Culturale Pediatri (ACP)
BRAL Citizens Action Brussels (BRAL)
Comité pour le Développement Durable en Santé (C2DS)
Deutsche Allianz Klimawandel und Gesundheit (KLUG)
EquiRoots Climate Collective
Mutualités Libres/Onafhankelijke Ziekenfondsen
Salud por Derecho

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 gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the European Union (EU) for the production of this publication. The responsibility for the content lies with the authors and the views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the EU institutions, CINEA and funders. The European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA) and the funders are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained in this publication.

HEAL's EU Transparency Register Number: 00723343929-96