



EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT
AND HEALTH PROCESS



EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH PROCESS NEWSLETTER

April–June 2024

1. EDITORIAL
2. TOP STORIES
3. COUNTRY ACTIVITIES
4. RECENT EVENTS
5. LATEST PUBLICATIONS AND CAPACITY-BUILDING MATERIALS
6. EHP PARTNERSHIPS CORNER
7. NEWS FROM EHP STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS
8. UPCOMING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES
9. CONTACT US



1. EDITORIAL

Greetings! It is a pleasure to welcome you to this new issue of the [European Environment and Health Process \(EHP\) newsletter](#).

As you read on, you will discover more about EHP activities in various countries; benefit from the insights gained through work on health challenges related to the triple crisis of climate change, environmental pollution and biodiversity loss; and get up to date with newly published materials.

Prepare also to be inspired as we showcase the collective dedication and commitment of the [European Environment and Health Task Force \(EHTF\)](#) members.

In light of the very hot weather affecting many Member States this summer, we hope you [#KeepCool](#) in the heat.

EHP Secretariat



Photo: A creative moment from the 14th EHTF meeting, Utrecht, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), 26–27 June 2024
©Mariana Nissen Da Costa Paiva, 2024



April–June 2024

2. TOP STORIES

Working hand in hand: highlights from the 14th EHTF meeting in Utrecht

On 26–27 June 2024, the vibrant city of Utrecht, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), hosted the 14th EHTF meeting. This event was a collaborative effort by the EHTF, co-organized by the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (WHO ECEH), the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) and the City of Utrecht.

The meeting saw the successful convening of more than 80 participants from 43 Member States of the WHO European Region and 11 stakeholders, both in-person and online. Representing the diversity of the Region,

participants created a dynamic environment for discussion and collaboration.

Special thanks go to the EHTF Chair, Brigit Staatsen, and the co-Chair, Professor Raquel Duarte-Davidson, for their exceptional leadership. Their dedicated efforts were instrumental in facilitating the successful outcomes of the meeting.

Also, congratulations go to Alessandra Fidanza from the Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, Italy, and Dr Tamás Pándics from the National Public Health Center, Hungary, for joining the EHTF Bureau.

Key highlights from the meeting



Setting the agenda for 2024–2025

The EHTF members outlined and agreed on activities and milestones for the EHP in the coming years. The discussions included agreement on the topics for the [Bonn Dialogues on Environment and Health](#) and led to the adoption of the programme of work for the EHTF for 2024–2025.

The agenda for 2024–2025 is organized around the structure of the [Declaration of the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health \(Budapest Declaration\)](#) and its Roadmap, with commitments to tackle climate change, environmental pollution and biodiversity loss through effective governance, enhanced financial resources, comprehensive knowledge and robust partnerships. Developing the professional

profiles and competencies on environment and health is one of the most effective tools for strengthening service delivery by the environment and health workforce.

Updates from EHP Partnerships

Lead organizations and partners provided updates on recent developments, at the plenary and a “marketplace” session. They shared progress on organizing meetings and consultations for drafting each EHP Partnership’s programme of work. Excitingly, two new EHP Partnerships were launched: the **EHP Partnership on Poison Centres**, led by the United Kingdom; and the **EHP Partnership on Risk Reduction in the School Environment**, led by Hungary (for more details, see the [“EHP Partnerships Corner”](#)).





April-June 2024



Adopting revised terms of reference of the EHP Partnerships and rules of procedure of the EHTF

The EHTF adopted revised terms of reference for EHP Partnerships, incorporating detailed guidance on operational procedures based on lessons learned. Additionally, the EHTF adopted revised rules of procedure to enhance efficiency, effectiveness and inclusiveness.

Youth engagement and the Budapest Youth Declaration

Youth representatives engaged in lively discussions, evaluating the progress made in implementing the [Budapest Youth Declaration](#). An interactive environment and health board game at the Youth Corner facilitated networking and bridged the intergenerational gap, fostering a collaborative spirit.



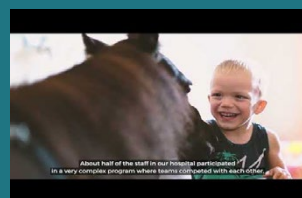
The 14th EHTF meeting was a significant step forward in addressing critical environment and health issues, provided updates from the Member States and stakeholders one year after the Budapest Declaration on the implementation of its commitments at the national level, and fostered international cooperation. The energy and dedication of all participants signal a promising future for the EHP and its impactful initiatives.



Capturing key moments! Check out the [photo gallery](#) to see some moments from the meeting and witness the collaborative spirit in action.



Video presenting key meeting highlights and memorable moments



Video featuring country experiences one year after the Budapest Conference



Photo: Participants of the 14th EHTF meeting, Utrecht, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), 26-27 June 2024
©Edith Kimotho, 2024



April–June 2024

Health and climate change at the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly (WHA77)

WHA77 took place from 27 May to 1 June in Geneva, Switzerland. The theme of this year's Health Assembly was All for Health, Health for All.

WHA77 set new ambitions for Member States and WHO in the area of climate and health through the adoption of a new [resolution on climate change and health](#). The resolution calls for the development of a “global WHO plan of action on climate change and health within existing resources, as feasible, that is coherent with the text of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement for consideration by the Seventy-eighth World Health Assembly in 2025, firmly integrating climate across the

technical work of the WHO at all three levels of the Organization and emphasizing the need for cross-sectoral cooperation, as appropriate”. The implementation of this global action plan will allow WHO to expand its ongoing work and mandate, in line with WHO's [Fourteenth General Programme of Work](#) 2025–2028 (GPW14), also adopted by WHA77. Responding to climate change was selected as one of its six key strategic objectives in GPW14. Acknowledging the significant changes in the world since the Sustainable Development Goals were adopted, GPW14 outlines an ambitious agenda for global health, addressing challenges and key megatrends such as climate change, aging populations, migration, shifting geopolitics and advancements in science and technology.

Campaign 2024 #KeepCool in the heat



The WHO European Region is the fastest warming of the six WHO regions, with temperatures rising at around twice the global average rate. Across the Region, in its 53 Member States, people are paying the ultimate price. The three warmest years on

record for the Region have all occurred since 2020, and the 10 warmest years have been since 2007.

For this summer, as for previous summers, WHO launched the 2024 #KeepCool in the heat campaign with a [news story](#). The story provides links to all available heat-health resources, including video series and revised

information sheets in 23 languages. These resources are freely available for use, quotation and dissemination. The Region is hosting three major international sporting events: the 2024 UEFA European Football Championship on 14 June–14 July in Germany, and the 2024 Summer Olympics on 26 July–11 August, immediately followed by the Paralympic Games on 28 August–8 September, both in Paris, France. For this, WHO/Europe with the German and French national authorities launched a campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of extreme heat and simple guidance (for [UEFA Euro 2024](#) and the [Olympics](#)) that can keep everybody safe.

The WHO/Europe emergency page “[Climate crisis: extreme weather](#)” contains comprehensive heat-health resources and will be updated with new materials and statements as the situation evolves.



April–June 2024

Additionally, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres issued a [call to action on extreme heat](#) in response to the deadly impacts of rising temperatures all over the world. In some places around the world, the climate crisis is already driving temperatures up to unbearable levels and estimates show that, globally, approximately 489 000 heat-related deaths occurred each year between 2000 and 2019, with the Region accounting for 36% or, on average, more than 175 000 deaths every year.

Check out the [statement](#) from the WHO Regional Director for Europe, Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge for more details.

Keep an eye out for more feature stories around the theme of heat coming out this summer, such as on [staying hydrated](#) and dealing with [hot weather during pregnancy](#).

Inspiration of the day: European Union countries approve landmark nature law



European Union (EU) countries approved a first-of-its-kind, flagship policy on nature restoration. This [law](#) aims to put measures in place to restore at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050.

The nature restoration law is among the EU's biggest environmental policies. It sets specific, legally binding targets and obligations for nature restoration in each of the listed ecosystems – from terrestrial to marine, freshwater and urban ecosystems.

The regulation aims to mitigate climate change and the effects of natural disasters. It will help the EU to fulfil its international environmental commitments and to restore European nature.

Air pollution now the second-leading risk factor for death globally

The fifth edition of the [State of Global Air report](#), released by the Health Effects Institute, revealed that air pollution caused 8.1 million deaths worldwide in 2021 and that many millions are dealing with debilitating chronic diseases, leaving health-care systems, economies and societies depleted.



3. COUNTRY ACTIVITIES

Creative campaign to raise awareness on tuberculosis and lung diseases in Romania

The WHO Country Office in Romania revealed a striking new [mural](#) at the Marius Nasta National Institute of Pneumology in Bucharest, kicking off an awareness campaign across three cities. Painted with air-purifying paint and created by a talented first-year art student, the mural's design was selected through a public contest

on World Tuberculosis Day 2024, garnering over 3900 votes. This campaign highlights the dangers of air pollution on lung health, underscoring the urgent need for action in a country still battling persistent tuberculosis threats.



Climate change in Cyprus: a health perspective

Climate change and health was high on the agenda as Cyprus hosted the Tenth High-level Meeting of the Small Countries Initiative on 11–12 April 2024 (for more about the meeting, please see "[Recent events](#)"). To address the pressing health risks caused by climate change, Cyprus has implemented a comprehensive set of

measures outlined in the National Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan. These include the setting up of public advisories for heatwave protection, development of emergency plans for health-care facilities, and empowering medical staff to respond effectively to climate-related emergencies.

Water safety plan auditing workshop in Croatia

On 6–7 May 2024, Croatia hosted a water safety plan (WSP) auditing workshop in Split, organized under the framework of the [Protocol on Water and Health](#), co-led by WHO ECEH

and in collaboration with Hungary and Italy. This workshop focused on training public health institutions in WSP auditing, fostering networking among Croatian, Hungarian and



April–June 2024

Italian experts to share experiences and best practices, and promoting future peer-to-peer support. WSP auditing plays a crucial role in ensuring safe drinking-water quality

management and surveillance, aligning with WHO guidelines for public health protection and supporting the implementation of the EU [Drinking Water Directive](#).

Greening of the health sector in Hungary

On 8–10 May 2024, the Hungarian Hospital Association hosted its annual congress with a forward-looking agenda. Aligned with the [Budapest Declaration](#) and in collaboration with WHO ECEH, the congress focused on the

transformative theme of greening the health sector. This initiative aims to champion climate-resilient, low-carbon and environmentally sustainable health-care practices not only within Hungary but also across the broader Region.

North Macedonia hosted roundtable discussion on adapting health sector to climate change

On 28 May 2024, a roundtable discussion focusing on identifying challenges and priorities for adapting the health sector to climate change took place in Skopje, North Macedonia. Key stakeholders from the Institute of Public Health, various ministries, academia, public health agencies, the Red Cross, nongovernmental organizations and WHO ECEH convened to strengthen their collaboration in environmental preservation and enhancing public health. During the meeting, the preliminary results of an analysis of the policy gap on climate change

and health were presented, shedding light on existing shortcomings in the current health policies related to climate change adaptation. These findings underscored the urgent need for coordinated efforts to address these gaps, ensuring both environmental sustainability and community health are safeguarded. The discussion reinforced the commitment of all parties involved to accelerate the integration of climate resilience into the health sector, highlighting the critical intersection of public health and environmental stewardship.

Health care towards the green path: national conference in Slovenia

On 3 June 2024, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Energy, in collaboration with the National Institute of Public Health, the Institute of Health and Environment, and the Jožef Stefan Institute, organized the first national conference on decarbonizing the health system, “[Health care towards the green path](#)”, in the city Brdo pri Kranju. The Ministry of Health has committed

to significant measures to reduce climate change impacts, focusing on renewable energy, healthy eating, sustainable pharmaceuticals, waste management, mobility and health-care digitalization. WHO ECEH was pleased to offer input to the discussions by sharing possible solutions and examples of good practice in the Region.



April–June 2024

Discussion on integrating health and environment considerations into transport policy in Lithuania

On 13–14 June 2024 in Vilnius, the Institute of Hygiene and WHO Country Office in Lithuania hosted the [6th meeting of THE PEP Partnership on Child- and Youth-Friendly Mobility](#).

Supported by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and WHO/Europe, this gathering focused on integrating health and environment considerations into transport policy across Europe. Ministries of transport, health and environment converged to discuss recent tools, pan-European strategies and national initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable and health-conscious mobility solutions. The meeting underscored the importance of creating safe and inclusive urban environments for future generations.



Photo: Organizers of the 6th meeting of THE PEP Partnership on Child- and Youth-Friendly Mobility in Vilnius ©Veronika Rynkevič, 2024

Training of national experts on the globally harmonized system for classification and labelling of chemicals and their mixtures in Uzbekistan

On 19–21 June 2024, WHO ECEH, the WHO Country Office in Uzbekistan and WHO headquarters, in collaboration with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, organized a comprehensive training on the globally harmonized system (GHS) for classification and labelling of chemicals and their mixtures. The event, with the Ministry of Health of Uzbekistan as the main national counterpart, enhanced the technical expertise of 15 national experts across various government sectors, including health, environment, emergencies and agriculture. Participants

gained valuable knowledge and practical experience on topics such as the [IOMC Toolbox for decision-making in chemicals management](#), the latest GHS version, legal frameworks for GHS implementation and inspection techniques for enforcing GHS standards. The training also fostered cross-sector coordination, increased awareness of recent policy decisions on chemicals management and laid the groundwork for developing a national legal framework for chemical classification and labelling.



4. RECENT EVENTS

In the past three months several exciting events in the field of environment and health have taken place. Some of these are presented below.

9–10 April 2024, Bonn, Germany

WHO ECEH hosted a two-day **expert meeting to work on the second edition of the [WHO Heat–Health Action Plans \(HHAP\) guidance](#)**. This update, also financially supported by the European Commission, aims to promote the development of national, subnational and local HHAPs. Key objectives of the updated guidance include enhancing risk communication strategies and ensuring the protection of vulnerable population groups. This effort is a significant step towards bolstering public health resilience in the face of increasing heatwaves and climate change impacts.

11–12 April 2024, Limassol, Cyprus

On 11–12 April, ministers and other delegates from the 11 countries in the WHO European Region with populations of 2 million or less met in Cyprus for the **[Tenth High-level Meeting of the Small Countries Initiative](#)**. The annual high-level meeting provided a dynamic platform for countries to discuss health agendas, forge collaborations and find solutions to shared challenges. One focus area of discussion was climate change and health. During the session led by WHO ECEH, ministers and delegates highlighted the impacts of climate change on health in their respective countries and shared the approaches taken to mitigate such impacts.



Building on the [Declaration on Climate and Health](#) adopted at the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference, and the climate and health commitments set out in the [Budapest Declaration](#), the Member States of the Small Countries Initiative adopted the [Cyprus Ministerial Statement on Small Countries' Health Priorities](#), committing to developing standalone or integrated national health and climate action plans by 2026, while also joining ongoing regional initiatives, such as the EHP Partnership for Health Sector Climate Action.

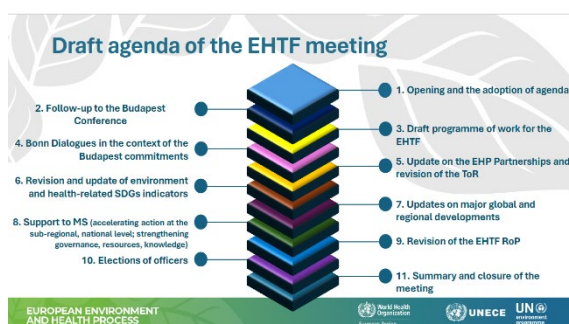


April–June 2024

16–19 April 2024, Geneva, Switzerland

The main objectives of the **14th meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health under the Protocol on Water and Health** were to review the state of implementation of the programme of work for 2023–2025 and provide guidance on its further development. The Working Group also discussed the development of a long-term strategy for implementation of the Protocol. Two new Parties – North Macedonia and Uzbekistan – that have joined the Protocol since the 6th session of the Meeting of the Parties were welcomed. On 18 and 19 April, the 31st meeting of the Bureau of the Protocol also took place.

22 April 2024, virtual



The **12th meeting of the EHTF Bureau** focused on the follow-up to the [Budapest Conference](#) and preparing for the [14th meeting of the EHTF](#). Over 70 participants from 39 Member States and 6 stakeholder organizations collaborated to strategize activities and establish key milestones for the EHP's implementation of commitments from the [Budapest Declaration](#) in the 2024–2025 biennium and beyond.

24–26 April 2024, Tallinn, Estonia

The **meeting on risk-based drinking-water surveillance in Nordic-Baltic countries** was jointly convened by the Ministry of Health of Estonia and WHO ECEH under the framework of the [Protocol on Water and Health](#) and the Nordic-Baltic Network for Water and Health. The primary objective was to enhance national capacities for risk-based management and public health surveillance of drinking-water, aligning with WHO recommendations and the EU [Drinking Water Directive](#). The gathering also aimed to foster the exchange of experiences and best practices in implementation among participating countries.

15–16 May 2024, Brussels, Belgium

WHO/Europe is a partner of the [European Climate and Health Observatory](#) established by the European Commission and managed by the European Environment Agency. The **9th partner meeting of the Observatory** took stock of the state of play, discussed the future priorities for the Observatory, developed the Observatory's work programme for 2025–2026, and explored opportunities for collaborative projects between Observatory partners, including WHO ECEH.



April–June 2024

22–23 May 2024, Bonn, Germany (hybrid)

A total of 43 representatives from 41 Parties to the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution and 26 experts and stakeholders participated in the **annual meeting of the Joint Task Force on Health Aspects of Air Pollution**. Within a rich agenda, several Parties shared their experience on advancing air quality policies, standards and action plans, and on the use of air quality information. Updates also covered a wide range of research, policy, technical and risk communication items related to air pollution, climate change and health. Discussions at the meeting covered the **revised EU Ambient**



©James Creswick, 2024

Air Quality Directive, which aims for zero air pollution by 2050 through stricter limits for air pollutants by 2030 and provisions for citizen access to justice and compensation. Additionally, preparations were discussed for COP29, and plans for the WHO Second Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health in 2025, emphasizing the use of behavioural and cultural insights for effective health policies.

23–24 May 2024, Geneva, Switzerland

The aim of the “**Global strategic roundtable on water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH), waste and electricity in health-care facilities**”, jointly organized by WHO and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), was to identify achievable actions and accelerate collaborate efforts to meet the targets set forth in the United Nations General Assembly resolution on WASH, waste and electricity in health-care facilities and the associated Global Framework, and to outline key actions for enhanced collaboration with health and climate stakeholders, including bolstering leadership and investments. WHO ECEH and Hungary – as Chair of the Protocol on Water and Health – contributed by providing insights into programmes and activities in countries of the European Region.

4–6 June 2024, Bonn, Germany

Exposure to hazardous chemicals remains a critical public health concern. Recent high-level strategic decisions have been made to address this issue, including the adoption of the new **Global Framework on Chemicals** and the **Bonn Declaration, WHA resolution (WHA76.17) on the health impacts of chemicals, wastes and pollution on human health**, and ongoing development of existing and new regulatory mechanisms. The **Budapest Declaration** also includes commitments to enhance chemical safety in the WHO European Region. In this evolving policy landscape, WHO ECEH hosted a **meeting on protecting health from hazardous chemicals**, attended by representatives from 28 countries. The



April–June 2024

meeting's main outcome was the identification of regional priorities that align with the new global and regional policies. These priorities include identifying chemicals of public health concern, establishing common action areas and receiving support from WHO/Europe. Additionally, a [training](#) on the life-cycle approach, using mercury as an example, and supporting the ratification and implementation of the Minamata Convention, was held during the meeting on 5–6 June 2024.

4–5 June 2024, Lisbon, Portugal

Under the framework of the [Protocol on Water and Health](#), 11 European countries and international partners gathered in Lisbon for the **workshop on “Increasing climate resilience of the water and sanitation sector in the Mediterranean Region”**, hosted by Portugal and co-organized by UNECE and WHO ECEH as a partner event under [EU Green Week](#). The workshop aimed at taking stock of the main challenges, priorities and needs of the Mediterranean countries and identifying joint approaches to increasing the climate resilience of the water and sanitation sectors. These [photos](#) offer a snapshot of the meeting.

5 June 2024, virtual

This year's [World Environment Day](#) campaign focused on land restoration, desertification and drought resilience under the slogan “Our land. Our future. We are #GenerationRestoration”. Saudi Arabia hosted the World Environment Day global celebrations.

10–13 June 2024, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

During the **3rd High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”**, WHO and UNICEF co-organized an engaging high-level interactive water and health dialogue with contributions from the Minister of Health and Social Protection of Tajikistan and WHO ECEH. This session emphasized the critical need for government leadership, dedicated funding, robust evidence and strategic partnerships to enhance access to WASH services, particularly in health-care facilities and in rural communities. The dialogue served as a vibrant platform for driving forward global commitments and innovative solutions for sustainable water and sanitation management in the health sector.



April–June 2024

11–13 June 2024, Vienna, Austria (hybrid)

A broad range of organizations and sectors were represented at the three-day **One Health Seminar for the European Region**. Besides the **Quadripartite** of organizing partners (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and WHO), the participants included representatives from ministries of agriculture, veterinary public health, human public health, food safety, wildlife management, environmental organizations and academia. It was truly a One Health event and the first to be organized by the Quadripartite. The event brought together 120 participants – with a further 60 attending online – from 41 countries.

13–14 June 2024, Paris, France

Public Health France held its annual **meeting** with a compelling **plenary session dedicated to the intersection of public health and environmental protection**. The session highlighted critical issues such as the impact of climate change on nature and the implementation of the One Health approach, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of human, animal and environment health. WHO ECEH joined discussions by showcasing France's prominent role in advancing nature-related health commitments, as detailed in the **Budapest Declaration**.

19–21 June 2024, Moscow, Russian Federation

The **International Scientific and Practical Conference on Road Safety** took place in Moscow, organized by the Research Institute for Road Safety of the Ministry of Interior to celebrate its 50th anniversary. Over 150 participants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan joined the meeting to discuss strategies, practical experiences and collaboration opportunities in national policies; road policing and enforcement; the role of the health sector; and road safety for children. One of the main highlights of the conference was the presentation of the Russian Federation's new draft national road safety strategy, which aims to reduce road deaths by 65% by 2035. This ambitious strategy is based on WHO recommendations and employs safe system approaches.

21 June 2024, Seoul, South Korea

WHO ECEH contributed to the **International Symposium on Environmental Health Indicators**, hosted by the WHO Asia-Pacific Centre for Environment and Health with the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific. More than a hundred participants from environmental and/or public health services were briefed on the European experience on environmental health inequality indicators. The symposium aimed to advance environment and health monitoring in Member States of the Western Pacific Region.



April-June 2024

26–27 June 2024, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan



The **Central Asia International Health Investment Forum** was hosted by WHO/Europe and the Ministry of Health of Kyrgyzstan, and brought together over 200 delegates. The attendees included representatives of governments, ministries of health and foreign affairs, international development banks, public health organizations, multilateral bodies, youth organizations and health professional bodies. Discussions were organized into five thematic round tables, including on addressing environment, health and climate change challenges, organized by WHO ECEH. The round table featured high-level panellists who outlined compelling country initiatives in addressing air pollution, improving WASH provisions, strengthening heat-health prevention, and improving chemical safety.

A significant outcome of the Forum was the signing of an **outcome statement** by delegates, committing to establish a Health Investment Group and develop a Health Investment Plan. The Forum marked a crucial step forward in fostering collaboration and strategic partnerships to tackle complex health challenges, aligning efforts towards sustainable development and improved health outcomes across central Asia.



Photo: During the live connection between Utrecht and Bishkek, Brigit Staatsen, Chair of the EHTF, and Robb Butler, Director of Communicable Diseases, Environment and Health at WHO/Europe, jointly highlighted the importance of mobilizing resources to ensure a clean, equitable and healthy environment for all, fostering a healthier planet for future generations.
©Mariana Nissen Da Costa Paiva, 2024



5. LATEST PUBLICATIONS AND CAPACITY-BUILDING MATERIALS

Discover the latest WHO publications, interviews and capacity-building materials in the field of environment and health, as listed below.

Panel discussion on the state of European climate today

The world's fastest-warming continent, Europe faced extreme heatwaves and large wildfires in 2023, but also more rain than average and more widespread flooding. The EU's largest wildfire was recorded in Greece in July, the northeast Atlantic saw its warmest marine heatwave on record in August. During 2023, river flows were the highest on record for December, with 'exceptionally high' flow in almost a quarter of the river network, while 16% exceeding the 'severe' flood threshold (for more facts, please read [here](#)). The state of the European climate today was addressed in a [panel discussion](#) of experts, including Francesca Racioppi, Head of WHO ECEH, who broke down the key messages in the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service [European State of the Climate report 2023](#).

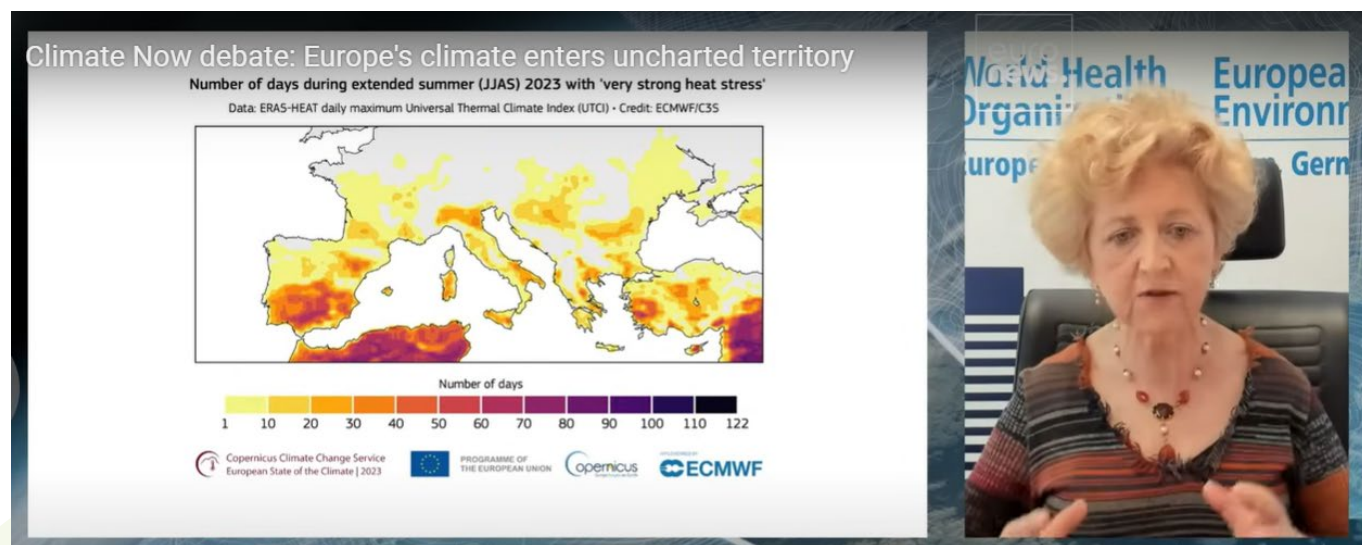


Photo: Francesca Racioppi, Head, WHO ECEH, speaking during the discussion ©Euronews, 2024



April–June 2024

WHO European Centre for Environment and Health Bonn, Germany



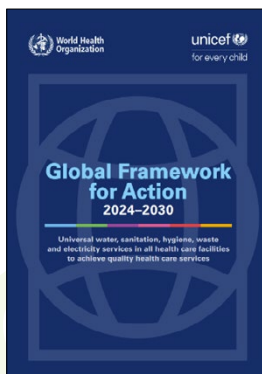
With more than 30 years of experience, WHO ECEH in Bonn, Germany, is a centre of scientific excellence that provides state-of-the-art evidence on existing and emerging environmental health risks. As an integral part of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, it assists its 53 Member States in identifying and implementing policies to address these risks and supports the environment and health workforce in building capacity. Check out this new [brochure](#) to learn more about WHO ECEH, its priorities and activities.

Water, sanitation and hygiene in schools – Key insights from the third subregional workshop



This publication offers [key insights](#) and outcomes of the third subregional workshop on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools (Astana, Kazakhstan, 12–13 December), which brought together representatives of health and educational authorities from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as participants from UNICEF country offices in central Asia and the Schools for Health in Europe Network, and experts from Croatia, Lithuania and Serbia.

Universal water, sanitation, hygiene, waste and electricity services in all health care facilities to achieve quality health care services



The [Global Framework for Action](#) serves to guide efforts to deliver safe and sustainable WASH, waste management and reliable electricity in all health-care facilities, with the ultimate aim to provide quality care for all. The Framework reflects a global consultative process and includes data and recommendations articulated in recent WHO/UNICEF global reports on WASH, waste and electricity in health-care facilities. It also provides an operational roadmap for implementing the 2023 United Nations General Assembly resolution on these issues. The Framework addresses the WASH, waste and electricity elements of the WHO comprehensive approach to build safe, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health-care facilities.

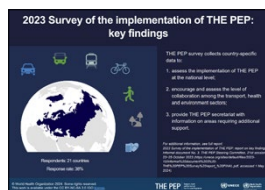


Disability weights for noise-related health states in the WHO European Region



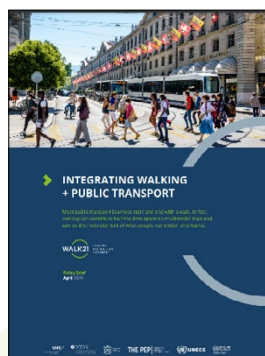
Following the publication of the [2018 Environmental noise guidelines for the European Region](#), WHO set out to update environmental noise related disability weights to enhance health risk assessment in the field. The “European noise disability weights measurement study”, on which this [report](#) is based, aimed to derive disability weights for several environmental and non-environmental noise related health states using standardized and comparable methods. A nationally representative sample survey was administered in the general populations of four countries – Hungary, Italy, Netherlands (Kingdom of the) and Sweden. The set of European noise disability weights is a valuable resource for use in future environment-related health risk assessments across the Region and beyond.

Survey of the implementation of THE PEP: key findings



In 2023, WHO ECEH carried out a biennial survey of Member States on the implementation of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP). A visual summary of the survey results can be found [here](#).

Integrating walking + public transport



Promoting healthy active mobility requires strong integration of walking and public transport, as walking is a crucial element of any public transport journey. Travel surveys consistently show that nearly all public transport users walk at some point during their trip. The new [policy brief](#), developed and launched under THE PEP, offers valuable insights on enhancing the connection between walking and public transport to increase the number of people who choose more sustainable modes of travel.



Compendium of WHO and other United Nations guidance in health and environment, 2024 update



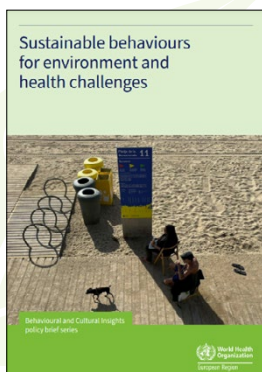
The [Compendium](#) is a comprehensive collection of available WHO and other United Nations guidance for improving health by creating healthier environments. It provides an overview of more than 500 actions, and a framework for thinking about health and environment interventions. It covers a broad range of areas such as air pollution, WASH, climate change, chemicals, radiation and food systems.

Action against antimicrobial resistance requires a One Health approach



The One Health approach is particularly important for antimicrobial resistance (AMR) because resistant organisms can spread quickly through health-care facilities, animals, food and the environment (soil and water), making the treatment of certain infections in people and animals more challenging, and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death. Check out this [policy brief](#) for more information about WHO/Europe's priorities regarding AMR and One Health.

Sustainable behaviours for environment and health challenges: behavioural and cultural insights policy brief



[Behavioural and cultural insights](#) (BCI) provide an approach to systematically understand behaviour and facilitate the changes needed to disrupt negative impacts and promote positive environmental impacts on our health. This [policy brief](#) explores how a BCI approach can improve outcomes by increasing understanding of behavioural and cultural determinants, and by creating more evidence-based and cost-effective policies and interventions to address environment and health challenges.



Strengthening hospital preparedness and resilience to respond to emergencies: catalogue of WHO guidance, assessment tools and training



Health facilities, especially hospitals, are critical assets for communities; both routinely and especially in response to emergencies, disasters and other crises. Yet hospitals and health workers are often among the major casualties of emergencies, with the result that health services cannot be provided to affected communities when they are most needed. This [catalogue](#) summarizes the available resources from the WHO, including the guidance on climate resilient and environmentally sustainable health-care facilities, to support and strengthen hospital preparedness for emergencies in the European Region. It is intended to be a living document to be updated on a regular basis as new guidance, tools and training become available.

Make sure to catch up on the following interesting reads



2024 Europe report of the [Lancet Countdown on health and climate change](#): unprecedented warming demands unprecedented action

Record-breaking temperatures were recorded across the globe in 2023. Without climate action, adverse climate-related health impacts are expected to worsen worldwide, affecting billions of people. Temperatures in Europe are warming at twice the rate of the global average, threatening the health of populations across the continent and leading to unnecessary loss of life.

This new [report](#) – developed with contributions by WHO ECEH – tracks 42 indicators highlighting the negative impacts of climate change on human health, the delayed climate

action of European countries and the missed opportunities to protect or improve health with health-responsive climate action. The methods behind indicators presented in the [2022 report](#) have been improved, and nine new indicators have been added, covering leishmaniasis, ticks, food security, health-care emissions, production and consumption-based emissions, clean energy investment, and scientific, political and media engagement with climate and health. Considering that negative climate-related health impacts and the responsibility for climate change are not equal at the regional and global levels, this report also endeavours to reflect on aspects of inequality and justice by highlighting at-risk groups within Europe and Europe's responsibility for the climate crisis.



April–June 2024

Dermal bioavailability of perfluoroalkyl substances using in vitro 3D human skin equivalent models

This [new study](#) shows perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), the “forever chemicals”, are absorbed by skin. This class of chemicals, derived from fossil fuel by-products, are ubiquitous and impossible to avoid. Exposure through this newly discovered pathway [increases the relevance of studying the effects of PFAS in humans](#), including on fertility, child development and chronic disease risk.

Experts warn of serious health impacts from climate change for pregnant women, children and older people

Pregnant women, newborns, children, adolescents and older people face serious health

complications due to climate change, according to a new [collection of papers](#) authored by experts from the WHO and academics worldwide, and published in the Journal of Global Health. So far, the specific needs of these groups have been largely neglected in the climate response.

Launch of 18th Road Safety Performance Index report

The [report](#) monitors progress towards the EU’s goal to halve the number of road deaths between 2019 and 2030. Between 2022 and 2023, road deaths in the 32 EU countries evaluated collectively decreased by just 1%, but this masks major progress in Malta (-38%), Luxembourg (-27%), Belgium(-11%) and Hungary (-10%).



6. EHP PARTNERSHIPS CORNER

Here, in the EHP Partnerships corner, we are excited to share some key highlights of the work being implemented by the lead countries and partners in follow-up on the [Budapest commitments](#).

The [EHP Partnerships](#) is a mechanism within the EHP to accelerate national and international implementation of commitments made in the [Budapest Declaration](#) and its Roadmap. The EHP Partnerships bring together countries and partners with a shared interest in a specific thematic area to collaborate on a voluntary basis and leverage progress across the WHO European Region.



The latest updates on the EHP Partnerships work are provided below.

Overview of activities implemented by the EHP Partnerships

EHP Partnership on Human Biomonitoring

*(led by Germany and co-
led by Georgia)*

Based on the input collected during the first Partnership meeting, which was organized by Germany, Georgia and WHO ECEH in November 2023, a draft list of future activities was developed and sent to all members for comment.

On 14 June 2024, Germany led an online consultation to finalize the list of Partnership activities. The meeting brought together 14 members – Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, as well as WHO. The primary focus was on a draft document that organized potential activities under key areas: communication, development of human biomonitoring (HBM) guidance values, information databases, capacity-building and laboratory cooperation. Following productive discussions and final amendments, the members agreed on a comprehensive workplan. This plan will guide short-, medium- and long-term HBM activities across the Region, marking a significant step forward for the Partnership.

Since the Budapest Conference and as of May 2024, 11 new countries have joined the Partnership, bringing the total to 19 countries.



April–June 2024

EHP Partnership for Health Sector Climate Action

(led by Ireland)

The EHP Partnership for Health Sector Climate Action participated in the European roundtable at the global meeting of the [Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health](#), which took place on 4–5 March 2024 in Madrid.

The Partnership met in-person on 13–14 May 2024 in Bonn, Germany, at the premises of WHO ECEH. All six partner countries shared their ongoing efforts in strengthening health sector climate action, both at strategic policy level and with specific initiatives, such as reducing supply chain emissions. The meeting discussed communication and public relations strategies within the Partnership's framework, and agreed on the format of the first three so-called "deep-dive" sessions, which will take place later in 2024 and 2025. These sessions will focus on health sector transport emissions, local and subnational adaptation action, and greener models of health care.



Photo: Members of the Partnerships at its first meeting in Bonn ©Andrea Rhein, 2024

The next strategic meeting of the EHP Partnership for Health Sector Climate Action will take place in Dublin, Ireland, in September 2024.



April–June 2024

EHP Partnership on Youth

*(led by Slovenia and co-
led by the International
Youth Health
Organization)*

In efforts to engage youth and bridge international gaps, a representative of the EHP Partnership on Youth took part in the UNECE [Regional Forum for Sustainable Development](#), contributing to the discussion during the roundtable – [Solving the Rubik's cube of the planetary crisis: lining up policy solutions for climate risks and biodiversity loss](#).

The EHP Partnership on Youth has been supporting the Slovenian Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Energy in the organization of the National Conference on Decarbonisation of the Health System in Slovenia, and participated in the first meeting of the EHP Partnership for Health Sector Climate Action to explore synergies and avenues of collaboration.

From July to October 2024, the EHP Partnership on Youth plans to host a series of youth webinars tackling new and emerging topics related to environment and health. Other future plans include hosting an international youth climate summit and active involvement in the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) events.



April–June 2024

THE PEP/EHP Partnership on Healthy Active Mobility

*(led by Austria, France
and Netherlands
(Kingdom of the))*

THE PEP/EHP Partnership on Healthy Active Mobility is focusing on two main directions: implementing the [Pan-European Master Plan for Cycling Promotion](#), adopted in 2021 by Member States, and developing the Pan-European Master Plan for Walking.

On 23–25 April 2024, a relay race workshop and the Partnership meeting were hosted by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Health of Serbia, with a focus on developing and implementing efficient policies for active mobility. The event offered participants and stakeholders an opportunity to consider the first draft of the Pan-European Master plan for Walking and reflect on the results of a survey on the implementation of the Pan-European Master Plan for Cycling Promotion. During this gathering, a policy brief “Integrating walking and public transport” was officially launched.

In the coming months, the Partnership will work to finalize the Pan-European Master Plan for Walking. Concurrently, a comprehensive monitoring report on the implementation of the Pan-European Master Plan for Cycling Promotion is underway, scheduled for presentation at THE PEP Steering Committee meeting in autumn 2024. Two additional Partnership meetings are scheduled for 2024. One will concentrate on walking and coincide with the 24th International Walk21 Conference on Walking and Livable Communities, to be held in October 2024 in Lisbon, Portugal. The other meeting will focus on cycling and take place in Ulm, Germany, in November 2024.



April–June 2024

The launch of the new EHP Partnerships

During the EHTF meeting, two new Partnerships were launched.

EHP Partnership on Poison Centres *(led by the United Kingdom)*



©Mariana Nissen Da Costa Paiva, 2024

This Partnership aims to strengthen governance and implement its key activities by providing technical support (such as advice, training and twinning) to countries in the WHO Europe Region to develop and enhance their poison centres. It seeks to integrate poison centres into national chemical networks and facilitate the sharing of chemical surveillance data. Additionally, the Partnership aims to raise awareness among governments, industry and the public on chemical safety, support the implementation of International Health Regulations, assess poison centres in the Region for capacity and training needs, and collaborate with existing poison centre networks such as the European Association of Poison Centres and Clinical Toxicologists to ensure coordinated efforts.

Before its launch, the Partnership members held three initial online meetings and met face-to-face on 12–13 June 2024, in Istanbul, Türkiye. The events were organized by the UK Health Security Agency.

EHP Partnership on Risk Reduction in the School Environment *(led by Hungary)*



©Mariana Nissen Da Costa Paiva, 2024

The objective of this Partnership is to promote actions towards improving the quality of indoor school environments to protect children's health, including through the dissemination of existing tools and resources, and identification of measures to advance more efficient uptake of good practices. Partners will aim to facilitate action both on policy and technical levels. The Partnership also aims to raise awareness among a wider range of stakeholders, including parents and children to achieve a behavioural change that can further improve health and learning outcomes. The Partnership will provide a platform for knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer learning on existing good practices to achieve higher awareness and to facilitate the uptake of existing resources and established good practices in managing indoor environments safely.

The EHP Secretariat is currently developing a report on the Partnerships' work and updating promotional leaflets for all Partnerships. Stay tuned for their upcoming launch!



April–June 2024

7. NEWS FROM EHP STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

Our dedicated partners and environment and health stakeholders have been working tirelessly to make a difference and create a positive impact. Below you will find a selection of their latest activities.

European State of the Climate Report 2023

Dive into the latest insights from the EU Copernicus Climate Change Service and the World Meteorological Organization. Their joint report, [the European State of the Climate 2023](#), developed with contributions from WHO ECEH, provides information on climate conditions, impacts and policy responses. The report confirms alarming trends in climate change impacts in our Region. Discover how this comprehensive analysis underscores the urgent need for unified action to confront the climate challenges head-on.

HEAL's prescription for the EU policy cycle 2024–2029: healthy people on a healthy planet

With the new EU strategic agenda and policy cycle to 2029, EU decision-makers can choose the path to better health by recognizing the urgency to act and adopting environmental and climate policies that accelerate the necessary transformation in this decade.

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) [prescription](#) for healthy people on a healthy planet sets out 10 demands to help policy-makers get there. Such a health protective approach reflects the concerns of Europeans, as more than four in five (84%) agree that EU legislation is necessary to protect the environment in their country. The demands are available in the following languages: [English](#), [German](#), [French](#), [Dutch](#), [Polish](#) and [Spanish](#), with more languages coming soon.

HEAL's prescription is built on its mission which envisions a world that is free of health-harming chemicals, where the air we breathe and the food we eat promote health. HEAL envisions a future where people have transitioned justly to a non-toxic, decarbonized, climate-resilient and sustainable economy and way of life, ensuring current and future generations benefit from a clean environment to enjoy long, healthy lives.

To get a summary, read the [leaflet](#) or view the [infographic](#).



April–June 2024



Responding to climate change impacts on human health in Europe: focus on floods, droughts and water quality

This new European Environment Agency (EEA) [report](#) aims to raise awareness about the range of risks to human health associated with changes in water quantity and quality under the changing climate. It assesses the preparedness for ongoing and future impacts by examining the current policy landscape in Europe. At the same time, it seeks to inspire action by showing examples of practical measures implemented across various sectors and on various scales in the EEA member states and collaborating countries. WHO ECEH contributed to the launch of the report on 15 May, together with the EEA Executive Director, Directorate-General for Climate Action and Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety.



April–June 2024

Air pollution: European Parliament adopts revised law to improve air quality

The [revised law](#) aims to reduce air pollution in the EU for a clean and healthy environment for citizens, and to achieve the EU's zero air pollution vision by 2050. More stringent standards take effect in 2030; if violated, citizens will be able to take legal action if their health is damaged. The law also establishes more sampling points and mandates transparent comparisons between air quality indices in different cities.

2024 report: state of EU progress towards climate neutrality

In this new [report](#), the European Climate Neutrality Observatory calls on the EU to double its targeted investments to meet its 2030 commitments. The report acknowledges progress in decarbonizing electricity generation and industry, and deploying clean technology, but the progress has not been sufficient to achieve the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030.



April–June 2024

8. UPCOMING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

We have a number of important upcoming meetings and events. Here is a list of the highlights.

Strengthening health sector governance for climate action (3–4 September 2024, Vienna, Austria), including the [Transatlantic Dialogue on health sector governance for climate action](#) (3 September 2024, 15:00–17:00 CEST, virtual).

Global meeting on monitoring and anticipating climate sensitive health risks (10–11 September 2024, Geneva, Switzerland).

Second meeting of the Partnership for Health Sector Climate Action (16–17 September, Dublin, Ireland).

A two-part online consultation for a new WHO Research Agenda for Action on Climate and Health (REACH) in the WHO European Region (25–27 September 2024, virtual).

8th Bonn Dialogue on Environment and Health – “Let’s get moving! Advancing safe active mobility for a healthier and more sustainable future” (9 October 2024, 10:00–12:00 CEST, virtual).

11th Working Group on Health in Climate Change meeting (29 October 2024, virtual).

[74th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe](#) (29–31 October 2024, Copenhagen, Denmark).

[22nd session of THE PEP Steering Committee](#) (28–30 October 2024, Geneva, Switzerland).

32nd Meeting of the Bureau of the Protocol on Water and Health (6–7 November 2024, virtual).

[29th annual Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (11–24 November 2024, Baku, Azerbaijan).

Executive Officers Meeting on Governance and Capacities for Environment and Health (2–4 December 2024, Bonn, Germany).

13th meeting of the EHTF Bureau (Q4 2024, virtual).



April–June 2024

Call for submission of national case studies for the upcoming Executive Officers Meeting on Governance and Capacities for Environment and Health – 2–4 December 2024, Bonn, Germany

As already announced in the previous [EHP Newsletter](#) and at the [14th meeting of the EHTE](#), the Executive Officers Meeting on Governance and Capacities for Environment and Health will convene on 2–4 December in Bonn, Germany, as a follow-up to the [Budapest Declaration](#).

To further prepare the meeting WHO ECEH is looking for experiences and practices on environment and health governance that could be presented and discussed as national case studies at the meeting.

Please, use the following link to submit case studies that you think would be worth sharing with your colleagues from across the WHO European Region:

- English: <https://extranet.who.int/dataformv3/index.php/227382?lang=en>
- Russian: <https://extranet.who.int/dataformv3/index.php/227382?lang=ru>

For further information, please contact Sinaia or Matthias at eurobonnschool@who.int.



April–June 2024

9. CONTACT US

WHO European Centre for Environment and Health

Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1

D-53113 Bonn, Germany

Tel. (switchboard): +49 228 8150 400

Fax: +49 228 81 50 440

E-mail: euceh@who.int

© World Health Organization 2024. Some rights reserved. This work is available under the [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/) license.