Scaling up climate action for health in the WHO European Region - focus on the health sector

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Symposium Green Deal Duurzame Zorg-Welzijn

Leuven, 18 November 2022

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Reimagine a world where:

- *clean air, water and food are available to all?*
- *economies are focused on health and well-being?*
- *cities are liveable and people have control over their health and the health of the planet?*

- ✓ Climate crisis is a health crisis
- ✓ Globally and in the European Region
- ✓ Everyone and everywhere is at risk

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Statement – Climate change is already killing us, but strong action now can prevent more deaths

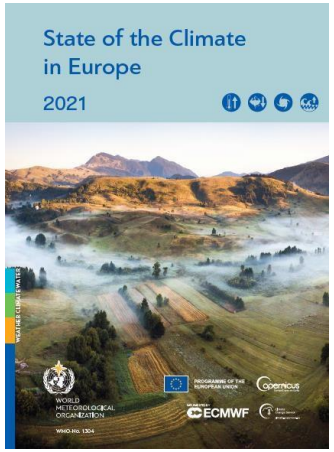
Statement by WHO Regional Director for Europe Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge

7 November 2022 | Statement | Reading time: 4 min (1042 words)

Extreme weather events in the European Region - some facts

Europe, between 1970 and 2019

- More than 1 600 reported disasters and nearly 160 000 reported deaths
- Floods (38%) and storms (32%) the most-reported cause of disasters
- Extreme temperatures responsible for the highest proportion of disaster-related deaths (93%)



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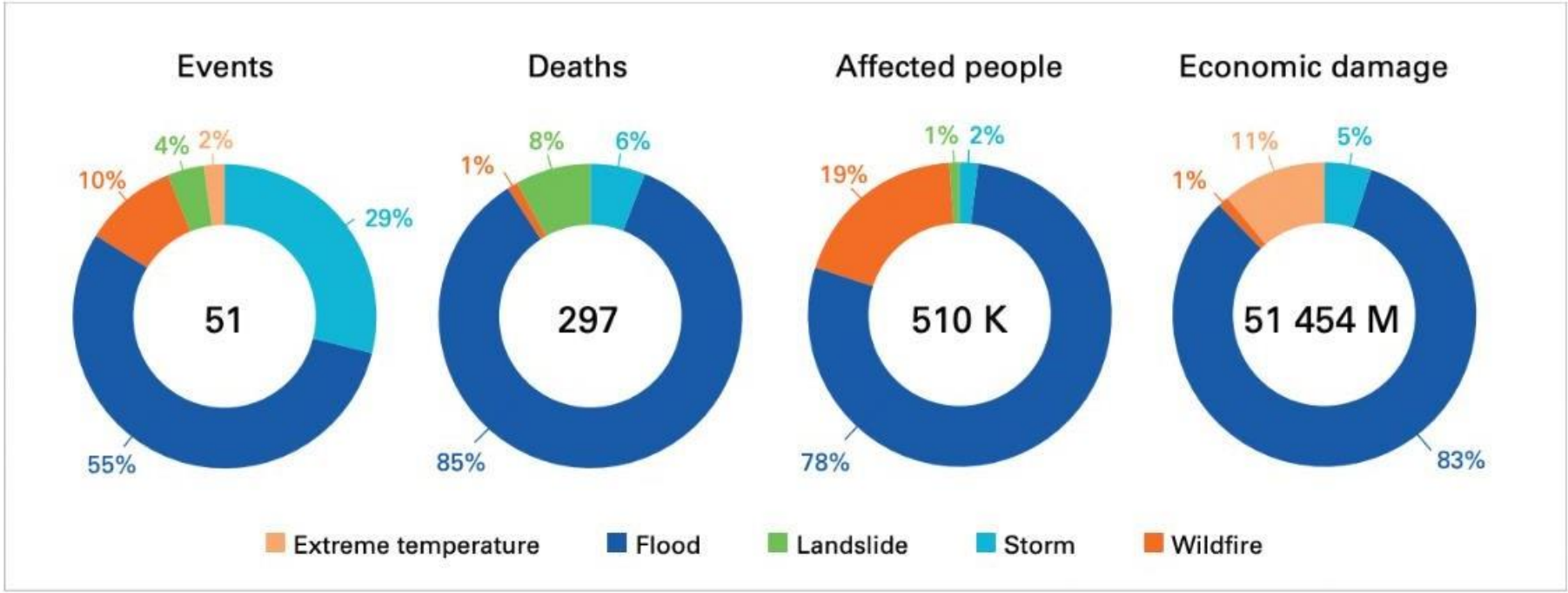
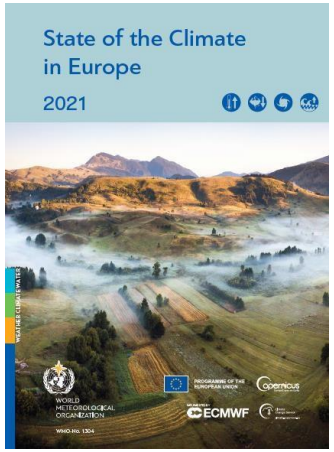
Source: State of the Climate in Europe 2021 (WMO-No. 1304) | E-Library

Extreme weather events in the European Region - some facts

Europe, 2021



Weather, climate and water-related natural disasters in Europe during 2021. Source of data: EM/DAT, accessed on 09 August 2022. (Note: Impacts for some disaster occurrences may be missing due to data unavailability). Source: State of the Climate in Europe 2021.



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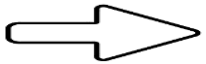
Source: State of the Climate in Europe 2021 (WMO-No. 1304) | E-Library

Health impacts of climate change



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Extreme events and health

- Heat strokes, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and hyperthermia
- Cardiovascular, respiratory and kidney diseases, dehydration and electrolytic disorders
- Deaths related to cardiovascular conditions
- Death or injury as a result of extreme climate event
- Indirect health impacts from damaged infrastructure, hospitals…
- Health risks associated with post-disaster clean-up activities

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Source: WHO/Europe | Climate change - Heat and health in the WHO European Region: updated evidence for effective prevention (2021)

Mental health concerns in the context of climate change

Mental health conditions already represent a significant burden worldwide

Climate change can exacerbate many social and environmental risk factors for mental health and psychosocial problems

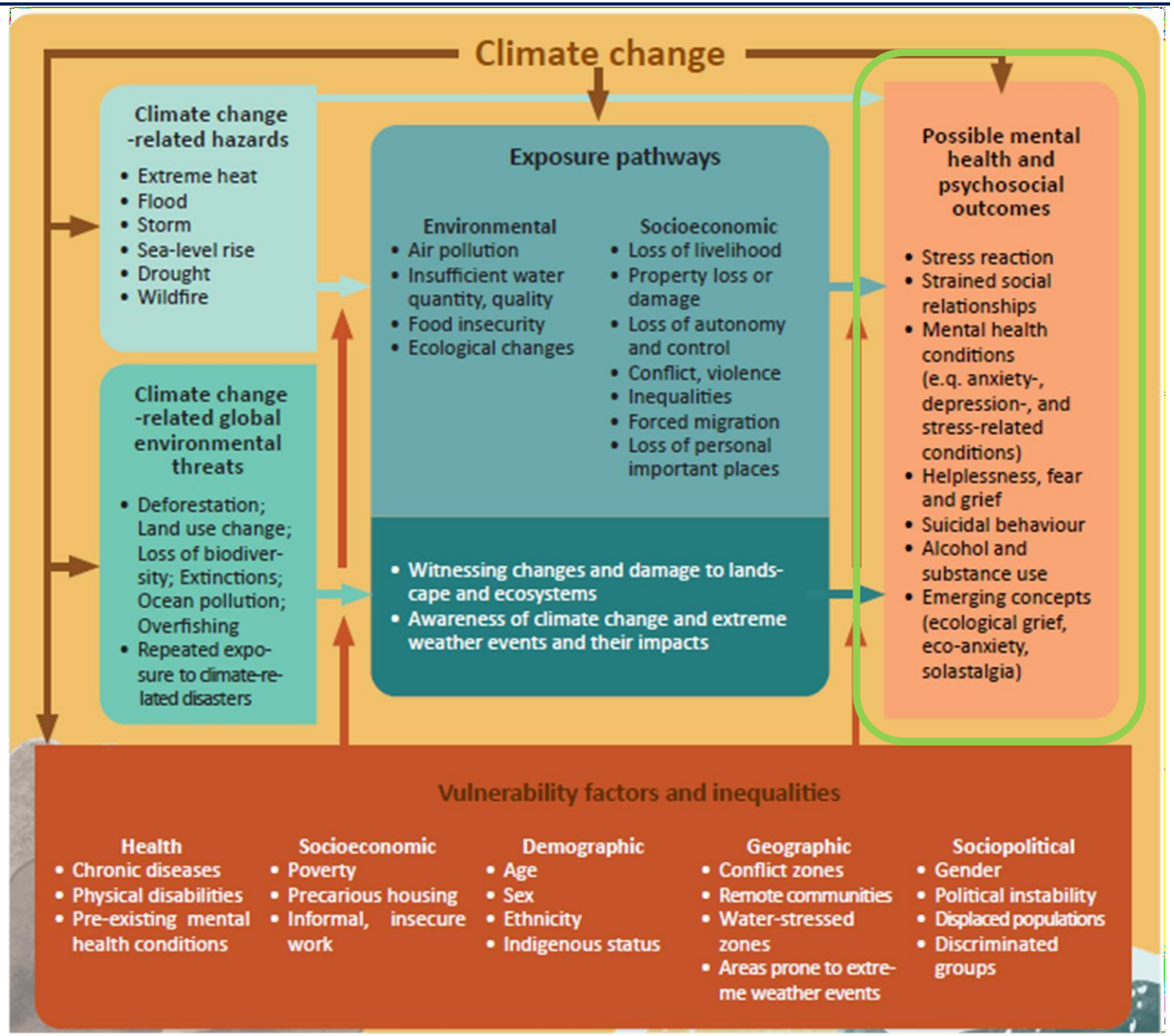
Certain groups can be disproportionately at risk, depending on existing vulnerabilities and inequalities:

- Communities in low-and middle-income countries
- Indigenous people
- Children and adolescents

Source: Mental health and Climate Change: Policy Brief (who.int)

Interlinkages between climate change and mental health

There are gaps in understanding the impact of climate change on mental health and psychosocial well-being, but **current knowledge is sufficient to act**



Source: Mental health and Climate Change: Policy Brief (who.int)

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WHO Policy Brief on Mental health and Climate Change

WHO recommends five key approaches

1. Integrate climate change considerations into policies and programmes for mental health, including MHPSS
2. Integrate MHPSS within policies and programmes dealing with climate change and health
3. Build upon global commitments
4. Implement multisectoral and community-based approaches to reduce vulnerabilities and address the mental health and psychosocial impacts of climate change
5. Address the large gaps that exist in funding, both for mental health and for responding to the health impacts of climate change

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Source: Mental health and Climate Change: Policy Brief (who.int)

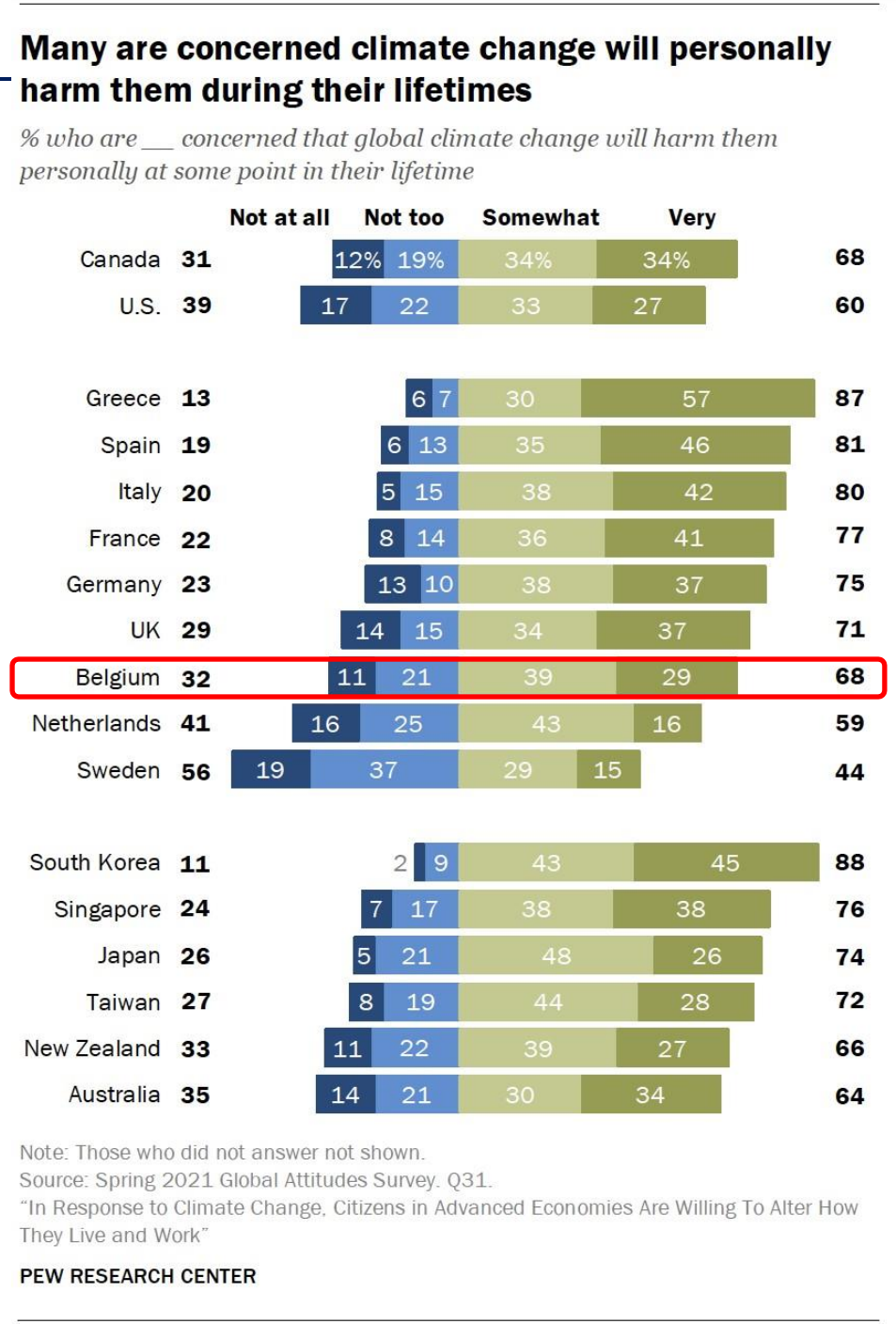
Climate anxiety and distress

45% of 10 000 young people, aged 16-25 years,

surveyed in 10 countries around the world

report that: **climate change has a negative impact on their daily functioning**

(eating, concentrating, work, school, sleeping, spending time in nature, playing, relationships)



Source: Hickman et al. Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey – ScienceDirect

Source: Climate Change Concerns Make Many Around the World Willing to Alter How They Live and Work | Pew Research Center

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Observed impacts – health and wellbeing

Climate change is adversely affecting the physical health of people globally (very high confidence) and mental health of people in assessed regions

- Extreme heat events human mortality and morbidity****
- Climate-related food-borne and water-borne diseases****
- Vector-borne diseases from range expansion and/or increased reproduction of disease vectors***
- Animal and human diseases, including zoonotic diseases, emerging in new areas***
- Water and food-borne diseases from climate-sensitive aquatic pathogens, including Vibrio spp. ***, and from toxic substances from harmful freshwater cyanobacteria**
- Diarrheal diseases, including cholera**** and other gastrointestinal infections**
- Some mental health challenges***
- Climate-sensitive cardiovascular and respiratory distress**
- Health services disrupted by extreme events, such as floods***

Levels of confidence: **** Very high; *** High; ** Medium; * Low

Source: AR6 Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability — IPCC

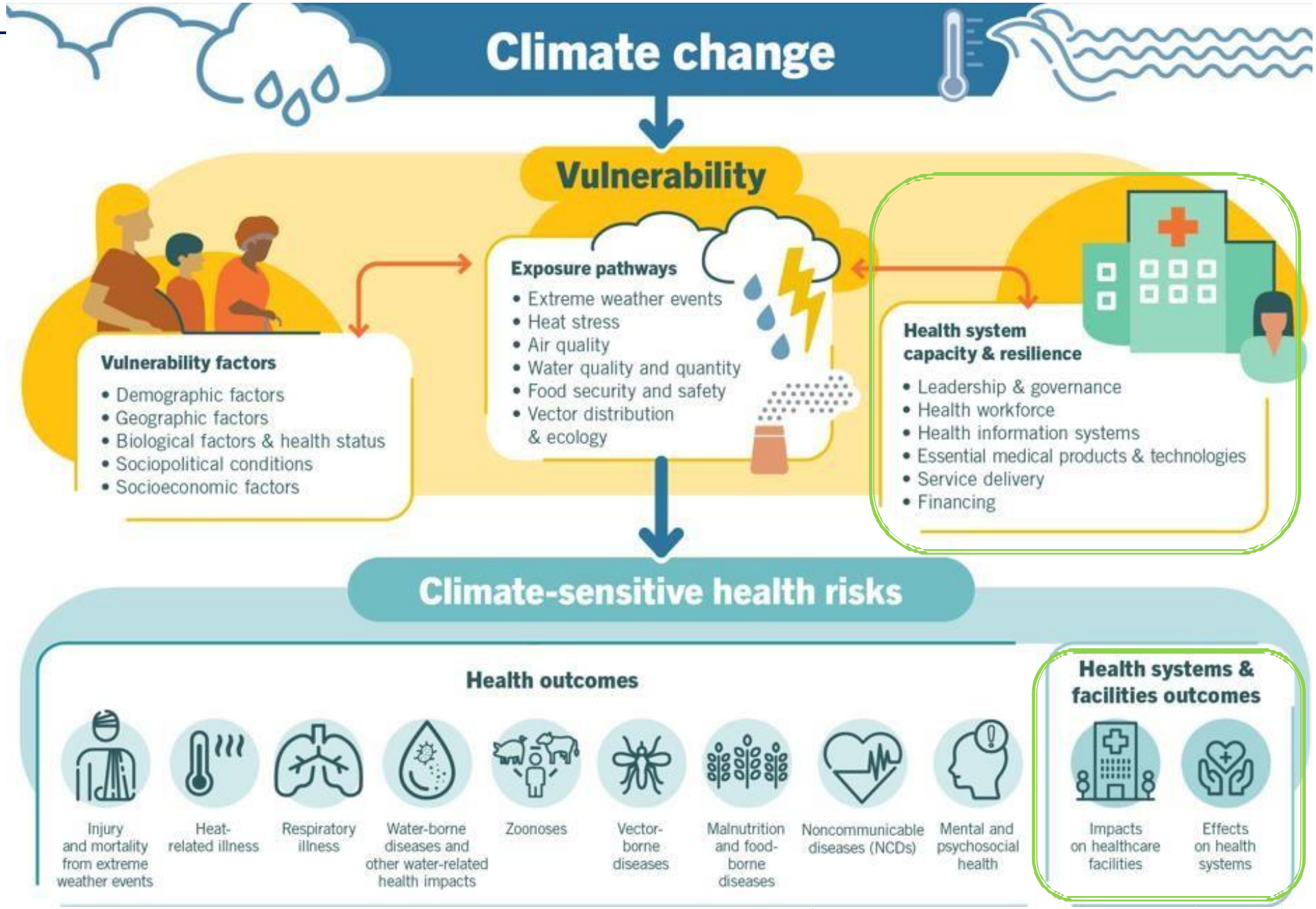
Projected impacts – health and wellbeing

Climate change and related extreme events will significantly increase ill health and premature deaths from the near- to long-term ***

- Population exposure to heatwaves: increase with additional warming, strong geographical differences in heat-related mortality ****
- Food-borne, water-borne, and vector-borne diseases: increase under all levels of warming without additional adaptation ***
- Dengue risk: increase with longer seasons and a wider geographic distribution, billions of people at risk by the end of the century ***
- Mental health (including anxiety and stress): increase in assessed regions ****

Levels of confidence: **** Very high; *** High; ** Medium; * Low

Source: AR6 Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability — IPCC



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Source: Quality Criteria for Health National Adaptation Plans (who.int)

Effective options are available to protect health from climate risks

Integrating health in climate action and scaling up climate action for health

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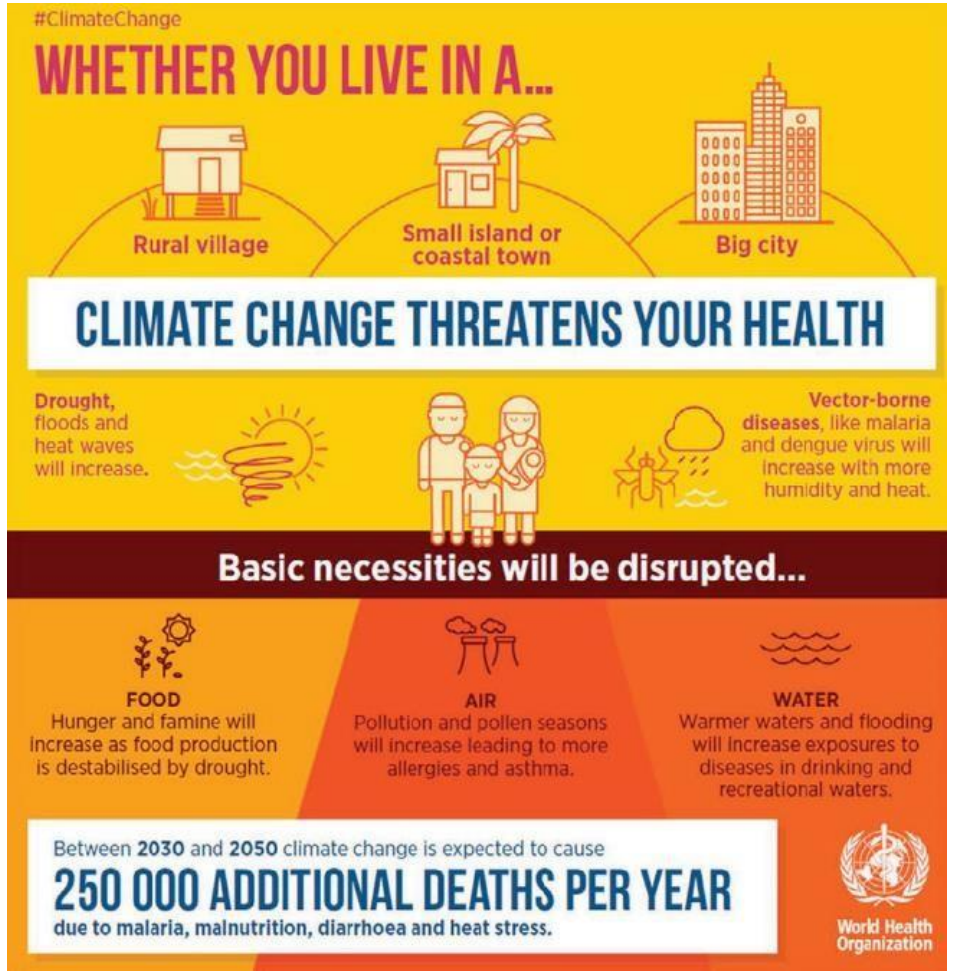
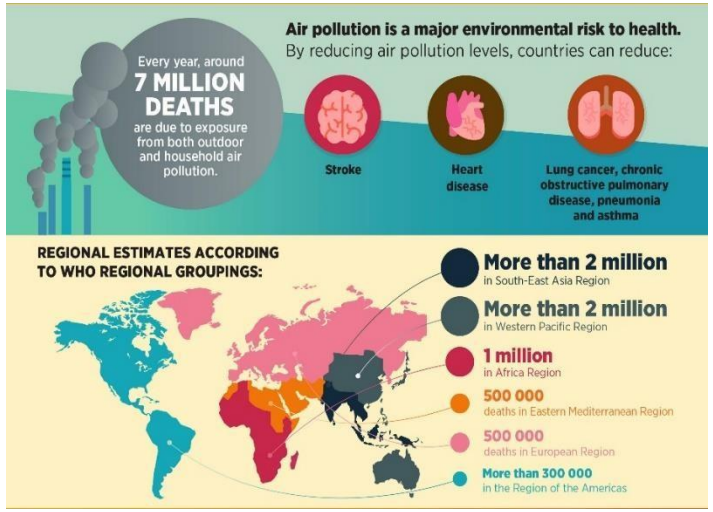


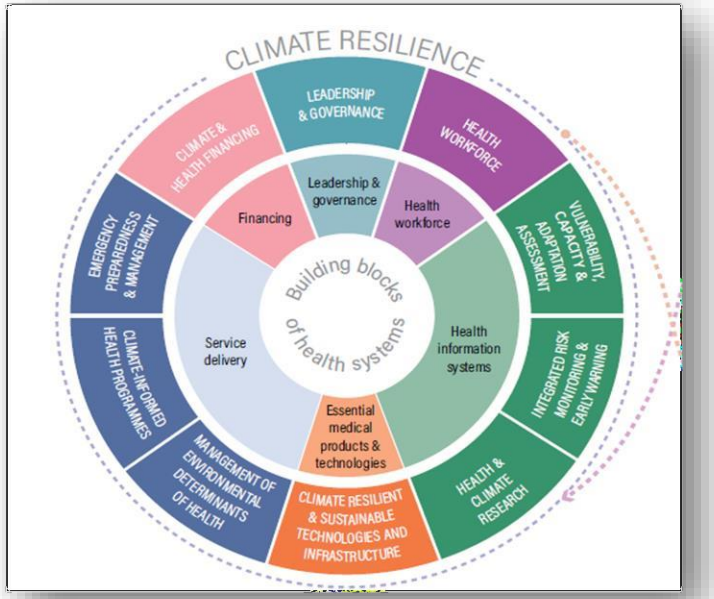
Actions on health and climate change

Help reduce carbon emissions for protecting health (air quality)



Protect health from climate risks

Make health systems more sustainable (lead by example)



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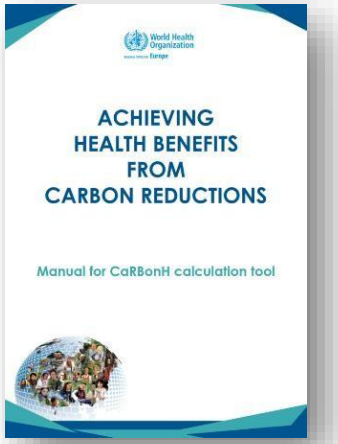
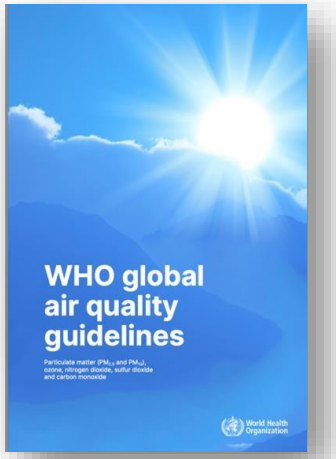
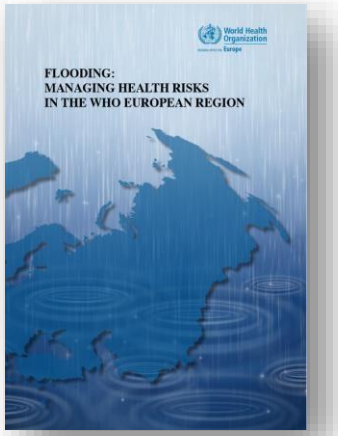
WHO actions on health and climate change

Help reduce carbon emissions for protecting health (air quality)





Protect health from full range of climate risks



Make health systems more sustainable (lead by example)

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Help reduce carbon emissions for protecting health (air quality)

Synergies in tackling CC and air pollution

Common drivers of climate change and air pollution

Multiple actions possible: reduced emissions, urban planning, behavioural change (e.g. transport, diet)…

Most efforts to improve air quality can enhance climate change mitigation, and climate change mitigation efforts can, in turn, improve air quality

Up to date evidence of the health effects of air pollution is instrumental to support action

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Help reduce carbon emissions for protecting health (air quality)

Pollutant	Averaging time	Interim targets IT1 - IT2 - IT3 - IT4	AQG level
$PM_{2.5}$, µg/m³	Annual	35; 25; 15; 10	5
$PM_{2.5}$, µg/m³	**24-hour**	75; 50; 37.5; 25	15
PM_{10}, µg/m³	Annual	70; 50; 30; 20	15
PM_{10}, µg/m³	**24-hour**	150; 100; 75; 50	45
O_3, µg/m³	Peak season	100; 70	60
O_3, µg/m³	**8-hour**	160; 120	100
NO_2, µg/m³	Annual	40;30; 20	10
NO_2, µg/m³	**24-hour**	120; 50	25
SO_2, µg/m³	**24-hour**	125; 50	40
CO, mg/m³	**24-hour**	7	4

Good practice statements

- certain types of particulate matter
- evidence insufficient to derive AQG levels
- health relevance

- black/elemental carbon
- ultrafine particles
- sand and desert dust

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Source: New WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines aim to save millions of lives from air pollution
WHO global air quality guidelines: particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10), ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide

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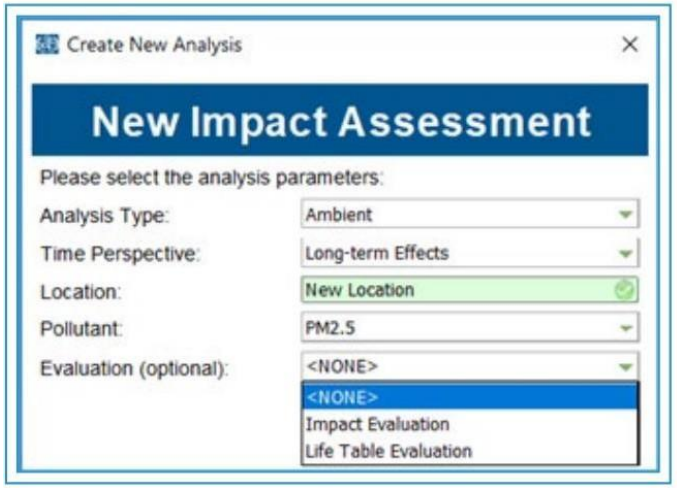
Help reduce carbon emissions for protecting health (air quality)

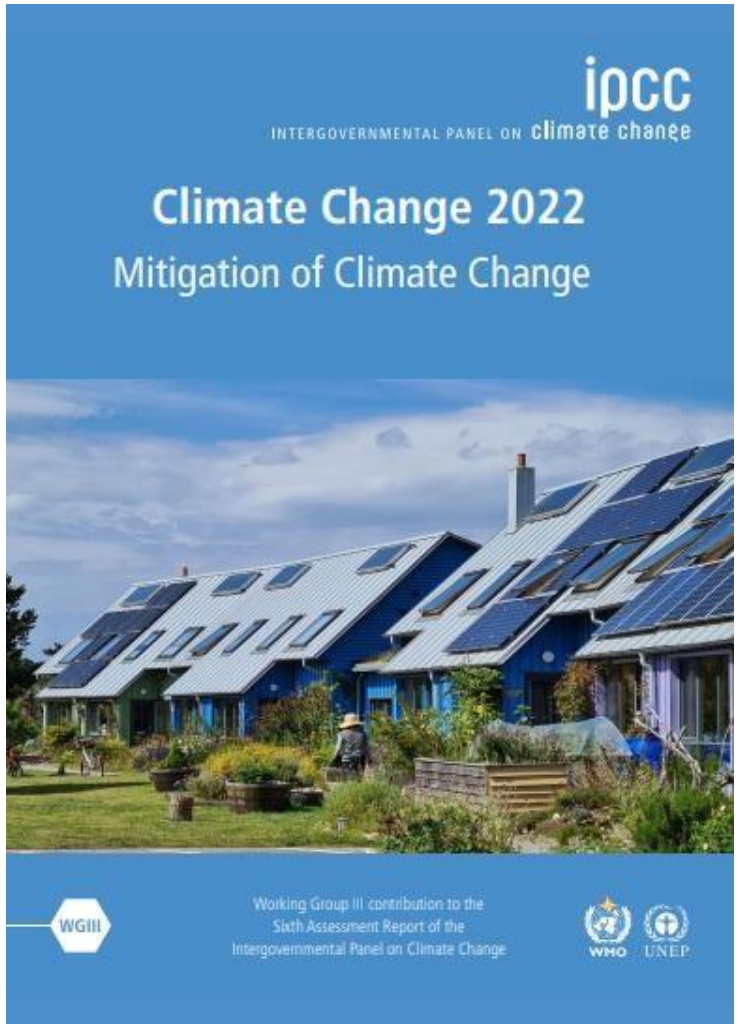


AirQ+: a tool for health risk assessments of air pollution can be used, with some limitations, for cities, countries or regions to estimate:

- How much of a particular health effect is attributable to selected air pollutants?
- Compared to the current scenario, what would be the change in health effects if air pollution levels changed in the future?

CLIMAQ-H (formerly CaRBonH)**:** a tool to quantify health and economic effects of climate change mitigation through air quality improvements. Key questions addressed:

- Which air pollution and health benefits have been achieved through reductions in domestic carbon emissions for the proposed climate policies under the NDCs submitted by Member States to the UNFCCC?
- What would the magnitude of the economic benefits due to the future changes in health effects expected under the NDCs be?



The economic benefits on human health from air quality improvement arising from mitigation action can be of the same order of magnitude as mitigation costs, and potentially even larger.

IPCC Working Group III

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Source: Working Group III — IPCC

WHO actions on health and climate change

Protect health from climate risks

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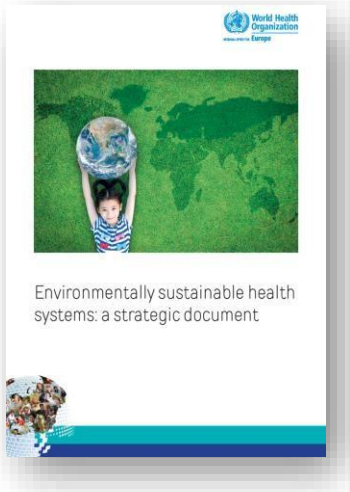
Core elements of Heat Health Acton Plans (HHAPs)

- Agreement on a lead body: governance of public health responses to heat;
- Accurate and timely alert systems: heat–health warning systems;
- Heat-related health information plans: communicating heat risk;
- Strategies to reduce heat exposure: types of intervention and evidence of effectiveness;
- Care for vulnerable population groups: updated evidence on risk factors and vulnerability;
- Preparedness: planning for heat–health risks in health and social care settings;
- Long-term urban planning: reducing heat risks
- Real-time surveillance

Source: https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289055406

WHO actions on health and climate change

Make health systems more sustainable(lead by example)



VISION

… health systems, which can improve, maintain or restore health, while minimizing negative impacts on the environment and leveraging opportunities to restore and improve the environment to the benefit of the health and well-being of current and future generations …

- For climate action, the health sector:
  - needs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its operations, contributing to mitigation efforts
  - has to adapt and become resilient to climate change
- Climate action is an opportunity to explore synergies to improve health services and infrastructure towards a low-carbon and resilient health sector.

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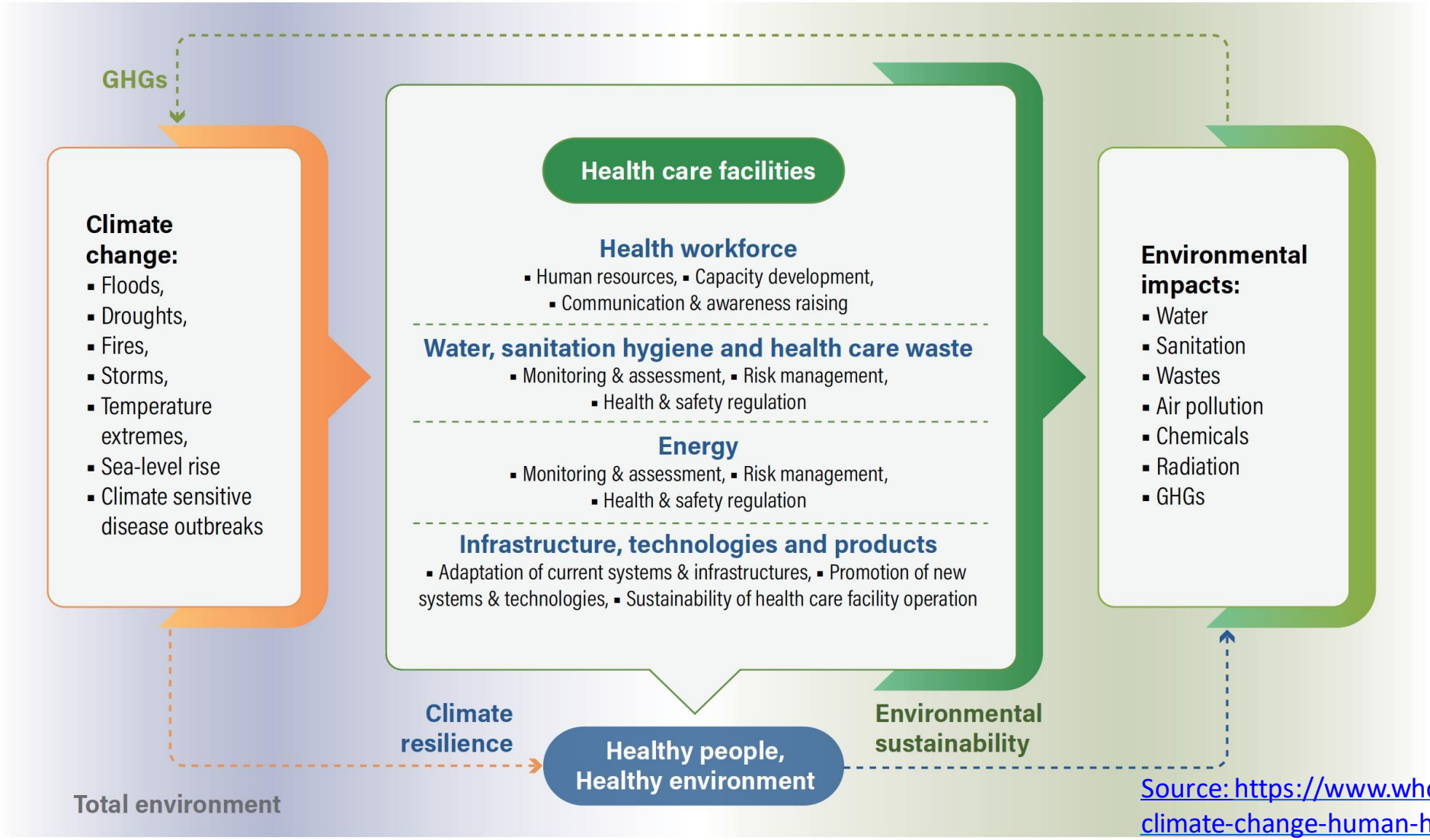
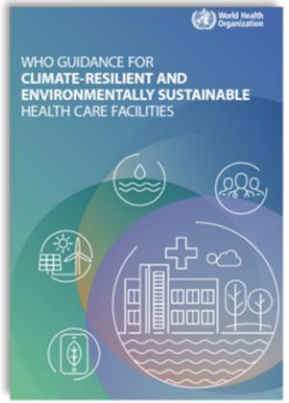
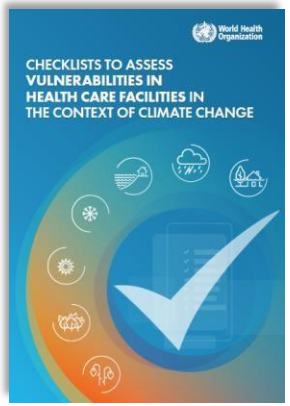
Source: https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Health-systems/public-health-services/publications/2017/environmentally-sustainable-health-systems-a-strategic-document-2017

Framework for climate resilient and environmentally sustainable health care facilities







Source: https://www.who.int/activities/building-capacity-on-climate-change-human-health/toolkit/resilience

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Protecting health workers

3.10. Environmental hygiene, sustainability and resilience

KEY DELIVERABLES:

- Adequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) provision in health facilities.
- Facilities available for staff welfare (e.g. personal hygiene, clothing, rest and dining).
- Safe handling and management of health-care waste.
- Safety protocols available for use of hazardous chemicals.
- Standard operating procedures for action in extreme weather events (e.g. heat or cold wave, hurricanes, flood) include protection of health and safety of health workers and first responders.

Interventions to protect health and safety of health workers in the context of building resilience to climate related disasters and emergencies

Source: Caring for those who care: Guide for the development and implementation of occupational health and safety programmes for health workers

UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE UK 2021

COP26 Health Init

lealth Systems

Two of the Programme's key
expected to announce their c
years and will allow countries

lth Systems, with countries
implemented in the coming
systems and facilities.

Commitment 1: Climate res

health systems

- Commit to conduct climate
  adaptation assessments
  facility level by a stated tar
- Commit to develop a **healt**
  health V&A, which forms p
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- Commit to use the V&A ar
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a target date by which to
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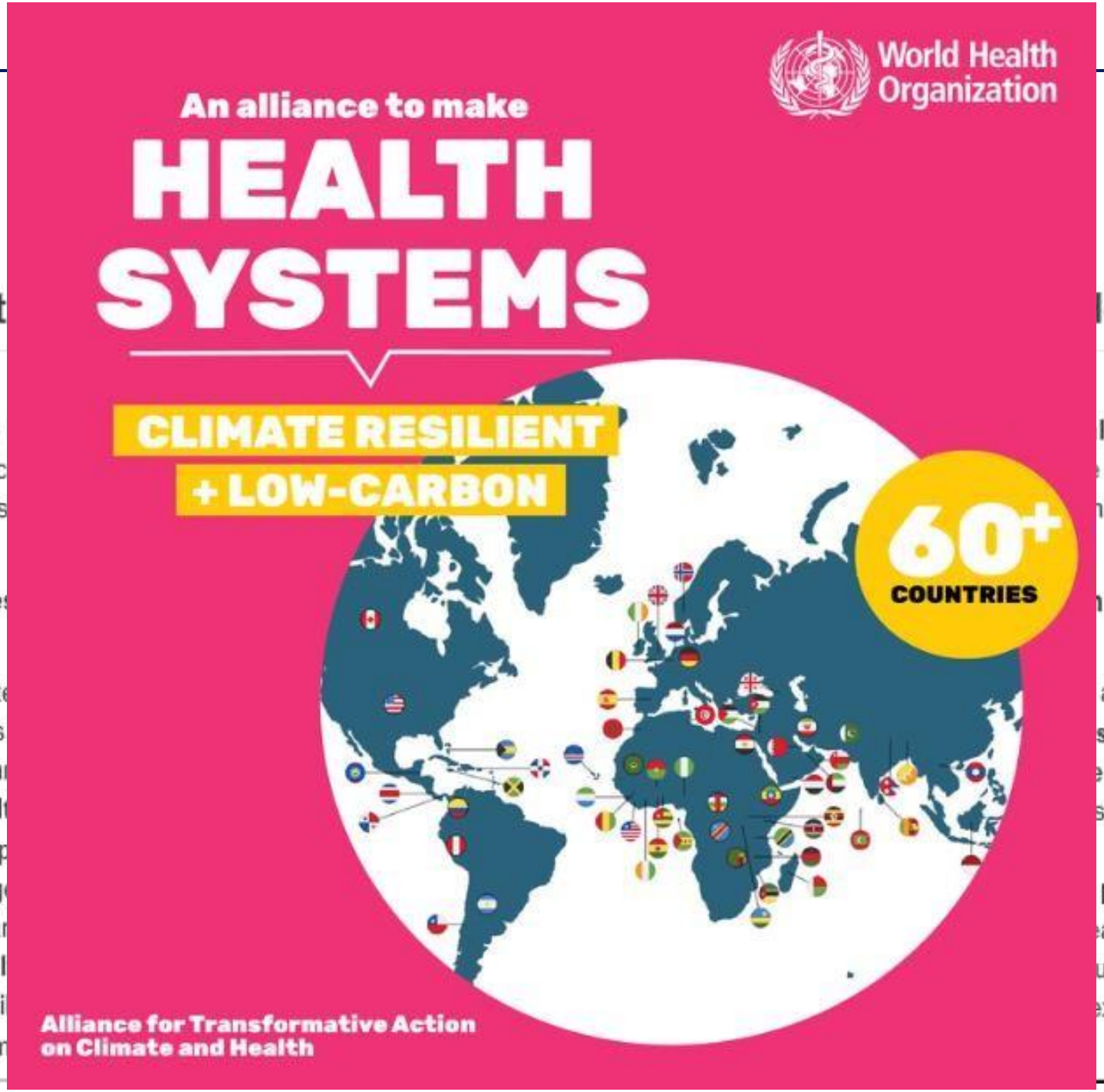

ATACH – global initiative

Works to realize the ambition set at COP26 to build climate resilient and sustainable health systems, using the collective power of WHO Member States and other stakeholders to drive this agenda forward at pace and scale; and promote the integration of climate change and health nexus into respective national, regional, and global plans

Four thematic working groups to address:

- Financing the Health Commitments on Climate Resilient and Sustainable Low Carbon Health Systems
- Climate Resilient Health Systems
- Low Carbon Sustainable Health Systems
- Supply chains

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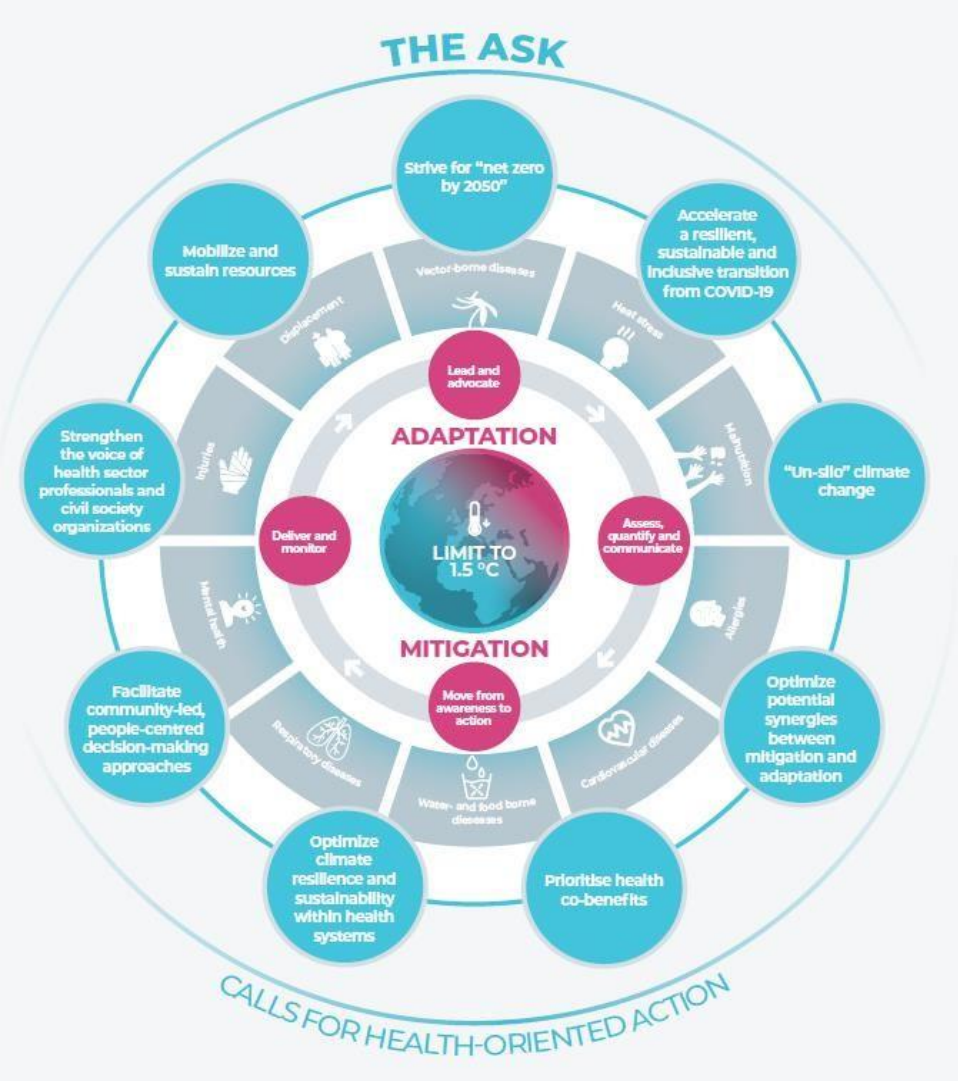
Regional initiative of the HIC Working Group in the European Region

Aimed at policy-makers, particularly from the health sector, and civil society with the intent to:

- **Raise awareness** about the links between health and climate change
- **Identify policy options** that can maximize the benefits for health and the environment
- **Equip stakeholders** with evidence and messages to support engagement in national preparatory consultations for and negotiations at COP
- **Indicate areas for action** and collaboration across sectorial boundaries and social actors.



The Asks

- **Strive for "net zero by 2050"** to support a sustainable future that is better for our health and the planet. A move to net zero economies will bring significant health co-benefits from improved air quality, from a more physically active population and from healthier diets, among others.
- **Accelerate resilient, sustainable and inclusive transition from COVID-19** and prioritise actions that optimise the multiple benefits for the environment, health and societal wellbeing.
- **"Un-silo" climate change** by following the guiding principle of "climate change in all policies" analogous to "health in all policies".

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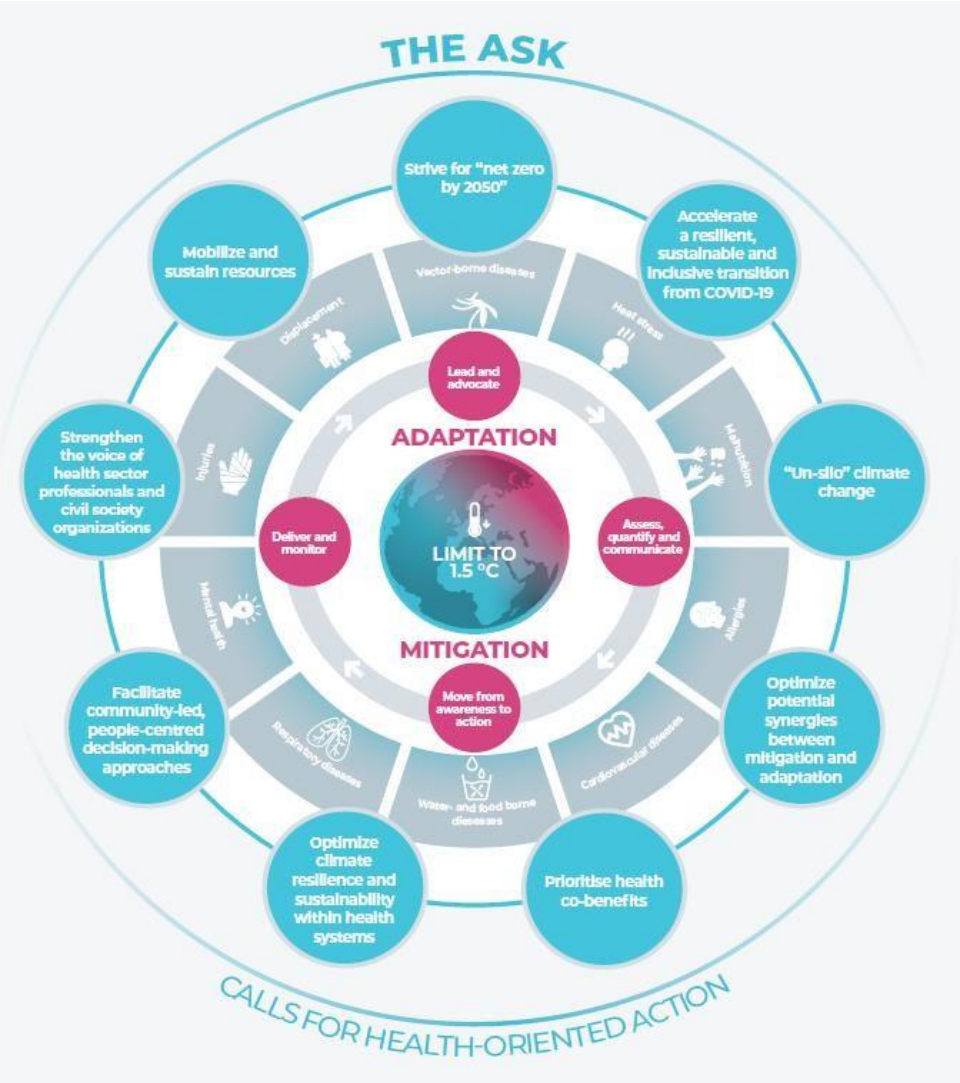

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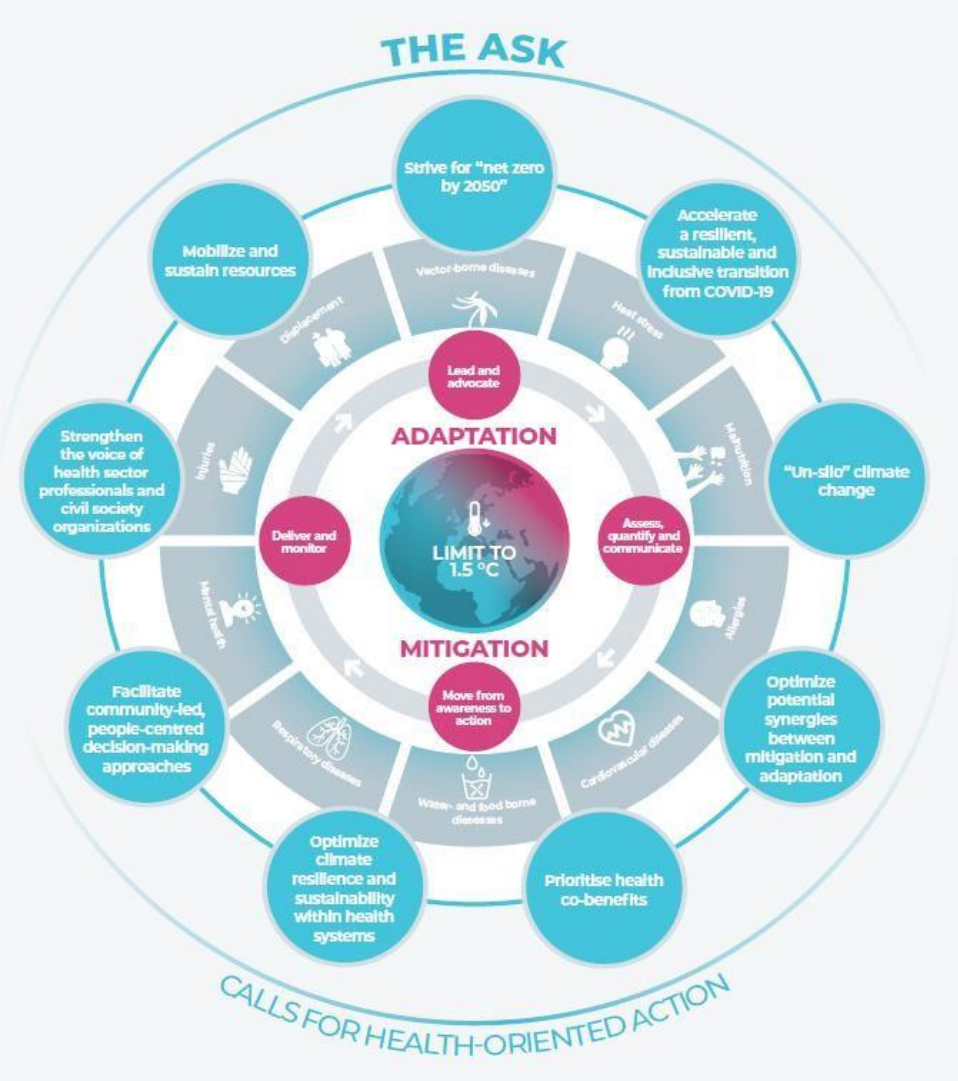
The Asks

- **Optimize potential synergies between mitigation and adaptation,** raising and sustaining ambitions for mitigation and simultaneously scaling up adaptation at national and subnational levels.
- **Prioritise health co-benefits and explore synergies of tackling climate change and air pollution,** and minimize or avoid adverse health outcomes through policy coherence and implementation optimisation in health and health determining sectors.
- **Optimize climate resilience and sustainability within health systems** by scaling up action at the local and national level, and climate-proofing health protection, promotion and improvement programmes. Lead by example and proactively promote and strive for green, low-carbon health service delivery, preferably by 2050.



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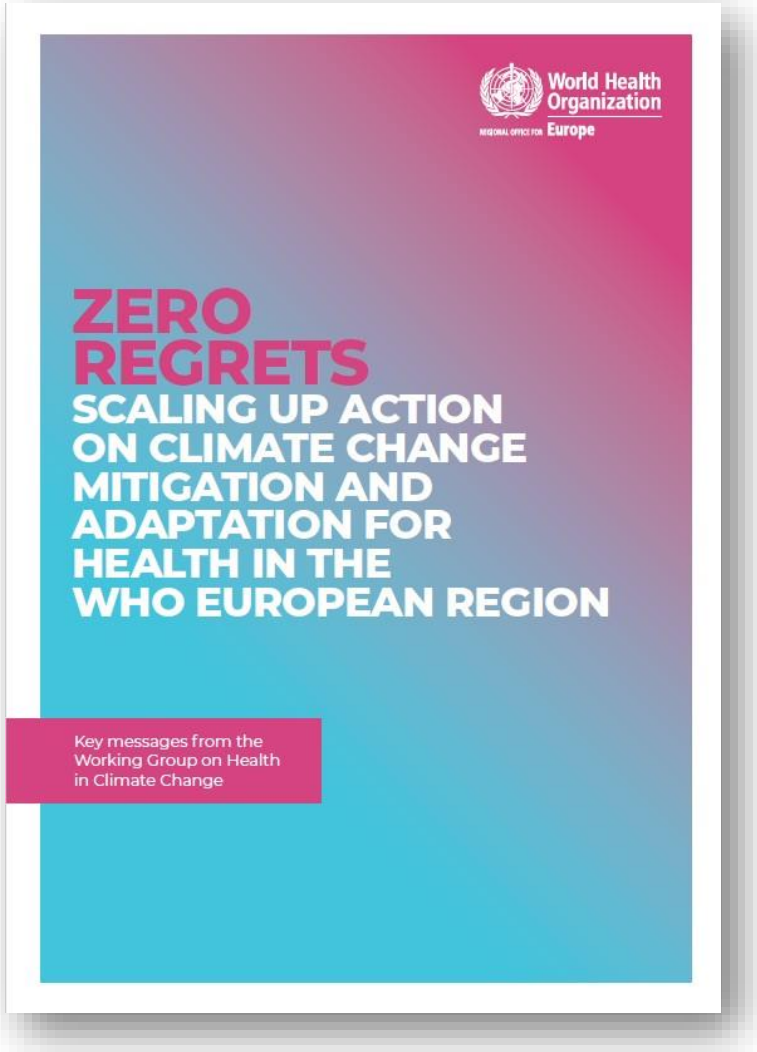
The Asks

- **Facilitate community-led, people-centred decision-making** approaches for all interventions for assessing and maximizing potential co-benefits, as well as minimizing unintended harms of mitigation actions.
- **Strengthen the voice of health sector professionals and civil society organizations** for action on climate change and undertake capacity strengthening for health and climate change.
- **Mobilize and sustain resources (knowledge, technology and finance)** for climate mitigation and adaptation action in the health and health determining sectors. Repurpose financial gains from reduction in, or the elimination of, fossil fuel subsidies to support health.



Calls for Action

- Asses and communicate risks
- Lead and advocate
- Move from awareness to action
- Align and adjust
- Deliver and monitor

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Align and adjust

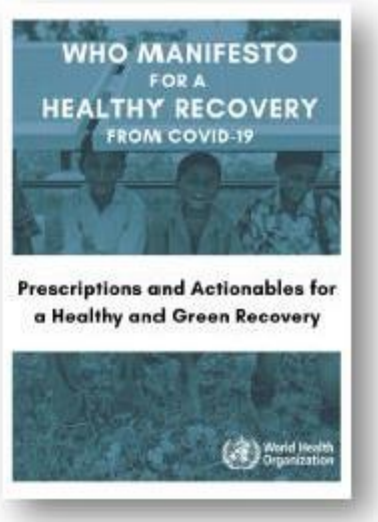
UNITED ACTION for BETTER HEALTH

EUROPEAN PROGRAMME OF WORK 2020-2025

Strategic delivery alliances

Fostering good governance

Universal Health Coverage



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Climate action in Environment and Health agenda in the WHO European Region

Environment and Health Process: a series of Ministerial Conferences on Environment and Health, endorsed by Regional Committee Resolutions

1989	1994	1999	2004	2010	2017	*2023*
Frankfurt	Helsinki	London	Budapest	Parma	Ostrava	*Budapest*
Climate change recognized		Early human health effects	Extreme weather events	Regional framework	Adaptive capacity and resilience	

Ministerial Declaration

- Compendium of actions
- Institutional arrangements

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“The cumulative scientific evidence is unequivocal:
Climate change is a threat to human well-being and planetary health.
Any further delay in concerted anticipatory global action on adaptation and mitigation will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all (very high confidence)”

IPCC WGII Summary for policy makers

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Thank you

Acknowledgments: Oliver Schmoll, Vladimir Kendrovski, Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum

More information:

https://www.who.int/europe/health-topics/climate-change

https://www.who.int/health-topics/climate-change

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