

Stakeholder Roundtable on Climate & Healthcare

26th June 2023 (virtual)

Sustainable Welfare &
Eco-Social Policy Network



Competence Center
Climate and Health
Agenda
Health Promotion

Researchers and representatives of international organizations and civil society organizations were invited to this Stakeholder Roundtable to discuss challenges and opportunities for European healthcare systems in the light of the climate crisis and the green transition. The roundtable aimed at promoting dialogue, hence sharing insights and experiences, as well as at strengthening the strategic cooperation between academic and institutional-societal actors.

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

By hosts Matteo Mandelli (*University of Milan*), Andrea E. Schmidt & Ernest Aigner (*Competence Centre for Climate and Health*)

BACKGROUND: The move from health-in-all policies towards health-for-all policies emphasizes the mutual benefits of [health and other sectors working together](#). The *Lancet Countdown* highlights prominently that the climate crisis constitutes the largest threat to public health in the 21st century. Several climate-sensitive health risks emerge, especially for socio-economically vulnerable groups. In turn, health inequalities increase the demand for healthcare, which raises greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions further. Yet, awareness of the [interlinkages between climate, health, and inequalities](#) is currently limited in both the academic and policy debates. Mainstream health policy frameworks – such as the “[health system performance assessment](#)” or “[value-based health care](#)” – do not take planetary health sufficiently into account. Furthermore, green healthcare debates are often restricted to aspects of infrastructure or energy services. Therefore, more reflection is needed on how to build a high-quality, patient-centered healthcare system that creates positive ecological synergies.

CHALLENGES

- **Socioeconomic trends:** Future challenges like ageing, lack of care workers, and fiscal tightening potentially limit the scope of action for integrated climate and public health initiatives.
- **Lack of resources, competencies-skills & will:** Health systems are often complex, fragmented, and hard to govern. Health ministries tend to lack climate-related competencies, skills and resources. They also tend to believe that environmental action in the healthcare sector is too complex, costly and not needed. Health professionals also crucially lack competencies and skills for climate action.
- **Weak implementation, monitoring & integration:** Despite the diffusion of several policy strategies for green healthcare, implementation remains non-systematic and relegated to minor interventions. This is partly due to a lack of quantitative indicators and qualitative case studies. Further, policymaking and management mostly occurs in silos, with little attention to cross-sectoral implications (synergies, trade-offs and conflicts).

BEST PRACTICES

- **Wellbeing framework:** several countries, civil society groups and international organizations have already adopted wellbeing frameworks to measure societal progress (as alternatives to GDP) also in the healthcare field.
- **EU funds and facilities:** The *Recovery and Resilience Facility*, among other EU funds, is available to finance green healthcare. Moreover, the EU’s *Expert Group on Health Systems Performance Assessment* and *European and Climate Health Observatory* represent valuable fora to improve knowledge-sharing in this field.
- **Agents of change:** Several associations are already active in the field of green healthcare (e.g. the *European Public Health Association*, *Healthcare Without Harm*, *Health and Environment Alliance*, etc.). Furthermore, interestingly, some COVID-19 response networks have shifted their initial focus to working on climate & health after the pandemic ended.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Building meaningful partnerships:** Various actors at all levels (from institutions, to advocacy groups and health professionals) should play their part and mobilize, building alliances. Education is key to foster (inter)action.
- **Health-in-all policies:** Planetary healthcare should be factored into the design of other public policies. Notably, climate mitigation policies should make sure to improve, or at least not to worsen, health conditions.
- **Health-for-all policies:** Changing how we provide care can help achieving environmental policy goals. For instance, if duly redesigned, healthcare systems may be crucial to support climate adaptation, e.g. through new forms of social security to cope with ecological disasters.
- **Harnessing co-benefits:** Reducing the demand for inpatient care (e.g. by boosting workplace health and safety, fighting societal inequalities, or investing in active mobility, green procurement, or plant-based diets) is key to decrease the ecological footprint of healthcare.

USEFUL LINKS

- <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/336134/policy-brief-37-1997-8073-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/368159/WHO-EURO-2023-7587-47354-69516-eng.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>
- <https://bewell-project.eu/>
- https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/health-promotion/geneva-charter-4-march-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=f55dec7_21&download=true
- <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/observatory>
- <https://cphp-berlin.de/en/health-within-planetary-boundaries/>
- <https://cphp-berlin.de/strengthening-sustainability-in-the-pharmaceutical-sector/>
- <https://cphp-berlin.de/the-need-for-transformation-to-a-post-growth-health-and-economic-system/>
- <https://discomap.eea.europa.eu/climatechange/>
- <https://easac.eu/meetings-events/details/easac-feam-webinar-on-decarbonisation-of-the-health-sector>
- https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/recovery-and-resilience-scoreboard/index.html
- <https://eupha.org/environment-and-health>
- <https://eurohealthobservatory.who.int/publications/i/health-system-performance-assessment-a-framework-for-policy-analysis>
- <https://eurohealthobservatory.who.int/publications/i/making-health-for-all-policies-harnessing-the-co-benefits-of-health>
- <https://feps-europe.eu/publication/climate-and-health-policy/>
- https://hope.be/hope_working_area/good-practices/
- <https://toberesearch.eu/>
- <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/climate-change-impacts-on-health>
- <https://www.enbel-project.eu/>
- <https://www.eugloh.eu/>
- <https://www.irdes.fr/english/2023/report-586-the-environmental-sustainability-of-health-care-systems.html>
- <https://www.norden.org/en/publication/nordic-nutrition-recommendations-2023>
- <https://www.oecd.org/health/tackling-wasteful-spending-on-health-9789264266414-en.htm>
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329109181_Planet_on_the_diet_-_Climate_and_Energy_prescription_for_better_environment_and_sustainability
- <https://www.rivm.nl/bibliotheek/rapporten/2022-0159.pdf>
- <https://www.rivm.nl/publicaties/impact-of-dutch-healthcare-on-environment-environmental-footprint-method-and-examples>
- [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(22\)01540-9/fulltext?itid=lk_inline_enhanced-template](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(22)01540-9/fulltext?itid=lk_inline_enhanced-template)
- [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(22\)00155-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(22)00155-4/fulltext)
- <https://www.who.int/europe/event/seventh-ministerial-conference-on-environment-and-health#:~:text=5%20%E2%80%93%20July%202023%20Budapest%2C%20Hungary%20The,of%20climate%20change%2C%20biodiversity%20loss%20and%20environmental%20pollution>
- <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2023-3198-42956-69520>
- <https://www.who.int/initiatives/alliance-for-transformative-action-on-climate-and-health>

LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

- Competence Centre for Climate and Health at the Austrian National Public Health Institute
- Deutsches Institut für Interdisziplinäre Sozialpolitikforschung (DIFIS)
- European Commission, DG Santé
- European Environment Agency
- European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies at World Health Organization (WHO) Europe
- European Social Observatory
- Institut de Recherche et Documentation en Économie de la Santé (IRDES)
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- Tampere University
- University of Milan
- University of Novi Sad
- World Health Organization (WHO)

N.B. *The statements in this summary document shall not be taken as the official positions of any of these participating organisations. The document rather summarises different participants' heterogenous points of view.*