A Healthy European Green Deal?

Putting public health at the heart of the transition to sustainability

BRIEFING
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epha european public health alliance

About EPHA

EPHA is a change agent – Europe's leading NGO alliance advocating for better health. We are a dynamic member-led organisation, made up of public health civil society, patient groups, health professionals, and disease groups working together to improve health and strengthen the voice of public health in Europe.

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Executive Summary

The European Green Deal is a general commitment by the European Commission to implement cross-sectoral measures covering policy areas such as energy, transport, agriculture, finance, public participation to transform the European Union into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where

- there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050
- economic growth is decoupled from resource use
- no person and no place is left behind

The ambition level is high and the conditions are there to transform these commitments into transformative actions to achieve a just and inclusive transition.

This paper gives a general overview of the ten key thematic areas of the European Green Deal covered by the policy package announced by the European Commission and identifies the cross-over points with public health, and the Green Deal's potential to also improve European's health and well-being.

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Why is the EU Green Deal relevant for public health?

According to the **World Health Organization (WHO) Constitution,** "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

Public Health is defined by **Donald Acheson** as "the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts of society". Health in All Policies (HiAP) is an approach which seeks to mainstream health in all relevant policy processes, and is a response to the cross-sectoral nature of public health policy-making.

The European Union has relevant legal bases to develop and implement an EU-level public health agenda. In fact, the HiAP principle is codified in the EU Treaties **(articles 9 and 168.1 - Treaty on the Functioning of the EU)** and in the **EU Charter on Fundamental Rights (article 35).**

The aim of public health policy is to create the enabling conditions for people to maintain or improve their health and well-being. Central to the practice of public health is the recognition that health and well-being is shaped by multiple social, economic, political, biological and environmental determinants. The burden of ill-health and premature mortality falls disproportionately on people exposed to socio-economic vulnerabilities, such as poverty, poor housing or education.

Environmental determinants of health refer to the health impacts of environmental factors, ranging from air quality, to occupational health; from chemicals safety, to housing and urban environments; from water quality and sanitation, to levels of noise.

The environmental and climate emergencies are major threats to public health. The **systemic changes in ecological conditions and social dynamics will have far-rea**ching effects on human health and well-being, including through air pollution, heat waves, floods, water shortages, infectious diseases, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, under-nutrition and mental ill-health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how our biodiversity, human and animal health are ultimately connected. Degradation of nature, polluting the air, water and soil, the emission of greenhouse gases are all causing an existential crisis for our planet. To tackle these challenges, a coherent policy approach is needed to urgently change the way our society is organised.

To this end, **the European Green Deal aims** to lead the European transition to "**a sustainable, fair and inclusive ecological transition**." This means Europe needs to move from an economy based on fossil fuels to a decarbonised and zero-pollution society using renewable energy sources, **whenever available and wherever possible across all sectors of the economy.** This ambitious, cross-sectoral policy package must also improve people's health.

Can the European Green Deal deliver on public health?

70% of Europeans want the EU to do more for health, according to a recent Eurobarometer survey. Should the Coronavirus outbreak continue, there is little doubt that this percentage will increase significantly.

The best predictor of the effectiveness of future European strategies can be gauged by evaluating the implementation of previous ones: the Lisbon Strategy, launched in March 2000, and the Europe 2020 strategy proposed in March 2010. The outcome of these strategies failed to meet their expectations in both cases. Careful consideration is needed to make sure that the EU will invest as much energy in actions to implement the European Green Deal as are devoted to developing the strategy and making ambitious declarations.

Therefore, the European public health community should **remain vigilant to ensure that this ambitious roadmap delivers population health benefits and reduces health inequities across the EU.**

Step-by-Step Analysis of the Green Deal from a public health perspective

The climate emergency and the environmental crisis are existential threats to Europe and the world. To overcome these challenges, Europe needs to move to a clean and circular economy, restore biodiversity and cut pollution.

In order to reach these targets, the European Commission has developed a new strategy named the European Green Deal, focused on three commitments:

- Become climate-neutral by 2050 (no net emissions of greenhouse gases);
- Invest in an economic growth decoupled from resource use;
- Leave no person and no place behind.

The European Green Deal is a roadmap, divided into actions, which will be implemented in all sectors of the European economy. Actions also outline investments needed and financing tools available.

The annex of the Commission's Communication on the European Green Deal lists these key actions and their indicative timeline.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the initial agenda will significantly affect the foreseen actions. The adjustment of the 2020 Commission work programme is a good indicator that a flexible approach will be taken.

1.Climate Ambition

Key proposals from the European Commission

- Proposal for a **European climate law** - published 4 March 2020
- Long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategy of the EU and its Member States – published 6 March 2020
- 2030 Climate Target Plan (non-legislative, including impact assessment, Q3 2020);
- New EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change (non-legislative, Q1 2021);

Climate action is at the heart of the European Green Deal. Based on the national energy and climate plans and in line with the Paris Agreement, the Commission presented a proposal: the European Climate Law. It sets a legally binding target of becoming the first climate-neutral continent (net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions) by 2050. For this purpose, the EU will create a system for monitoring progress and will take further action if needed.

To deliver additional GHG emissions reductions, the Climate Law also makes a detailed plan of the necessary steps to get to the 2050 target. The Commission will propose a new EU target for 2030, with a cut in GHG emissions of at least 50% to 55% for 2030 from 1990 levels, rather than at least 40% currently.

By June 2021, the Commission will also align its action with this new 2030 target in all areas. By September 2023, and every five years thereafter, the Commission will assess the consistency of EU and national measures with the climate-neutrality objective and the 2030-2050 trajectory.

Implications for Public Health

The climate emergency is a major threat to public health. According to the **2015 Lancet Report on Health and Climate Change**, systemic changes in ecological conditions and social dynamics will have far-reaching effects on human health and well-being, as a result of air pollution, heatwaves, floods, water shortages, infectious diseases, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, under-nutrition and mental ill-health. Therefore, the climate emergency is undermining the foundations of good health.

The EU commitment made in December 2019 is no longer up to meeting these challenges and more significant actions are needed to prepare for the next pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic, linked to changes in climate and biodiversity, clearly demonstrated that the current economic model is not sustainable.

We need an ambitious plan at European level to reduce EU emissions and to become a climate-neutral continent. A reduction of 65% GHG emissions by 2030 is essential in order to be aligned with the Paris Agreement objective to keep temperature rise below 1.5°C. **The 2019 Emissions Gap Report** by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) underlines that, to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C, all countries need to reduce their GHG emissions by 7.6% yearly between 2020 and 2030.

"Systemic changes in ecological conditions and social dynamics will have far-reaching effects on human health and well-being, as a result of air pollution, heatwaves, floods, water shortages, infectious diseases, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, under-nutrition and mental ill-health. Therefore, the climate emergency is undermining the foundations of good health."

It means that the European Union should have an emission reduction target of at least 65% by 2030 and should aim at climate neutrality by 2040.

EPHA's recent contribution to the consultation on the 2030 Climate Target plan outlined the main considerations for public health.

The 2019 Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change report demonstrates how the life of every child born today will be profoundly affected by the **climate emergency**. Without accelerated intervention, this new era will come to define the health of people at every stage of their lives.

The IPCC 2018 report identifies "**low GHG-intensive food consumption**" as a main pathway towards not exceeding a 1.5°C increase in global temperatures. The IPCC 2019 Report on Climate and Land emphasises the role of public health policies in advancing a transition to sustainable and healthy diets which can bring significant co-benefits for economy, climate and health. It can also create space to tackle **antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** and other food systems challenges, including **biodiversity loss**. Reducing GHG intensive consumption can contribute to lower agriculture-related air pollution.

In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) underlined the **consequences for health of the link between climate change and air pollution**, identifying it as the greatest environmental risk to global health. Tackling the climate crisis and improving air quality in Europe could unlock benefits for both our environment and our health. Synergies can be achieved from integrated prevention strategies, given that the drivers of both the climate emergency and air pollution often overlap. Healthcare costs of transport pollution are another indicator of health co-benefits of climate mitigating measures.

A 2018 report from CE Delft on the health impacts and costs of diesel emissions in the EU identifies concrete policy measures which the EU can promote by legislation, funding and promotion of good practices if implemented by 2030, would also result significant reduced healthcare costs,.

There are other opportunities for climate and health of **phasing out coal** or using the **reform of the Common Agricultural Policy** (CAP) and the new **Farm to Fork Strategy** to tackle emissions from the **agricultural sector**, while contributing to a resilient food system able to achieve sustainable food and nutrition security, are immense. Coherence needed with the ***Zero Pollution strategy*** as well as to the **Europe's Beating Cancer Plan** stressing that GHG emitting activities also emit **carcinogenic substances**. Likewise, mainstreaming climate adaptation into **cohesion policy** will enable countries to contribute to reach the targets of the 2030 UN Agenda for ***Sustainable Development Goals*** (SDGs), reducing premature deaths, in particular.

Ambitious climate targets go hand in hand with **lowering health-harmful substances emission** and thus decreasing the indirect health impacts of the climate crisis. GHG emissions usually contribute to air pollution. **Air pollution** increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, cancers, dementia and diabetes, causes new asthma cases in children, and damages nearly every organ in the human body. It is estimated to cause about 16% of lung cancer deaths, 25% of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) deaths, about 17% of heart disease and stroke, and about 26% of respiratory infection deaths.

2.Clean, Affordable and Secure Energy

Key proposals from the European Commission

- Strategy for smart sector integration - Q2 2020
- Renovation wave - Q3 2020 - Offshore renewable energy - Q4 2020

The Commission considers that decarbonising the EU's energy system is critical to reach the climate objectives. In fact, in 2018, the production and use of energy account for more than 75% of the EU's

GHG emissions. In this context, the major step is to prioritise energy efficiency and develop a power sector based largely on renewable sources.

Renovation wave initiative for buildings renovation is essential to improve energy performance, because they account for 40% of energy consumed. Strict enforcement of rules on energy performance of buildings is also crucial, so the current rates of renovation of public and private buildings should at least double. Design of buildings should be more climate-proofing and in line with the circular economy. This initiative aims to tackle energy poverty in the EU.

Implications for public health

Energy poverty occurs when a household suffers from a lack of adequate energy services in the home. It is estimated that more than 50 million households in the European Union are experiencing energy poverty. Energy poverty is also one of the key sources of air pollution from excessive use of firewood, coal and oil-burning stove for heating. Poorer areas and less wealthy Member States are more affected by energy poverty.

The European Commission is focused on tackling energy poverty through the EU Energy Poverty Observatory (EPOV). Adequate warmth, cooling, lighting and the energy to power appliances are essential services needed to guarantee a decent standard of living and people's health.

Energy poverty is one form of persisting health inequities in Europe, associated with a range of adverse consequences for people's health and wellbeing. For instance, this phenomenon increases the risk of respiratory and cardiac illnesses, and also affects mental health. Addressing energy poverty has the potential to bring multiple benefits, including reducing the need for increased health spending to tackle the illnesses it causes, reduced air pollution, improved comfort and wellbeing, more resources for households, and increased economic activity.

Poverty related inequities are mainstreamed in EPHA's work. Housing is a key social determinant of health and the challenge of energy poverty featured among the focus areas of the 2nd EU Clean Air Forum.

3. Industrial Strategy for a Clean and Circular Economy

Key proposals from the European Commission

- A New Industrial Strategy for Europe – Communication presented 10 March 2020
- New Circular Economy Action Plan - published 11 March 2020
- Empowering the consumer for the green transition (legislative, including impact assessment, Article 114 TFEU, Q2 2021

With its Industrial Strategy for Europe and Circular Economy Action Plan, the European Commission aims to ensure that European businesses and economies are fit to achieve the transition towards climate neutrality, while coping with global competition. All industrial sectors, including the most energy-intensive ones, should support the **Green transition**, and thus reduce their own carbon footprints, while achieving the **Digital transition** and being **competitive on the global stage**.

Industries must use clean technology solutions and develop new greener business models. Financing research and innovation will be essential to make this happen. These efforts will be supported by policies and financial instruments at EU and national level, as well as the private sector. As carbon leakage is a major challenge, the Commission's proposal Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism has to reduce this risk while respecting World Trade Organisation rules.

Industry accounts for 20% of EU emissions. Reducing emissions across industry will depend on securing low-carbon energy at competitive prices. The European Union and the Member States have to plan and invest in renewables generation technologies, capacity and infrastructure. Currently, only 12% of the materials used by EU industry come from recycling. The European economy is still mostly linear, instead of being based on the circular economy. Many products break down too easily and cannot be reused, repaired, or recycled, or are made for single use only. The EU should ensure that nothing is wasted, just like nature.

Implications for public health

According to a **commentary** published in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology, the three global health thr eats, namely chemical pollution (including endocrine disrupting chemicals), loss of biodiversity and climate change, are strongly interlinked by their common origins in fossil fuels such as coal, oil, or gas.

As a member of the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), EPHA supports its call for a Healthy Energy Future for Europe. 257 coal power plants are still in operation across the European region (excluding Russia, Ukraine Belarus), and in the Balkans region and Turkey new projects are in the pipeline. Coal power plants are not only a major contributor to global warming with the release of CO2 but they also emit thousands of tons of hazardous air pollutants, which harm human health.

Globally, **almost 360 million tons of plastic were produced in 2018**. Its produc-

tion and disposal contribute to many environmental problems, such as plastic waste, which often ingested by animals, can injure or poison wildlife. Human health is also threatened by chemicals added to plastics that are absorbed by human bodies and alter hormones with implications for human health. Around 4 percent of world oil production is used to make plastics, and a similar amount is consumed as energy in the process. Reducing plastic consumption, especially single-use plastics, is thus vital.

4. Sustainable and Smart Mobility

Key proposals from the European Commission

- Strategy for sustainable and smart mobility – (Roadmap published open for feedback (until 29 July 2020) and Public consultation (01 July 2020 - 23 September 2020) Q4 2020
- ReFuelEU Aviation - Sustainable Aviation Fuels & FuelEU Maritime - Q4 2020

Transport is a major contributor of GHG emissions as well as air pollution, and to achieve the EU's goal of climate neutrality by 2050, transport emissions will have to be reduced by 90%. According to the DG Transport and Mobility Commissioner Adina Valean, the future strategy will aim to make the transport system as a whole more sustainable, with green alternative solutions available to EU citizens and businesses, respecting the "polluter-pays principle" in all transport modes and to foster connectivity and access to transport for all.

In the upcoming transport strategy, four areas of action will be prioritized:

- increase the uptake of clean vehicles and alternative fuels for road, maritime and aviation;
- extend the share of more sustainable transport modes such as rail and inland waterways;
- incentivise the right consumer choices and low-emission practices;
- invest in low- and zero-emissions solutions, including infrastructure.

Initiatives such as prices that reflect transport's impact on the environment, e.g. ending subsidies for fossil-fuels, might have a greater impact on the reduction of pollution. Stricter standards on pollution for cars and more public recharging and refuelling stations for zero- and low-emission vehicles will also be included in the Commission's priorities.

Implications for public health

Vehicles emissions continue to have a seriously negative impact on air quality in Europe. In 2016, air pollution was responsible for 4.2 million deaths worldwide. Air pollution increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, cancers, dementia, and diabetes, causes new asthma cases in children, and damages nearly every organ in the human body. As has been mentioned previously,iIt is estimated to cause about 16% of lung cancer deaths, 25% of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) deaths, about 17% of heart disease and stroke, and about 26% of respiratory infection deaths.

The future Strategy for sustainable and smart mobility needs to lead the European transition to sustainable mobility, including zero-emission vehicles. The new European vehicle emissions standards "Euro 7/VII" will be vital in this strategy. As EPHA has called for in its feedback to the EU's consultation on Euro 7/VII, the final EU vehicle emissions standards to be legislated must be implemented as soon as possible, to ensure that vehicles on European roads no longer endanger lives due to their emissions. EU air quality standards should also be aligned with the latest WHO guidelines.

To ensure that every European citizen has easy access to sustainable, safe active transport modes, in particular to walking, cycling, public transport and shared mobility services, EPHA joined forces with other stakeholders in the mobility sector to call for a modal shift in passenger as well as freight transport, both in urban as well as rural settings.

5. Greening the Common Agricultural Policy and "Farm to Fork" Strategy

Key proposals from the European Commission

- A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system - published 20 May 2020
- Proposals for the revision of the EU Common Agricultural Policy - published June 2018
- Analysis of links between CAP Reform and Green Deal - published 20 May 2020

The production, processing, transportation, packaging, marketing, preparation, consumption and disposal of food makes a major contribution to air, soil and water pollution and GHG emissions, and has a profound impact on land and marine biodiversity. Food systems remain one of the key drivers of the climate crisis and environmental degradation. This while their potential to support the well-functioning of ecosystems are likewise vast.

The Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system aims to comprehensively address the challenges linked to the unsustainability of current food systems, recognising the links between healthy people, healthy societies and a healthy planet. A shift to sustainable food systems can bring environmental, health and social benefits, offer economic gains and ensure that the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis puts the EU onto a sustainable path.

Over the next few years, the strategy will introduce a number of legislative and non-legislative actions, including ensuring sustainable food production and food security; stimulating sustainable food processing, wholesale, retail, hospitality and food services practices; promoting sustainable food consumption

and facilitating the shift to healthy, sustainable diets; reducing food loss and waste; and combat food fraud.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) plays a key role in supporting the EU's agricultural sector. If well-designed, it can be a major instrument in managing

the transition to sustainable food production systems, contributing to the climate objectives of the EU and supporting the achievement of the EU biodiversity commitments for 2030. To achieve this, the principles in the Farm to Fork Strategy should be used to guide the national implementation of the CAP.

Implications for public health

The Farm to Fork Strategy introduces EU-wide targets to reduce the use of pesticides, fertilisers and antimicrobials, to increase organic agriculture and to cut food waste. It recognises that supporting sustainable consumer choices requires changes to the food environment. Food environments are the physical, economic, socio-cultural and policy surroundings affecting the availability, accessibility, affordability and attractiveness of foods. Food environments shape what food people buy and eat. Approaching food policy through the lens of food environments promotes a comprehensive, evidence-informed and equitable approach to change that goes to the root of these issues.

In its reaction to the strategy's publication, EPHA has called Farm to Fork "the most coherent attempt yet to respond to the fundamental challenges plaguing our food systems." While welcoming the approach taken by the strategy and a number of specific actions, such as setting nutrient profiles, proposing a mandatory EU front-of-pack nutrition label, setting mandatory sustainability requirements for public food procurement and proposing a legislative framework for sustainable food systems, for a true transformation, this is only the first step. The actions to address food environments are seen as especially weak, being dominated by consumer information and a voluntary industry code of conduct, in contravention to the advice of the EU's own chief scientists. Also, while the impacts of large-scale animal farming are acknowledged, the commitment to transition to a "less and better" animal product future is elusive.

The CAP too has many entry points to deliver for better human and planetary health. In a 2018 policy briefing, EPHA identifies 11 ways on how the CAP can contribute to better health, including by addressing climate, biodiversity, nutrition, socio-economic inequalities, work quality and reducing the use of antibiotics and agrochemicals. Various policy proposals are made to move the policy towards delivering on this potential.

"A comprehensive public health approach relies on biodiversity, as flourishing nature, and good animal and plant health are closely linked to human health. Restoring and protecting nature brings many benefits, from climate and flood protection to defence against the emergence of new diseases."

6. Preserving and Protecting Biodiversity

Key proposals from the European Commission

- EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - published 20 May 2020
- 8th Environmental Action Programme - Q4 2020 & New EU Forest Strategy - Q1 2021

Related to the Farm to Fork Strategy, the European Commission has adopted the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, a long-term plan for **protecting nature and reversing the degradation of European ecosystems by 2030.** The strategy proposes establishing a l**arger EU-wide network of protected areas on land and sea,** and to plant three billion new trees in the EU.

The **EU Nature Restoration Plan** aims to restore degraded ecosystems across the EU by 2030, addressing the key drivers of biodiversity loss. The decline in pollinators should be reversed and the use of chemical pesticides has to be reduced by 50%. Cities with at least 20,000 inhabitants will have an Urban Greening Plan, which include measures to create urban farms, biodiverse and accessible urban forests, parks and gardens, and eliminate the use of chemical pesticides.

This strategy is also the EU proposal for a **Global Biodiversity Framework u**nder the **UN Convention on Biological Diversity.** The Commission also wants to decrease the number of Red List species threatened by **invasive alien species by 50%**. They inflict major damage to local nature and economy, and facilitate the outbreak and spread of infectious diseases, posing a threat to humans and wildlife.

Implications for public health

A comprehensive public health approach relies on biodiversity, as flourishing nature, and good animal and plant health are closely linked to human health. Restoring and protecting nature brings many benefits, from climate and flood protection to defence against the emergence of new diseases.

The COVID-19 pandemic is raising awareness of the links between human health and planetary ecosystems. Indeed, the risk of emergence and spread of infectious diseases increases as nature is destroyed. Several diseases have originated in animals, e.g. AIDS, SARS, Ebola, and now the new coronavirus. The chances of pathogens passing from wild and domestic animals to humans may be increased by the destruction and modification of natural ecosystems, the illegal or uncontrolled trade of wild species and the unhygienic conditions under which wild and domestic species are mixed and marketed. Protecting and restoring biodiversity and well-functioning ecosystems can prevent the emergence and spread of future diseases.

Species abundance and homogeneity, the actual **lack of biodiversity** of intensive livestock is contributing to the risk of new zoonotic diseases. EPHA supports the **"One Health"** approach, which recognises the deep-rooted connection between human health, animal health and healthy ecosystems. Many of the same microbes infect animals and humans. Efforts by just one sector can-

not prevent or eliminate the problem. Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), which occurs when infections caused by bacteria are difficult to treat, or can no longer be treated as they have become resistant to antibiotics. Drug-resistant microbes can be transmitted between animals and humans, so a well-coordinated approach to contain and eradicate AMR in humans and animals is required. Better protection of natural ecosystems helps prevent possible future diseases.

Biodiversity loss threatens food security: more than 75% of global food crop types rely on animal pollination. To avoid a biodiversity collapse, a transition towards sustainable food systems is urgently needed. The decline of genetic diversity has to be reversed, e.g. by facilitating the use of a wide variety of crops and breeds, bringing health benefits through more varied and nutritious diets.

7. Towards a Zero-Pollution Ambition for a Toxic-free Environment

Key proposals from the European Commission

- Chemicals strategy for sustainability - Q3 2020
- Zero pollution action plan for water, air and soil - 2021

Ecosystems and humans are suffering from the release of chemical pesticides, pharmaceuticals, hazardous chemicals, urban and industrial wastewater, and other waste including litter and plastics. All of these pressures on our environment must be reduced.

The new chemicals strategy for sustainability will aim to better protect people and the environment against hazardous chemicals and encourage innovation in the sector to develop safe and sustainable alternatives.

The Commission will adopt a **Zero-Pollution Action Plan** to prevent pollution of:

- **air:** by reviewing air quality standards in line with the WHO guidelines and providing support to local authorities to achieve cleaner air for our citizens;
- **water:** by reducing pollution from excess nutrients (Farm to Fork Strategy) and from micro-plastics and pharmaceuticals;
- **soil:** by reducing pollution from industrial installations and promoting the goal of zero pollution from nitrogen and phosphorus flows from fertilisers;
- **human body**: by developing more sustainable alternatives and improving rules on assessment of substances launched onto the market

Implications for public health

The body of evidence on the health damage attributed to air pollution is convincing and robust. The European Respiratory Society, an EPHA member, has highlighted many of the common misunderstandings and myths regarding air pollution and its adverse effects on health, as well as the added value of European air pollution limits and why they should be strengthened.

EPHA has co-signed a letter from the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) to the EU College of Commissioners on the importance of a long-term chemicals strategy that prioritises health and environmental protection. Regarding clean air, EU air quality standards are still exceeded despite being less strict than the WHO guidelines. Air pollution is one of the top risk factors for chronic diseases including heart disease, asthma, cancer, and diabetes. There are also synergies between climate and clean air efforts, given that fossil fuel combustion drives both GHG emissions and air pollution.

Chemical production and use are increasing across Europe and globally, while the body of evidence on the health toll of hazardous chemicals continues to grow. Lessening chemical exposure, especially in the most critical phases of human development such as during pregnancy, is vital. Identification of hazardous chemicals under the EU's landmark REACH regulation is too slow, and endocrine disruptors can still be found in many consumer products including toys, cosmetics and food contact materials.

Discharge of antimicrobial compounds from human and veterinary medicines into the environment is a potential driver for the development of AMR. EPHA continues to urge EU decision-makers to tackle AMR and pharmaceuticals in the environment (PiE), providing concrete recommendations from a "One Health" approach. The Roadmap for Action on AMR by the EPHA-led pan-European Antimicrobial Resistance Stakeholder Network calls for the implementation of 5 key strategies and targets to tackle AMR, including tackling the environmental dimension of AMR.

5 key strategies and targets to tackle AMR

The signatories of this Roadmap call for the implementation of 5 key strategies and targets to tackle AMR:

1. Set targets and performance indicators
2. Help countries mobilise resources for better implementation of national AMR policies
3. Close the existing collaboration gap between civil society and EU policy-makers
4. Put prevention at the heart of AMR policy-making
5. Tackle the environmental dimension of AMR in the framework of the European Green Deal

8. Mainstreaming Sustainability in all EU Policies

Key proposals from the European Commission:

Financing the sustainable transition:

- European Green Deal Investment Plan - Q1 2020
- Just Transition Fund - Q1 2020
- Renewed Sustainable Finance Strategy - Q4 2020
- Review of the Non-Financial Reporting Directive - Q1 2021

The European Commission recently unveiled a recovery plan to reboot the bloc's economy badly hit by the pandemic. The proposal includes a 25% climate spending target. It stresses the need to prioritise investments in sustainable vehicles, charging stations and cycling.

To ensure the recovery is sustainable, even, inclusive and fair for all Member States, the European Commission is proposing to create a new instrument, Next Generation EU of € 750 billion, as well as targeted reinforcements to the long-term EU budget for 2021-2027 will bring the total financial firepower of the EU budget to € 1.85 trillion.

Mainstreaming climate emergency mitigation and adaptation into EU sectoral policies and EU funds is an essential component of a successful comprehensive policy. This process will include

- Infrastructure
- Agriculture & forestry;
- Marine, fisheries and coastal areas and water management:
- Biodiversity
- Disaster risk reduction;
- Health.

This last section will focus on actions that must be taken in response to direct and indirect effects of the climate emergency on human health, and the tools and financing to fix them.

Direct effects result from, for example, changes in the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events. Indirect effects can be felt through changes in the incidence of diseases transmitted by insects (e.g. mosquitoes and ticks) or changes in water and air quality.

Implications for public health

The narrative in favour of Better Regulation, the general principle which considers public interest legislation to be a barrier to business, is still in use. It is in clear contradiction with the European Green Deal, asking to:

- Align all new Commission initiatives in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal and promote innovation;
- Stakeholders to identify and remedy incoherent legislation that reduces the effectiveness in delivering the European Green Deal;
- Integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the European Semester.

The health community is advocating for a EU budget aligned with the Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach. Consideration of the implications for health should be included in all EU policies, which is why EPHA constantly calls on the EU to develop a robust HiAP methodology respecting Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. This includes:

- adopting EU-level actions to prevent diseases and promote healthy lifestyles; developing a framework for tackling non-communicable diseases;
- supporting national health systems with expertise and evidence;
- empowering citizens and patients;
- assessing the impact on health of EU policies;
- and establishing strong European leadership with a global health strategy.

9. The EU as a global leader

Key proposals from the European Commission

- The EU will continue to lead the international climate and biodiversity negotiations, further strengthening the international policy framework - from 2019
- Strengthen the EU's Green Deal Diplomacy in cooperation with Member States - 2020
- Green Agenda for the Western Balkans - 2020

Climate emergency and environmental degradation affect every human being. This needs a global solution. The European Union is committed to:

- Leading by example, through the European Green Deal;
- Setting standards for sustainable growth across global value chains;
- Using diplomacy, trade and development cooperation to advance climate action.

The European Commission will enhance the enforcement of sustainability commitments in trade agreements. The EU will use its diplomatic and financial tools to make sure that EU's partners also take action. Engaging with the G20 countries, who are responsible for 80% of global greenhouse gas emissions, is crucial. The Commission will also establish an environment, energy and climate partnership with the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership and Southern Neighbourhood. It will also build Green Alliances with partner countries and regions in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific.

Implications for public health

Protecting the climate and our health goes hand in hand. The EU's cooperation with partner countries is also driven by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals which seek to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development while protecting people and the planet.

The European Public Alliance is one of 40 NGOs led by SDG Watch Europe to joined a call in June for an EU Recovery Plan which puts the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement at the heart of a sustainable and inclusive future.

The European Union shall show strong leadership on health at global level, including by adopting a coherent European Global Health Strategy. The EU has a responsibility within the global health agenda: it has a leadership role to play, not only as a donor but as a policy influencer. Adopting a strong Global Health Strategy, which brings together the work of key Commission DGs and ensures policy coherence across its work, is an important step towards achieving the SDGs and the right to health for all.

10. Working together – a European Climate Pact

Key proposals from the European Commission

- Public consultation on the European Climate Pact - published 4 March 2020 - adoption Q4 2020

The European Climate Pact aims to engage citizens and all parts of society in climate and environmental actions. This pact's goals are to inform, inspire and foster cooperation between people and organisations ranging from national, regional and local authorities to businesses, unions, civil society organisations, educational institutions, research and innovation organisations, consumer groups and individuals.

In concrete terms, the Pact will encourage people and organisations to commit to concrete actions, designed to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate emergency. The Commission will promote "pledges" (public commitments) and support relevant initiatives with knowledge/capacity-building, to boost their impact and inspire further action across Europe and globally.

In selected areas, the Commission could provide targeted support. At the start, these areas could cover:

- buildings, by stimulating advisory services, facilitating smart financing and assisting local authorities for energy efficient housing;
- mobility, by supporting cities and towns with knowledge, raising awareness, and possibly targeted financial support for sustainable urban mobility plans;
- tree-planting, nature regeneration and greening of urban areas.

Implications for public health

The European Climate Pact is about people and their daily lives: how they work, consume, move, heat or cool their houses, and lead healthy lives. A public debate with ordinary Europeans about the climate crisis can only be a real dialogue if the links between the climate and human health are fully revealed. The European public health community should mobilise to build this narrative and lead and contribute to this discussion.

Conclusion

Towards a genuine public health-friendly recovery

The measures needed to implement the European Green Deal also demonstrate the urgent need for a **stronger and more ambitious EU Health policy**. Developing a comprehensive European approach to public health can ultimately bring the EU closer to its people - a core goal of the whole European integration project. The European Green Deal has the potential to implement the principles of the Health in All Policies approach, so that health policy breaks outside the healthcare silo. As it was designed prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, the EU's new growth strategy has to be reassessed to make it fit for a post COVID-19 healthy recovery. With a coherent public health narrative injected into this strategy, it could unleash Europe's hidden potential to improve population health and well- being, while also ensuring climate and environmental sustainability.

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