

25 March 2026



To: President of the European Commission, Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen

CC: Executive Vice-President, Mrs. Teresa Ribera; Executive Vice-President, Mr. Stéphane Séjourné; Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth, Mr. Wopke Hoekstra; Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare, Olivér Várhelyi.

Re: Open letter calling for the urgent release of an EU Strategy on Climate and Health

Dear President of the European Commission, Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen,

We, the undersigned representatives of four major health and environmental organisations, bringing together more than 1 million healthcare professionals and 8,000 healthcare facilities across the EU, write to express our support for the [proposal](#) by Austria, Czechia, Estonia, France, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and Spain calling on the European Commission to publish an EU Strategy on Climate and Health by the end of June 2026.

We strongly support the previous call by the above mentioned Member States to develop a dedicated and coordinated EU strategic approach to climate and health, integrating both mitigation and adaptation, and ensuring that climate and health considerations are systematically embedded across all EU policies and actions.

Climate change is the greatest public health threat of the 21st century, already affecting the health of populations in Europe and disproportionately impacting vulnerable persons. As the fastest-warming continent, Europe is experiencing record heatwaves and increasingly frequent and severe extreme weather events.¹ Heatwaves in the summer of 2022 caused [60,000–70,000 deaths](#), with projections of a [370% increase in heat-related mortality if temperatures rise by 2°C](#) above the pre-industrial level, further [straining health systems](#). Climate change is also increasing the frequency and spread of vector- and water-borne diseases, reducing crop yields and nutrient content, and exacerbating air pollution. The latter causes [7 million premature deaths annually](#) worldwide, including [182,000 deaths](#) attributable to PM 2.5 only in the EU, with cities such as Brussels recording more than [900 premature deaths yearly](#).

¹ Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) 2025: European State of the Climate 2024, climate.copernicus.eu/ESOTC/2024, library.wmo.int/idurl/4/69475, doi.org/10.24381/14j9-s541

These impacts fall heavily on Europe's health systems and healthcare professionals, while also exerting a high financial cost. Between 1980 and 2020, Europe suffered economic losses of [€450–520 billion and 85,000–145,000 deaths](#) from extreme weather events. [By 2100, up to 1,040 European hospitals could face total or partial shutdown](#) due to climate-related disasters, with [11% of healthcare facilities located in potential flood-prone areas](#). Frontline healthcare workers face direct exposure to climate-driven health risks, including psychological strain, infection, injury, and mortality, with projections of at least [50,000 deaths and 8 million years of healthy life \(DALYs\) lost globally from 2025 to 2050](#) due to climate-related health risks.

At the same time, Europe's healthcare sector contributes to approximately 5% of regional greenhouse gas emissions. If healthcare were a country, it would rank as the [fifth-largest polluter globally](#), with emissions in Europe exceeding those of most developing countries. A climate-resilient healthcare sector in Europe is imperative to slow the pace of climate change and the impact of its associated health hazards on population health and health systems. Without action, [healthcare emissions could triple by 2050](#), while the benefits of climate mitigation remain largely untapped – and could prevent millions of avoidable deaths each year.²

Addressing climate change demands mitigation and adaptation actions across sectors, guided by a coordinated One Health approach that promotes health equity and addresses the social and environmental determinants of health. Importantly, climate action in the energy, food and agriculture, transport, and sanitation sectors offers [significant health benefits](#), including clean air, healthy diets, active lifestyles, and safe drinking water.

As highlighted by Member States, the absence of a dedicated EU Strategy on Climate and Health has led to fragmented and less effective action, both internally and in international processes such as the WHO and UNFCCC negotiations. As COP31 approaches in late 2026, a comprehensive EU Strategy on Climate and Health would strengthen coordination, improve policy coherence, and reinforce Europe's global leadership in climate and health.

We would be grateful for a response from the Commission indicating a clear timeline and process for the development and publication of an EU Strategy on Climate and Health, in line with the request of Member States and the urgency posed by the [biggest health threat of our time](#).

We thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Mark Wilson, Executive Director
Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) Europe
europe.noharm.org

² Romanello, Marina et al. The Lancet (2025), The 2025 report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: climate change action offers a lifeline, Volume 406, Issue 10521, 2804 - 2857

On behalf of:

Dr Jeni Miller, Executive Director
Global Climate and Health Alliance
climateandhealthalliance.org

Dr Ole Johan Bakke, President
The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)
cpme.eu

Dr Milka Sokolović, Director General
The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
epha.org

[Health Care Without Harm \(HCWH\) Europe](#) is a nonprofit NGO that exists to create a sustainable healthcare sector in Europe, demonstrating alongside our network of thousands of hospitals and healthcare leaders how we can transform healthcare to protect both people and our planet. HCWH Europe is a registered international non-profit association (AISBL). BCE number: 0767.799.441. EU Transparency Register ID number: 57514749088-82