

## Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – EU strategy EPHA feedback

The [\*\*European Public Health Alliance \(EPHA\)\*\*](#) is the largest European public health NGO advocating for better health. Our 82 member organisations encompasses 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.

### Summary

EPHA welcomes the Commission's intention to adopt a comprehensive strategy to reduce transport-related greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2050. Our NGO underlines the importance of prescribing zero-emission vehicles and making sustainable, safe and active transport solutions available to everyone. Especially considering the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Union needs a public health driven, green mobility recovery, to help fight climate and health crisis. To this end, the *European Green Deal* shall be strengthened to lead the European mobility transition to a sustainable and healthy continent.

### EPHA's position

A European *Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy* should bear in mind two different, yet interlinked, health aspects: fighting the climate emergency, and improving air quality.

According to the [\*\*European Environment Energy \(EEA\)\*\*](#), in 2017, **27 % of total EU-28 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions came from the transport sector**. Transport is the only economic sector whose GHG emissions are higher than in 1990, and despite the mitigation efforts undertaken CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from transport increased by 2.2 % compared with 2016. **Transport sector is thus one of the main sectors responsible for the climate crisis and a priority to decarbonise.**

**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. 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 increase heat-waves and ozone-related mortality. 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.”

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 21<sup>st</sup> century and **no one should be left behind**.

There is a need for an ambitious plan at European level to reduce EU emissions and to become a climate-neutral continent. In 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 vulnerable in their fight against COVID-19 and any other future pandemics. [In many Member-states, the lockdown has significantly reduced GHG emissions](#). However, 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 *European Green Deal* targets, especially in the field of mobility.

**Air pollution is a major problem caused by Internal Combustion Engines (ICE)**, the backbone of current mobility. In 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) underlined the impact of climate crisis and air pollution on health, identifying them as the [greatest environmental risks 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 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](#) identifies concrete policy measures, the EU can promote by legislation, funding and promotion of good practices. The opportunities for climate

and health of phasing out ICEs are immense. Coherence is needed with the *Zero Pollution strategy* and the *European Beating Cancer Plan*. They are stressing that GHG emitting activities also emit carcinogenic substances. Likewise, mainstreaming climate adaptation into mobility policy will enable countries to contribute to reach the targets of the 2030 UN Agenda for *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs).

Ambitious climate targets go hand in hand with lowering health-harmful substances emission and thus decreasing the indirect health impacts of the climate crisis. 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.

Europe needs to phase out the sales of diesel and petrol cars by 2028 if it wants to meet its commitments to the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. Countries pledged 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, EPHA 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 European Commission 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; and
- **Acknowledge** that immediate and concerted actions are needed, as well as engaging diverse policy areas and actors across society in enabling systemic change.

## The new EU Sustainable and Smart Mobility strategy must:

- **Introduce** a climate impact assessment in all future EU policies, including health and well-being impacts; [the Lancet Countdown Climate Change and health indicators](#) provide a good basis from which the EU can draw inspiration;
- **Include** a calculation on how much will the initiative contribute to prevent cancer and therefore help effectively the *European Beating cancer plan*;
- **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 and the development of ambitious policies, such as:
  - the revision of climate and health harmful air pollutant limits;
  - expanding 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.

The Group of Chief Scientific Advisors published a useful report on “[Adaptation to climate change-related health effects](#)”. Their report contains recommendations on how the EU can help to make the health sector, and our societies, better prepared and more resilient with respect to impacts from climate change on health.

Decisively, tackling the climate crisis by keeping global warming below 1.5°C is one of the greatest health challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The highest level of ambition in the *Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy* is needed to ensure a sustainable continent and improve air quality in Europe. With health at the heart of policymaking, the new strategy has the potential to improve all our lives, and those of our children.