



PRESS RELEASE

29 November 2018

HEALTH GROUPS CALL FOR GREATER EU LEADERSHIP IN TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

Lancet Countdown assessment shows lack of progress on reducing emissions, while millions worldwide suffer from increased heat stress

Brussels, 29 November 2018 - New research published in The Lancet medical journal today shows that emissions, climate change and rising temperatures are already exposing people everywhere to an unacceptably high health risk. The independent, interdisciplinary research collaboration Lancet Countdown identified that last year globally, 157 million more vulnerable people were subjected to a heatwave than in 2000.

The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME), in collaboration with the Lancet Countdown, has published a [Briefing for EU Policymakers](#) focusing on the link between health and climate change. This briefing, written by Dr. H el ene Rossinot and launched in parallel with the 2018 Lancet Countdown report and a number of other policy briefs around the world, shows that rising temperatures as a result of climate change are already exposing people everywhere to an unacceptably high health risk. Of particular concern is the finding that older people in Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean are particularly vulnerable to heat extremes, markedly higher than even in Africa and Southeast Asia.

Dr. Martin Balzan, CPME Rapporteur on Environmental Health, states: *“We hope that EU policy-makers will take to heart the new evidence on the huge threat to people’s health climate change poses as they enter the COP24 climate negotiations. This year’s heatwave impacted many people in Europe and was a glimpse of what is expected to come in the future. Heat stress is a particular threat to elderly people living in urban areas, and those with pre-existing conditions. The WHO European Region is one of the worst off – with 42% of the population being over 65 years and a more elderly population living in urban areas.”*

Whilst the numbers of total deaths is strongly related to population size, the change in death rates can be much greater in regions where conditions are conducive to greater warming, with the greatest impact expected in central southern Europe. It is estimated that mortality increases in Member States will be 1– 4% for each one-degree rise in temperature, meaning that heat-related mortality could rise by 30 000 deaths per year by the 2030s, and by 50 000 to 110 000 deaths per year by the 2080s.

The briefing provides seven take home messages and recommendations, including the development of National Action Plans for Climate, Health and Wellbeing by EU Member States,

the inclusion of climate change and health in the medical curriculum and consistent, pro-active communication by health bodies on links between climate change and health. CPME is strongly encouraging its national member associations, and individual physicians to continue to bring home this message for action to their national authorities in the best interest of the health and quality of life of their patients.

Dr. Helene Rossinot, lead author of the briefing said: *“The trends in climate change impacts, exposures and vulnerabilities are an unacceptably high risk for the current and future generations. As a doctor, I am worried about the increasing numbers of patients that will soon have to be treated for climate-related illnesses. We need to act now so that future generations don’t have to pay the bill of our carelessness.”*

In addition to an increased frequency and exposure to heatwaves, the new Lancet assessment found a lack of progress in reducing emissions and building adaptive capacity, which threatens both human lives and the viability of the health systems.

The Lancet Countdown also highlights developments in the energy sector, which contributes both to greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, pointing out that the carbon intensity of total primary energy supply remained unchanged since 1990. For the first time, the report attributes early death from air pollution to specific sources, finding that coal power generation accounts for approximately 16% of air pollution related premature deaths globally.

“Coal power generation is still a major source in Europe’s energy mix, with coal emissions fuelling climate change, worsening air quality, and threatening our health”, says Anne Stauffer, Director for Strategy and Campaigns at the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL). “As EU leaders enter the next UN climate negotiations in Katowice, Poland, they need to walk the talk on their climate and clean air commitments. The new Lancet Countdown evidence should prompt policy-makers to declare an ambitious phase out date for this outdated and health-harming fossil fuel, starting with the most polluting plants as soon as possible. Coal phase out is a crucial, “no regrets” public health intervention.”

The Lancet Countdown global report can be found [here](#)
The Lancet Countdown EU Policy briefing can be found [here](#)

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) warmly invite you to the Brussels launch of the new Lancet Countdown report, on **Wednesday, 5 December 2018**, at the HEAL premises in Brussels, Belgium. More information can be found [here](#).

Note to editors

The Lancet Countdown: Tracking Progress on Health and Climate Change is a global, independent, interdisciplinary research collaboration between 27 leading academic institutions, the United Nations, and intergovernmental agencies. It draws on world-class expertise from climate scientists; ecologists; mathematicians; geographers; engineers; energy, food, livestock and transport experts; economists; social and political scientists; public health professionals; and medical doctors. The Countdown monitors and reports annually on the relationship between health and climate, and its implications for national governments, reporting on 41 indicators across five key thematic groups.

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union (EU). With the support of more than 70 member organisations, HEAL brings independent expertise and evidence from the health community to different decision-making processes. Our broad alliance represents health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, doctors, nurses, cancer and asthma groups, citizens, women's groups, youth groups, environmental NGOs, scientists and public health research institutes. Members include international and Europe-wide organisations as well as national and local groups. Website: www.env-health.org. Follow HEAL on [Facebook](#) and Twitter [@HealthandEnv](#)

The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) represents national medical associations across Europe. CPME is committed to contributing the medical profession's point of view to EU institutions and European policy-making through pro-active cooperation on a wide range of health and healthcare related issues. Website: www.cpme.eu Twitter: [@CPME EUROPA](#)