



**EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT
AND HEALTH PROCESS**



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EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH PROCESS NEWSLETTER

July–October 2024

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1. EDITORIAL

Hello and season's greetings! It is a pleasure to welcome you to this July–October 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 \(EHTE\)](#) members.

Enjoy the read!
EHP Secretariat



2. TOP STORIES

Countries adopt the first-ever Pan-European Master Plan on Walking to encourage healthier societies and more sustainable cities

Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Climate Action, Environment,
Energy, Mobility,
Innovation and Technology

MINISTÈRE
CHARGÉ DES
TRANSPORTS
*Le mouvement
fait la différence*



Government of the Netherlands



Walking, a simple, cost-effective and accessible form of physical activity from childhood onwards, is affordable, socially equitable, and delivers extensive economic, social, environmental and health benefits. Regular walking prevents many non-communicable diseases and boosts mental health by reducing depression and anxiety, improving sleep quality and enhancing cognitive function.

The [Pan-European Master Plan on Walking](#)

highlights these benefits and provides a strategic framework for action. This plan is designed to help national and local authorities prioritize and promote walking as a mainstream mode of transport, offering a transformative approach to creating walkable cities, improving public health, reducing emissions and fostering sustainable urban living.

The Master Plan was developed under the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP)/EHP Partnership on Healthy Active Mobility jointly led by Austria, France and Netherlands (Kingdom of the) with the participation of 38 Member States of the WHO European Region and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). It was adopted at the 22nd session of THE PEP Steering Committee held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 28–30 October 2024 (see [Recent events](#) for more information).

The Pan-European Master Plan on Walking, together with the Pan-European Master Plan on Cycling, will form the Pan-European Master Plan on Active Mobility.



Menstrual health is a fundamental human right



Source: *Improving health and learning through better water, sanitation and hygiene in schools. An information package for school staff.* Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2019. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO

More than half the world's population experiences menstruation at some point in their lives, yet menstrual hygiene management (MHM) remains a critical issue for health, dignity and equality of girls and women. A landmark resolution on MHM, human rights and gender equality was adopted at the [56th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council](#), held in Geneva from 18 June to 12 July 2024.

It specifically calls for:

- **universal access:** affordable, safe and clean menstrual hygiene products and facilities, especially in rural and remote areas; 
- **infrastructure improvement:** providing access to adequate water and sanitation facilities in public and private spaces, including schools, to support safe MHM; 
- **affordability and economic support:** eliminating or reducing all taxes on menstrual products and supporting those living in economic vulnerability with free or affordable options; and 
- **awareness raising and education:** integrating MHM into WASH programmes and national policies, and promoting women and girls' access to appropriate and accessible information and education on MHM. 

"Menstrual health is a public health and human rights issue. We have made it our mission to prioritize menstrual health in policy-making and standard setting, and to advocate for improved menstrual hygiene provisions. For many years, these have been cornerstones of our efforts under the [Protocol on Water and Health](#). Schools are the focus of these efforts. Unfortunately, in many countries across the European Region, schoolgirls still face barriers to safe, hygienic and dignified menstruation."

Dr Márta Vargha,
Hungarian National Center for Public Health and Pharmacy, Chair of the Bureau of the
Protocol on Water and Health

For more on this story, see the [news release](#) on the WHO/Europe web site.



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Climate crisis: extreme events

Without decisive action, climate-related health impacts are expected to worsen worldwide, affecting billions. Below are a few severe examples, illustrating the impacts of climate change on health, its determinants and nature in the WHO European Region. Let's stand together to tackle the climate crisis!

- [Braving the blaze – the health toll paid by firefighters in Greece](#)
- [Statement – Heat claims more than 175 000 lives annually in the WHO European Region, with numbers set to soar](#)

- [The unseen toll of floods: prioritizing mental well-being in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)
- [Flooded but not defeated: the residents of Budapest navigate catastrophic flooding](#)
- [Heavy rainfall is causing rivers to burst their banks, leaving huge swathes of central Europe reeling](#)

For more, check the WHO web site on what to do during [extreme weather](#) events, including heatwaves, wildfires, floods and storm surges, as well as slow-onset events such as droughts.





3. COUNTRY ACTIVITIES

Austria strengthens health sector governance and resilience to climate impacts through new strategy

On 3–4 September 2024, the Austrian National Public Health Institute and the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH) hosted a meeting with representatives from 12 Member States, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and WHO headquarters to discuss effective governance mechanisms and supportive institutional arrangements for integrating health considerations in climate change policy-making. The key outcomes of this meeting will be compiled into a summary for policy-makers.

Also, in October 2024, the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer

Protection in Austria introduced a new strategy to bolster the resilience of its health system against climate-related impacts. Developed in collaboration with the Competence Centre for Climate and Health, this strategy establishes a robust “[target catalogue](#)” that outlines both immediate and long-term goals aligned with WHO frameworks. Drawing on expertise from a range of sectors, including the Federal Environment Agency and the Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, the initiative represents a cross-sectoral approach to addressing climate challenges.

Meeting on climate change impacts on vector-borne diseases in Croatia

A meeting on climate change impacts on vector-borne diseases in Croatia and across the European Region took place on 14–15 October 2024 in Zagreb. Organized by the Croatian Institute of Public Health, WHO Country Office in Croatia, and WHO ECEH, the event built on a workshop on implementation of the [Budapest Declaration and its Roadmap](#), which was held in November 2023. Participants discussed how to better understand the impact of climate change on vector-borne diseases by analysing how rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns and other climatic factors affect the spread, intensity and geographical distribution of these

diseases in Croatia. The need to strengthen public health capacity to monitor, prevent and respond to vector-borne diseases, which are increasingly exacerbated by climate change, and to improve the resilience of local systems to emerging health threats were highlighted. It was agreed that it is important to initiate the development of public health interventions to reduce the burden of vector-borne diseases and to promote innovative research and development of new tools for surveillance, diagnosis, prevention and control of vector-borne diseases, and to improve the resilience of health systems to climate change.



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Kazakhstan leads regional initiative to enhance water, sanitation and health standards across central Asia

On 4–5 September 2024, in Astana, Kazakhstan, UNECE and WHO/Europe launched the [project](#) “Improving water, sanitation, hygiene, and health through implementation of the programme of work of the Protocol on Water and Health”. Supported by national agencies, including Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Health, Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, and the Ministry of Industry and Construction, and the International Water Assessment Center – who all attended the launch event – this

project aims to build capacity among policy-makers and stakeholders to set and implement national water, sanitation, hygiene and health targets. The initiative specifically promotes, among others, information exchange among participating countries in central Asia, eastern Europe and the Caucasus on the benefits and limitations of wastewater and environmental surveillance for infectious disease detection as an early warning system.

Kyrgyzstan marks International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week with focus on protecting children

During [International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week](#) (20–26 October 2024), the WHO Country Office in Kyrgyzstan, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), held a [press conference](#) to raise awareness of the dangers of lead exposure,

particularly for children. The event advocated for the elimination of lead paint and other harmful sources of lead in Kyrgyzstan.

WHO [recognizes](#) lead as one of the 10 chemicals posing the greatest threat to public health.

Lithuania highlights best practices for hand hygiene and menstrual health in schools

On 5 September 2024, in Kaunas, Lithuania, the National Public Health Centre under the Ministry of Health in partnership with the Lithuanian Sports University and WHO ECEH organized the “[Good Practices in Hand Hygiene and Menstrual Health in Schools in the Pan-European Region](#)” conference. Held under the

framework of the Protocol on Water and Health, 60 experts gathered to discuss innovative approaches to create healthier and safer school environments across the European Region, with a particular focus on hand hygiene and menstrual health needs.



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Romania hosts workshops on environmental sustainability in hospital management

On 24–25 October 2024, two workshops on environmental sustainability in hospital management took place in Romania. The events were co-organized by WHO/Europe and the WHO Country Office in Romania, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, the National Institute for Health Services Management (INMSS) and

the NOVA School of Public Health (Portugal). The first workshop focused on equipping INMSS trainers with the skills to promote sustainable, climate-resilient health care, while the second provided practical insights from hospital managers in the Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway and Portugal.

Turkmenistan launches major initiative to improve water, sanitation, hygiene and health

The [launch](#) event for the new joint UNECE–WHO/Europe project in Turkmenistan “Improving water, sanitation, hygiene and health through implementation of the programme of work of the Protocol on Water and Health” took place on 2–3 October 2024 in Ashgabat. The event brought together high-level officials and technical experts from different ministries and sectors, including health, water,

environment and finance, as well as academia, to discuss the objectives, planned activities and outcomes of this project to benefit the people of Turkmenistan in the areas of safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in 2024–2025, and to support subregional cooperation in central Asia.



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4. RECENT EVENTS

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

25–27 June 2024, Kathmandu, Nepal

Delegates from more than 20 countries, including from the WHO European Region, and stakeholder organizations, gathered in Kathmandu for a [Global Sanitation Summit](#) organized by UNICEF, WHO and WaterAid. The summit resulted in the development of key guidance, comprising “[Steps to achieve universal access to safely managed sanitation](#)” and the “[Sanitation inspections: user guide](#)”, which also inform and support work under the Protocol on Water and Health and allow Member States to advance access to safely managed sanitation services for all.

2 July 2024, Washington, DC, United States of America and Bonn, Germany (virtual)

The [first Transatlantic Dialogue on Climate and Health](#), a joint initiative by WHO/Europe, the Pan American Health Organization and the Department of Health and Human Services of the United States of America, focussed on the critical issue of extreme heat and health. This virtual event contributed to discussions on strengthening health system and community resilience against heatwaves and extreme heat. This transatlantic platform is providing input to develop a series of summaries for policy-makers on different topics related to climate change and health in Member States on both sides of the Atlantic.

4–5 July 2024, Oslo, Norway

The [42nd meeting of the Bureau for the implementation of THE PEP](#) was hosted by the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services and jointly serviced by WHO/Europe and UNECE. The meeting brought together representatives from 11 Member States leading THE PEP Bureau. Participants reviewed progress on various initiatives under THE PEP, including the development of now adopted [Pan-European Master Plan on Walking](#), a comprehensive [strategy on transport, health and environment for the region](#), and an inspirational [document on sustainable tourism mobility](#).



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3 September 2024, Vienna, Austria (hybrid)

The [second Transatlantic Dialogue on Climate and Health](#) brought together various stakeholders to assess governance modalities and institutional arrangements for addressing climate change within the health sector across Member States. This hybrid meeting, hosted by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection and the National Public Health Institute, enhanced understanding of national institutional arrangements for integrating climate considerations into health governance, identified common and country-specific challenges, and stimulated discussions on mutual learning and support for future collaboration in addressing climate impacts on health.



10–11 September, Geneva, Switzerland

Co-convened by WHO, the World Meteorological Organization, the Wellcome Trust and the Rockefeller Foundation, the “Global meeting on monitoring and anticipating climate sensitive health risks” brought together relevant actors from both health and climate sectors to define and align concrete actions to strengthen the capacity of health information systems to routinely integrate and use climate and weather information. The meeting concluded that the establishment of robust data platforms at country level is critical to further unlock opportunities for applications such as research, health early warning systems, risk assessment and climate-informed service delivery. During the two days of discussion and break-out sessions, a draft three-year action agenda for integrated climate and health data and monitoring systems was proposed.

23–26 September 2024, Utrecht, Netherlands (Kingdom of the)

WHO ECEH contributed to the [Future Green City World Congress](#) in Utrecht, which gathered over 1000 experts to share insights on making cities more liveable and envisioning sustainable urban landscapes. WHO ECEH hosted a masterclass, supported by international experts, on the influence of green spaces and parks on physical and mental health.



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25 and 27 September 2024, virtual

A two-part online consultation for a new WHO Research Agenda for Action on Climate and Health (REACH) in the European Region was organized in collaboration between WHO ECEH and headquarters. During these consultations, participants from academia and civil society were introduced to the REACH goals, objectives, framework and process, and identified key trends and factors that will affect climate change and health and facilitate or hinder action on these during the REACH timeframe. They also identified and discussed the research and evidence needs for forward-looking, action-oriented climate change and health research in each of WHO's core areas of work.

7 October 2024, Brussels, Belgium (hybrid)

The Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and WHO/Europe jointly hosted a [high-level policy dialogue](#) on the mental health impact of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, environmental pollution and biodiversity loss. The event was held in the context of the WHO Leadership Dialogue on Global Health Diplomacy, three days ahead of [World Mental Health Day](#) on 10 October. The meeting united over 100 representatives from European Union Member States, the European Commission and various stakeholders to exchange insights on the mental health impacts of climate change and implementation of [Budapest Declaration](#) commitments, explore evidence-based policies, foster cross-sectoral collaboration, and identify priority areas for action to build a more resilient and mentally healthy future.

9 October 2024, virtual

WHO ECEH, in partnership with THE PEP, convened ministers, deputy ministers, state secretaries, European Commission representatives and high-level stakeholders from cities, as well as representatives of nongovernmental organizations and youth activists at the [8th Bonn Dialogue on Environment and Health](#). Participants discussed the urgent need for proactive implementation actions to integrate active mobility – walking and cycling – into transport policies, spatial planning and urban design, and health and climate strategies.

The Bonn Dialogue concluded with the following key takeaway messages for policy-makers and stakeholders to intensify promotion of active mobility in the WHO European Region and accelerate the implementation of agreements, strategies and plans for cycling and walking:





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- 1. Sustaining political support for active mobility.** Significant progress has been made in adopting strategic agreements across the European Region, but maintaining momentum requires effectively communicating the benefits of active mobility – such as improved health, safety and economic growth – to policy-makers and the public.
- 2. Broadening political focus on walking.** There is a need to expand political attention from cycling to walking by advancing comprehensive strategies at all levels, which involves setting clear objectives, securing resources, fostering coordination and creating strong partnerships.
- 3. Prioritizing safe infrastructure networks.** National programmes are essential for developing safe walking and cycling infrastructure. Adequate funding is crucial for creating and upgrading these networks to ensure access to key locations and promote sustainability. **Safe streets for active mobility.** Enhancing traffic safety is critical for promoting active mobility, with measures such as traffic calming and establishing a 30 km/h speed limit to protect pedestrians, cyclists, and vulnerable groups like children and the elderly.
- 4. Innovative spatial and mobility planning.** Innovative planning focuses on creating active mobility networks through the 15-minute city approach (where everything we need – workplaces, shops, parks, schools – should be within a 15-minute walk or cycle) and dense spatial structures with mixed land-use, ensuring access to essential services and promoting sustainable urban development.
- 5. Reclaiming urban space.** Reallocating urban public spaces is vital for fostering active mobility, with efforts to green streets, implement low-emission zones, and reduce car dependency through new design for urban space.
- 6. Ensuring seamless access to public transport.** Efforts aim to provide safe, barrier-free access for pedestrians and cyclists to public transport, including easy access to stations, bike-sharing systems and improved information systems for integrated travel.
- 7. Embedding active mobility in legislation.** Active mobility promotion should be included in legislation and planning standards.
- 8. Building capacity for active mobility.** Capacity-building initiatives encompass sharing best practices, developing training programmes, enhancing data collection and integrating active mobility education into driver's licence training – all aimed at fostering healthier, more sustainable communities. The Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) is an example of a tool that estimates the health and economic benefits of increased walking and cycling.
- 9. Boosting economic and social impacts.** Promoting the positive economic benefits and social impacts of walking and cycling supports the local economy, encourages cycling and hiking tourism and facilitates inclusive mobility. Improved infrastructure, such as well-maintained paths and bike lanes, makes walking and cycling safer and more attractive, reducing barriers for people of all ages and abilities and encouraging more equitable, widespread mobility options.



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- 10. Strengthening partnerships and cooperation.** Building partnerships among countries, cities and civil society is key to promoting active mobility, with cross-sectoral cooperation essential for engaging citizens and stakeholders.
- 11. Broadening communication of benefits.** Efforts focus on effectively communicating the diverse benefits of active mobility, raising public awareness, launching social media campaigns, and shifting perspectives towards people-centred planning.

14–18 October 2024, Lisbon, Portugal

The [24th International Walk21 Conference on Walking and Liveable Communities](#) was hosted by the Institute of Mobility and Transport on behalf of the Government of Portugal in partnership with the City of Lisbon, ISCTE and Walk21. The event had more than 500 participants from 61 different countries. THE PEP/EHP Partnership presented the final draft of the Pan-European Master Plan on Walking.

23–25 October 2024, Ljubljana, Slovenia

The [10th Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes](#) highlighted the importance of building climate resilience through cross-border water collaboration. Over 500 participants from nearly 100 countries joined to agree on the next [Programme of Work](#) and launch key publications including the [third progress report on the Water Convention](#); [Good practices and lessons learned in data-sharing in transboundary basins](#); and the [Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation: mid-term status of SDG Indicator 6.5.2, with a special focus on climate change](#). A Protocol on Water and Health update, as one of the protocols under the Water Convention, was presented to all member states, and even stronger synergies between the activities under the Convention and the Protocol were encouraged.



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29 October 2024, virtual

The 11th meeting of the Working Group on Health in Climate Change (HIC) highlighted ongoing global and regional initiatives addressing health and climate change. Discussions included updates on the implementation of the [Budapest Declaration](#) and preparations for the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference ([COP29](#)).

Key findings from the [2024 Europe report of the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change](#) were summarized, emphasizing regional data that underscores the urgent need for action. WHO ECEH representatives shared the latest progress on the update of the second edition of the WHO guidance on [heat-health action planning](#). Additionally, invited speakers showcased successful heat-health initiatives from Austria, France and Tajikistan.

The meeting also explored emerging experiences and capacity needs related to climate action in mental health and the development of climate-resilient health systems. The introduction of the [Research for Action on Climate Change and Health](#) agenda (REACH) framework facilitated consultations with the HIC Working Group to identify crucial research priorities across WHO's core focus areas in climate change and health.

28–30 October 2024, Geneva, Switzerland

At the [22nd session of the Steering Committee of the Transport, Health, and Environment Pan-European Programme](#), representatives from over 20 Member States came together to advance collaborative efforts in sustainable mobility and health. Organized jointly by WHO/Europe and UNECE, the session marked significant milestones, including the adoption of the first-ever Pan-European Master Plan on Walking, a comprehensive strategy on transport, health and environment for the pan-European region, and an inspirational document on sustainable tourism mobility. In addition, a new WHO publication was launched: "[Health economic assessment tool \(HEAT\) for walking and for cycling. Methods and user guide on physical activity, air pollution, road fatalities and carbon impact assessments: 2024 update](#)" (for more, please see [Latest publications and capacity-building materials](#)).



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29–31 October 2024, Copenhagen, Denmark

During the [74th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe \(RC74\)](#), Member States [adopted two landmark health emergency action plans](#): the Preparedness 2.0 strategy and action plan and the Emergency medical teams regional action plan 2024–2030. A [new framework on resilient and sustainable health systems](#) was also adopted, marking a significant shift in the vision for health delivery across the Region. In addition, Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge was [nominated](#) by Member States to serve as WHO Regional Director for Europe for a second five-year term. A total of seven decisions were adopted, alongside productive discussions on leadership, governance, budget matters, health innovations and technologies, and [implementing the One Health approach](#).



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Youth engagement takes centre stage at RC74

In the opening of the #RC74CPH a representative of the EHP Partnership on Youth, Katja Čič, emphasized the vital importance of engaging youth in environment and health decision-making. She stated, “Evidence proves that when youth voices are at the centre of decision-making, there is increased trust by societies in science”. The speech underscored the need to accelerate the implementation of the commitments outlined in the [Budapest Youth Declaration](#), which calls for a complete set of measures to tackle the “triple crisis”, which includes addressing mental health issues and implementing sustainable practices and climate-friendly policies in the public sector.



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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.

Guidance on wastewater and solid waste management for manufacturing of antibiotics



High levels of antibiotics in water bodies downstream of manufacturing sites have been widely documented. The new first-ever [guidance](#) on wastewater and solid waste management for antibiotic manufacturing published by the WHO shed light on this important but neglected challenge ahead of the United Nations General Assembly [High-Level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance](#), which took place on 26 September 2024, resulting in a [political declaration](#). This guidance aims to provide an independent scientific basis for including targets in binding instruments designed to prevent the emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance.

Health-enhancing physical activity in the European Union



This [report](#) presents the results of analysis using the Health-Enhancing Physical Activity Monitoring Framework, conducted in the European Union Member States in 2024, updating the information published in 2015, 2018 and 2021. It provides aggregated information collected on 23 indicators that reflect a comprehensive approach to national physical activity promotion and monitor implementation of the European Union Physical Activity Guidelines.



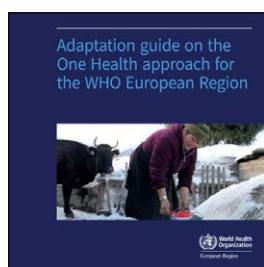
HEAT for walking and for cycling. Methods and user guide on physical activity, air pollution, road fatalities and carbon impact assessments: 2024 update



The promotion of cycling and walking for everyday physical activity not only promotes health but also has important positive effects on societies and the environment. This [publication](#) summarizes guidance and presents a practical tool to facilitate the shift to more active mobility. It sets out: the methodology for the economic assessment of transport infrastructure and policies in relation to the health effects of walking and cycling; systematic reviews of the economic and health literature; and guidance on applying the health economic assessment tool (HEAT) for walking and cycling and the principles underlying it.

Check out the [video tutorial](#) on how to use HEAT.

Adaptation guide on the One Health approach for the WHO European Region



This [guide](#) underscores the critical need for collaborative efforts and innovative, people-centred and evidence-informed approaches to address complex health challenges comprehensively and effectively. These actions should not only address immediate concerns but also aim to bring about long-lasting, fundamental and positive transformations in how health challenges are understood, managed and prevented.

Sustainable development goal indicator 3.9.1: mortality attributed to air pollution



This [report](#) presents a summary of the methods and results of the latest WHO burden of disease assessment due to air pollution from particulate matter. These estimates were carried out through monitoring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 3.9.1.



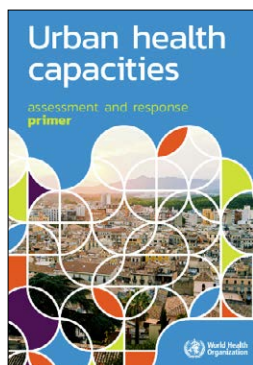
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Urban health capacities and assessment resource kit

On World Cities Day 2024, WHO [released tools](#) to foster healthier cities for empowered youth, and to promote healthier, age-friendly urban environments, focusing on empowering youth as drivers of change. The urban health capacities assessment and response [resource kit](#) equips multisectoral teams to assess whether a given initiative can meet its goals in a complex urban environment. It helps answer a critical question: do we have the right capacities in place to achieve our objectives that influence urban health, whether directly or indirectly?

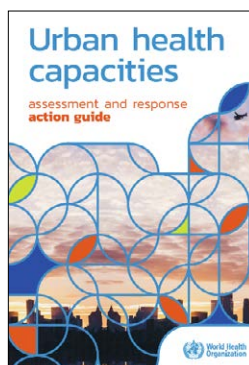
The resource kit provides a structured framework through its primer, and a step-by-step process in the action guide, [training videos](#) and [city examples](#).

Urban health capacities: assessment and response primer



By informing a capacity self-assessment, this [primer](#) helps teams aiming to understand the extent to which they have “connective capacities”, what this means for achieving their urban health goals and how to respond.

Urban health capacities: assessment and response action guide



This [action guide](#) accompanies an assessment and response primer which profiles “connective capacities” at individual, organizational and cross-organizational levels, and their vital role in achieving urban goals across all sectors.

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



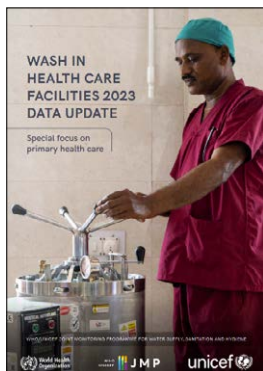
On 11–13 December 2023, WHO/Europe hosted the third subregional workshop on WASH in schools. The event took place in Astana, Kazakhstan, bringing together representatives of health and educational authorities from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as participants from UNICEF country offices in central Asia and the Schools for Health in Europe (SHE) Network, and experts from Croatia, Lithuania and Serbia.

Key [highlights](#) from this event, including several insightful case studies from the central Asian subregion, are now available in English and Russian for your inspiration.



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WASH in health care facilities 2023 data update: special focus on primary health care



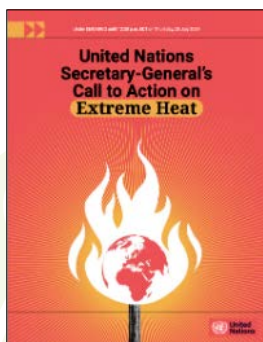
This [report](#) presents updated national, regional and global estimates for WASH in health-care facilities in 2023 and has a special focus on primary health care (PHC). The report explores how adopting the PHC approach is critical to improving water, sanitation and hygiene services, and how these services are essential to advancing PHC. The data sheets for the WHO European Region can be found [here](#).

Compendium of WHO and other UN guidance on health and environment, 2024 update



The [Compendium](#) (2024 update) is a comprehensive collection of available WHO and other United Nations guidance for improving health by creating healthier environments. It provides an overview of and easy access to 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; water, sanitation and hygiene; climate change; chemicals; radiation; and food systems. Guidance is classified according to the principal sectors involved, level of implementation (national, community, health-care system), the type of instrument (taxes, infrastructure etc.) and the category of evidence.

United Nations Secretary-General's Call to Action on Extreme Heat



Recognizing the wide-ranging impacts of extreme heat driven by human-induced climate change, alongside its escalating scale, intensity, frequency and duration, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres issued a [Call to Action on Extreme Heat](#). This initiative brings together 10 specialized United Nations agencies, including WHO, in a groundbreaking collaborative effort. It synthesizes scientific evidence and data on extreme heat and its impacts on human health, lives, livelihoods and environment. The Call to Action emphasizes protecting the most vulnerable, safeguarding all workers, enhancing the resilience of economies and societies through data and science, and limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 °C.



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Science corner: make sure to catch up on the following interesting reads

New systematic reviews on the effects of air pollution on health

New studies on long-term exposure to [nitrogen dioxide and ozone](#) as well as on [particulate matter and mortality](#) strengthen existing evidence linking exposure to air pollution with adverse health outcomes, reinforcing the [2021 WHO global air quality guidelines](#). By incorporating studies published in the past five years and examining a broader spectrum of exposures and health outcomes, these reviews offer updated support for policies on air pollution and climate change.

Out now! The 2024 report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: facing record-breaking threats from delayed action

Data in this year's report show that people all around the world are facing record-breaking threats to their well-being, health and survival. Experts call for trillions of dollars spent on fossil fuels to be redirected towards protecting people's health, lives and livelihoods.

Read the latest assessment of the links between health and climate change [here](#).

New study on heat-related mortality in Europe during 2023 and the role of adaptation in protecting health

The year of 2023 was the warmest on record globally and the second warmest in Europe. This [study](#) suggests that there were more than 47 000 excess heat-related deaths across 35 countries in Europe, among them Greece and Bulgaria with the highest mortality.

New study reveals growing temperature-related mortality risks across Europe: climate change and aging population drive regional disparities

A new modelling [study](#), published in The Lancet, investigates present and projected future excess mortality caused by temperature change in 1368 European regions across 30 countries, comprising the European Union, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The assessment indicates current and future regional disparities in temperature-driven mortality risk, which is set to increase due to the effects of climate change and an ageing population.



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WHO and TikTok to join forces for health literacy



WHO and TikTok (the leading destination for short-form mobile video) have launched a year-long [partnership](#) to provide reliable, science-based health information on TikTok, adding to the reach achieved by the [WHO Fides](#) network of influencers. This collaboration aims to counter health misinformation by promoting evidence-based content and fostering positive health discussions on a platform where one in four young adults seek news. Through this initiative, WHO leverages TikTok's wide reach to enhance health literacy and encourage healthy behaviours in a digital-first world.

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The “Let’s get moving! 100 reasons to walk and cycle more” campaign



The soon-to-be launched #LetsGetMoving! [campaign](#) was created for THE PEP and developed by WHO ECEH. It highlights the numerous benefits of walking and cycling. From improving personal health and enhancing community well-being to protecting the environment and stimulating economic opportunities, these activities offer countless advantages. Stay tuned for more information about the campaign!

Meanwhile, check out the video below to hear what the voices of the Region have to say about walking and cycling:

In English:



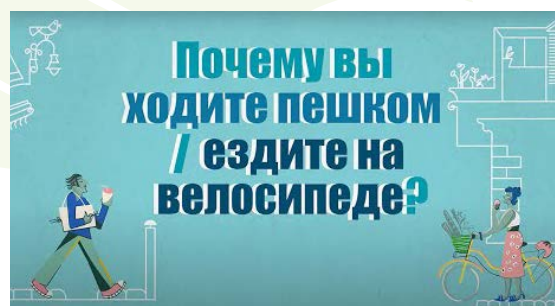
In French:



In German:



In Russian:





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EHP Partnerships

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 under 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.



WHO welcomes new partnerships to unlock solutions for health and environmental challenges

This year, during the [14th meeting of the EHTF](#), the EHP launched two new Partnerships, which expand its reach in tackling environment and health challenges across the European Region: 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 information about these Partnerships, check the [news release](#).



Photo: Launch of the new EHP Partnerships at the 14th EHTF meeting. ©WHO



A new publication by the EHP Partnership on Human Biomonitoring (HBM) on activities to facilitate national HBM programmes



This [publication](#) summarizes the actions that can be performed within the HBM Partnership and provides information on the process of their development. It also includes a report on the capacity-building initiative for HBM held back-to-back with the first meeting of the HBM Partnership in Tbilisi, Georgia on 29–30 November 2023. An online link to the publication will be shared in the next newsletter issue, once available.

Second EHP Partnership for Health Sector Climate Action meeting: advancing decarbonization in health care

On 17–18 September 2024, the second EHP Partnership for Health Sector Climate Action meeting took place in Dublin, Ireland, bringing together members from Austria, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway, the United Kingdom and WHO ECEH. The meeting focused on innovative strategies for decarbonizing transport within the health-care sector, with participants exchanging insights and initiatives to drive emissions reductions. Partnership members discussed a range of innovations and challenges across the breadth of issues relevant to reducing the carbon footprint of health-related transport (staff, patient and freight). The discussions

enabled the development of a coherent and comprehensive agenda for the November deep-dive session featuring a wide range of transport-related solutions by all Partnership members. An update session from the [Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health](#) underscored the Alliance's alignment with the Partnership's goals, further enhancing collaboration and coordination in climate action.

The meeting reaffirmed the commitment to building a sustainable, climate-resilient health-care system, establishing a strong foundation for continued joint efforts across European Region.



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First Nordic-Baltic Youth Summit tackles mental health and climate change in policy recommendations

© WHO/Dovile Rimke



On 27–28 September 2024, the first [Nordic-Baltic Youth Summit](#) brought together over 200 youth representatives from 11 national youth councils in Vilnius, Lithuania. This event was supported by the EHP Partnership on Youth, the [Youth4Health](#) network, the [Mental Health Coalition](#) team (which hosted a workshop addressing mental health stigma) and the WHO Country Office in Lithuania. WHO/Europe contributed to various working groups, with a strong emphasis on mental health and climate change. This collaboration played a role in shaping the final [youth policy recommendations](#).

Youth and WHO Regional Director for Europe lead discussion on youth engagement in climate-resilient health care

© WHO/Dovile Rimke



On 19 September 2024, youth engagement took centre stage in Kaunas, Lithuania as the WHO Regional Director for Europe, the Minister of Health and the Head of the WHO Country Office in Lithuania, met with students from the [Lithuanian University of Health Sciences](#) and representatives from the Faculties of Nursing and Public Health as well as the EHP Partnership on Youth. These discussions emphasized the essential role of young professionals in advancing climate-resilient health care – focusing on ways to elevate the nursing profession, strengthen the impact of public health leaders and introduce innovation in health systems to address climate challenges.

For the Lithuanian audience, you are most welcome to check out the Regional Director's [thoughts](#) on why health is a vital political priority.



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Welcome to the new members of the EHP Partnerships

We are delighted to extend a warm welcome to the countries joining the EHP Partnerships. Germany, Hungary and North Macedonia have joined the EHP Partnership for Health Sector Climate Action, contributing to vital efforts in addressing climate change impacts on health through health-care policies and practices. Czechia and Ireland have joined the EHP Partnership on Human Biomonitoring, enhancing collaboration to better understand and address human exposure to hazardous chemicals. Also, Belarus, Georgia, Luxembourg, Montenegro and the Republic of Moldova have joined the EHP Partnership on Risk Reduction in

the School Environment, focusing on improving the quality of indoor air to support children's health. We look forward to working together on these important initiatives.

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!



7. NEWS FROM EHP STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

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

New rules to improve air quality adopted by the European Council

Air pollution is now the second-leading risk factor for death globally. In Europe, air pollution is the biggest environmental health risk.



In 2021, the European Commission announced a zero pollution ambition for the European Union (EU), namely for air, water and soil pollution to be reduced to levels which are not harmful to people and the environment by 2050. This goal is part of the [European Green Deal initiative](#). The proposed new directive sets stricter air quality standards for 2030, as an intermediate step to achieving a zero pollution objective and contributing to a toxic-free environment in the EU by 2050.

The new standards will be aligned more closely with the [WHO global air quality guidelines](#) and concern emission limits, average exposure reduction obligations, and alert thresholds, among other things. For more on EU rules on air quality, read [here](#).

Final report of the Climate Resilience Dialogue now available

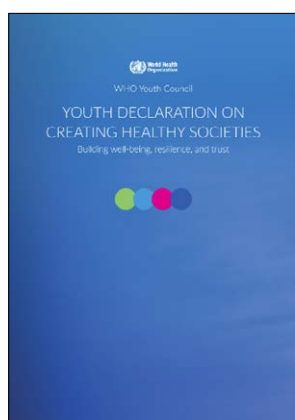
The Climate Resilience Dialogue is a temporary group of stakeholders set up at the initiative of the European Commission to discuss ways to narrow the climate protection gap and increase the resilience of economies and societies to the effects of climate change. The first Dialogue was convened in 2021.



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The [final report](#) of the Climate Resilience Dialogue, published in July 2024, puts forward actions for increasing climate resilience in the EU and addressing the climate protection gap, with a focus on adaptation measures.

WHO Youth Council releases bold call for a healthier world



The [WHO Youth Council](#), during the World Health Summit, launched its first [Youth Declaration on Creating Healthy Societies](#). The Declaration outlines 10 key actions across three priority areas: health education and literacy, accessible and sustainable health care, and youth leadership and engagement. With input from the EHP Partnership on Youth, based on the [Budapest Youth Declaration](#) commitments, the Council emphasizes the importance of including health, climate change and digital literacy as foundational elements in national curricula, with the aim of empowering young people to take action in their communities.



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8. UPCOMING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

Listed below are the upcoming events to look forward to.

Expert meeting on the update of the WHO Heat–Health Action Plans guidance (8–9 January 2025, Bonn, Germany)

[Second Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health](#) (25–27 March 2025, Cartagena, Colombia).
For more, see the [news article](#).

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EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT
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