



Editorial

Slashing pollution is protecting public health: Reflections on Europe's Zero Pollution Goals for World Environment Day

World Environment Day is a key moment to reflect on the health of our communities and our planet. It is also a day to recommit to action advancing both environmental protection and public health.

Acting on pollution is a case in point. The European Union's commitments in this area are outlined in the [Zero Pollution Plan](#), intended to reduce pollution's harm on people and ecosystems. Its [2030 targets](#) reflect this dual focus, aiming to halve premature deaths from air pollution, slash noise and chemical exposure, and curb pollutants from agriculture and industry.

Plastic fantastic?

This year, plastic pollution rightly takes centre stage on World Environment Day. The proliferation of plastics in our oceans, soils, and even our bodies is emblematic of the web of commercial, political, and environmental determinants that shape health outcomes. The drivers of plastic pollution cut across borders and sectors, including petrochemical production, global trade, and waste management. Plastic production, use, and waste contaminate ecosystems all the way to our food, water, and the air we breathe, and contribute to a host of health issues.

Two Zero Pollution targets aim at reducing the presence of plastic in our environment. Yet, according to the EU's most recent [monitoring and outlook report](#), we are not on track to deliver on the one related to microplastics. This raises significant public health concerns: emerging evidence continues to link microplastic exposure to a range of potential health risks, from respiratory and digestive issues to possible immune and endocrine impacts. As science advances, the need for upholding the precautionary principle - taking proactive steps to prevent potential harm, even when there's uncertainty about the risks - and fostering action on pollution grows stronger.

Plastic pollution relates to other harmful forms of pollution targeted in the Zero Pollution Plan. Plastic particles contaminate our air, while the industrial emissions from plastic production contribute to air pollution. Chemicals from plastics leach into waterways, and microplastics disrupt soil ecosystems. Even noise pollution intersects with plastic: tyre abrasion is a major source of microplastics, air pollution, and traffic noise, which calls for integrated solutions in the transport sector.

Health cannot wait

It is clear that Europe must step up, accelerating efforts to reduce environmental threats as action on noise, nutrient and waste pollution are also lagging. Even where progress to meet current targets is reportedly on track, the health impacts remain

substantial. This is especially true for air pollution, the leading environmental threat to health in the region - impacting cardiovascular, respiratory, and neurological systems across the life span, increasing cancer risk, and costing hundreds of billions to health and social systems across the block. Given this reality, the urgency of achieving a pollution-free environment cannot be overstated.

This World Environment Day, we are reaffirming the need to protect public health by slashing all forms of pollution. Tackling the health impacts of pollution has long been a priority for EPHA, that remains central to our mission. Many of our members and partners in the public health field share this commitment: that is why we call on EU decisionmakers to respond to these concerns, with the urgency and leadership this reality demands. In this edition, we highlight some key work and perspectives from our community: from calls for robust [Zero Pollution funding](#) in the next EU budget, to tackling [plastic use in healthcare](#), [confronting PFAS contamination](#) to reduce cancer risk, and raising awareness on the growing evidence regarding [air pollution's neurological impacts](#). Ensuring full implementation and enforcement of EU environmental legislation, and reaffirming a clear commitment to protect everyone in the EU from preventable environmental harms, is paramount.

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This Month's Top Stories



Financing zero pollution action for better health in the next EU budget

The European Union (EU) long-term budget is a key instrument that sets the framework for what the EU will spend on, and how much, across a list of core priorities.

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World Environment Day: Plastic-free, sustainable care starts with nursing

Nursing, as a profession, is critical to the delivery of care – and with that central role comes a significant environmental footprint. Nurses generate the most waste, majority plastic based or wrapped.

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Addressing air pollution to reduce dementia risk

Affecting over 9 million people in Europe, dementia is a progressive, neurodegenerative condition that worsens over time, symptoms include memory loss, confusion, problems with language and understanding, and changes in behaviour.

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Is Europe facing a 'forever chemicals' crisis? Why we must ban PFAS to prevent cancer

What do raincoats, non-stick frying pans, mascara, fire-fighting foams, and pizza boxes have in common? Harmful chemicals lurking in plain sight: PFAS.

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EPHA Updates



MFF consultation responses

EPHA has responded to four out of seven of the European Commission's public consultations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). These were carefully selected for their relevance to public health, social equity, and the sustainability of health systems.

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Advancing Micronutrient Policies: A Key Step Forward for the Zero Hidden Hunger Project

EPHA is excited to announce that we are finalising a comprehensive review of micronutrient policies at both EU and national levels. Once revised by our co-authors, work package partners, and coordinators, this analysis will serve as a guiding framework for our upcoming Policy Lab, helping to shape informed policy recommendations to address micronutrient deficiencies across Europe. We look forward to leveraging this review to drive meaningful change and ensure no one is left behind in the fight against hidden hunger in Europe.

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News From Members





EVENT | Building Trust, Breaking Barriers: Tackling Vaccine Hesitancy for a Healthier Europe

Tue, Jun 10 | Room SPINELLI 3H1, European Parliament, Brussels | 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Vaccine hesitancy poses a critical public health challenge in Europe and globally. Despite scientific advancements and the availability of safe and effective vaccines, misinformation, distrust in institutions, and cultural barriers continue to influence individual vaccination decisions. This issue was magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the urgent need to build trust in immunization programs.

This event in the European Parliament, organized by MEP Nicolás González Casares, aims to foster debate on strategies to combat vaccine hesitancy, strengthen public trust, and ensure equitable vaccine coverage across Europe.

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Public Mobilisation Across Europe Demands Ban on Controversial Sweetener Aspartame

In February, public mobilisation started across Europe as Foodwatch and allies launched a campaign to ban the controversial artificial sweetener E-951, known as aspartame.

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A call for ambitious action on NCDs

On 14.05, the United Nations released the Zero Draft of the Political Declaration ahead of the High-Level Meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and the promotion of mental health and well-being, scheduled for 09.25. 2025.

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Building National Cancer Data Nodes: the New EU Project CANDLE Starts its Work

On 1.06.2025, EU-funded project CANDLE (National CAncer data Node DeveLopErs) officially started its three-year mission to build a robust cancer research infrastructure.

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Other News



EPHA is now on Bluesky!

Exciting news: EPHA is on BlueSky! Join us on the growing platform to learn about our work and engage on key public health topics across Europe.

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Building Better Indicators for Mental Health and Wellbeing – EPHA Focus Group Consensus Report

This report presents a series of expert-informed suggestions for improving mental health and wellbeing indicators, drawing on insights from a focus group that brought together specialists from academic, policy, and clinical backgrounds. It begins by highlighting the importance of adopting a wider, more comprehensive, and positively framed approach to measuring and monitoring mental wellbeing. The report then examines existing frameworks, evaluating both their potential and their limitations, before introducing the indicators proposed through this collaborative exchange.

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patients groups, health promotion and disease specific NGOs, academic groupings and other health associations. The European Public Health Alliance has received funding under an operating grant from the European Union's EU4Health Programme (2021-2027). The content of this email represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility; it cannot be considered to reflect the views of the European Commission and/or the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA) or any other body of the European Union. The European Commission and the Agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains. Transparency Register Number: 18941013532-08

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