# 2030 Climate Target Plan

## Roadmap - EPHA Feedback

The **European Public Health Alliance** (EPHA) is the largest European public health NGO advocating for better health. It is made up of public health NGOs, patient groups, health professionals, disease groups, academia and population group representatives working together to improve health and strengthen the voice of public health in Europe.

The climate emergency is a major threat to public health. According to the 2015 *The Lancet* report, systemic changes in ecological conditions and social dynamics will have far-reaching effects on human health and well-being, including via air pollution, heat waves, 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. However, the response to the climate emergency could also be the greatest global health opportunity of the 21st century and no one should be left behind.

EPHA calls for an ambitious plan at European level to reduce EU emissions and to become a climate-neutral continent. The EU's aim at cutting its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 55% (instead of 40%) by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

Indeed, based on the Emissions Gap Report 2019 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the 55% target might not be sufficient to keep global heating to 2°C and thus to avoid climate breakdown. The European Environmental Agency (EEA) also urges immediate and concerted action. Their "European Environment — State and Outlook 2020" study makes it clear that Europe is not making enough progress in addressing climate and environmental challenges.

The EU commitment made in December 2019 is not up to the challenge anymore and more significant actions are needed to prepare for the next pandemic. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic clearly demonstrated that the current economic model is not sustainable and that the coronavirus outbreak is linked to climate and biodiversity. By lowering GHG emissions and air pollution levels, we can help the most vulnerables in their fight against COVID-19 and any other future pandemics. In many Member-states, the lockdown has significantly reduced GHG emissions. However, in order to prevent going back to pre-pandemics GHG emission levels, sustainable policies should be put in place to achieve low level emissions on the long-term. These goals could be achieved by ambitious 2030 Climate targets.

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**Transparency Register Number:** 18941013532-08

EPHA encourages the European Commission to go a step further. EPHA suggests a reduction of 65% GHG emissions by 2030 in order to be aligned with the Paris Agreement objective to keep temperature rise below 1.5°C. The UNEP report 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. 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.

The Special Report (2018) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on Global Warming of 1.5°C explained that "any increase in global temperature is projected to affect human health, with primarily negative consequences". Missing the 1.5°C temperature target would substantially increase heatwaves. This is especially the case in the urban heat islands, which amplifies the impacts of heatwaves in cities. Ozone-related mortality could also increase massively. Some vector-borne diseases, such as malaria, dengue fever, West Nile virus and Lyme disease, "are projected to increase with warming from 1.5°C to 2°C, including potential shifts in their geographic range."

2019 *The Lancet* Countdown on Health and Climate Change report demonstrates that 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 climate change and air pollution often overlap. Healthcare costs of transport pollution are another indicator of health co-benefits of climate mitigating measures.

A 2018 EPHA-sponsored report (https://epha.org/ce-delft-health-impacts-costs-diesel-emissions-eu/) identifies concrete policy measures which the EU can promote by legislation, funding and promotion of good practices. The 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 European 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. (https://www.who.int/gho/phe/outdoor_air_pollution/burden_text/en/ )

Europe needs to phase out the sale of diesel and petrol cars by 2028 if it wants to meet its commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement. Countries resolved to limit the rise in global average temperatures to 1.5°C. In order to have a high (66%) chance of achieving this, the EU will need to end all sales of conventional fossil fuel-powered cars by 2028 and phase out all petrol and diesel cars by 2045.

**EPHA policy recommendations**

To this end, and in order to achieve a GHG emission reduction of 65% by 2030, these aspects shall be reflected in the EU Climate 2030 targets accordingly. EPHA therefore suggests including the following elements into the EU proposal to contribute to mitigating the negative public health impacts of the climate crisis.

**As an overarching principle, the Climate 2030 targets shall**

**Recognise** that the climate crisis has a negative impact on human health and biodiversity, which will endanger the well-being and the future of new generations;

**Acknowledge that** immediate and concerted actions, engaging diverse policy areas and actors across society in enabling systemic change;

**As regards the elements the initiative will assess (p 3 of the consultation document):**

**Include** a climate impact assessment in all future EU policies, including health and well-being impacts; the Lancet Countdown Climate Change and health indicators

(https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32596-6/fulltext) provide a good basis from which the EU can draw inspiration;

**Include** a calculation on how much will the initiative contribute to prevent cancer therefore contribute effectively to the European Beating cancer plan

Considering elements the initiative will present (p 3 of the consultation document):

**Add** a legally binding target for GHG emission reductions from agriculture because the global food system is responsible for up to 30% of anthropogenic GHG emissions;

**Commit** to mobilise its resources to invest in walking, cycling and improve public transport infrastructures, to achieve the shift in mobility;

**Explore and support** the legal, financial, coordination or promotion tools the development of ambitious policies such as:

- revision of climate and health harmful air pollutant limits,
- expand zero emission vehicles,
- urban policies, e.g. ultra-low emission zones, congestion charging parking policies, tax measures and incentives, encourage car-free days and car-sharing.

**Aim** to end all sales of conventional fossil fuel-powered cars by 2028 and phase out all petrol and diesel cars by 2045.

Decisively, tackling climate change by keeping global warming below 1.5°C is one of the greatest health challenges of the 21st century. The highest level of ambition in European climate law is needed to ensure climate neutrality before the middle of this century. A transformation towards sustainability of all sectors of Europe's economy and society, with health at the heart of policy-making, has the potential to improve all our lives, and those of our children.

The COVID-19 pandemic is putting the health of European people at the core of the European political ambition. The European Commission should continue protecting our health with an ambitious European Climate law, and thus limiting the health damages of a potential climate breakdown by reducing GHG emissions.