

Health Care Without Harm **Europe**

# 2023 Annual Report



EUROPE.NOHARM.ORG



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# Introduction

**In 2023, Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) Europe made significant strides in sustainable healthcare, one of which was that we were able to resume work on delivering our five-year Strategic Plan with renewed energy and focus.**

We continued to grow and strengthen our community in Europe during the year, with 39 new members joining Global Green and Healthy Hospitals (GGHH), steady expansion across our health professionals networks, and the launch of a new network focused on sustainable pharmacy.

Critically, engagement across our community also increased in 2023, reflecting the deepening reach and impact of our work. We enjoyed a healthy increase in social media followers and website activity, and our busy events programme attracted 1,500 attendees across the year. A particular highlight was our revamped, virtual CleanMed Europe conference, which together with a CleanMed Berlin in-person conference, brought together over 600 people from around the world.

Alongside a number of key policy wins, our programme teams were busy developing a raft of innovative new projects and initiatives helping us attract new donors and partners.

The launch of our ground-breaking Born Green Generation project is particularly exciting, with the potential to transform perinatal care services and safeguard the health of future generations.

As an ambitious, growth-phase organisation, it is critically important that we continue to develop and strengthen our team. As part of a transformational restructuring exercise, a new Executive Leadership Team was established, ensuring we have the leadership capacity to drive forward our work, support our growing team and capitalise on our progress and achievements.

Lastly, 2023 was important because it marked HCWH Europe's 20th anniversary. To celebrate this milestone, we produced a **special anniversary report** (in place of our 2022 annual report), reflecting on 20 years of sustainable healthcare in Europe, celebrating our many successes and looking forward to what the future might hold for our work.

There is of course much work to do; however, our progress in 2023, and indeed over the past 20 years, demonstrates the tremendous potential for sustainable healthcare in Europe. We look forward to continuing our work with our members, partners and donors to realise this potential in the years to come.



**Will Clark**  
Executive Director

**Anders Bolmstedt**

Chair of the Board of Directors



# Snapshot of 2023

In 2023, HCWH Europe delivered:

## Events

21

webinars and events

1500+

total attendees



33

sessions and workshops  
at CleanMed Europe

430 attendees | 99 speakers  
24 sessions | 9 workshops

## Publications

- Towards PVC-free Healthcare: Reducing Environmental Impact and Exposure to Harmful Chemicals
- European Healthcare Climate Summit 2023 Report
- Procuring for Greener Pharma
- Press Kit on Antimicrobial Resistance
- How Healthcare Professionals Can Advocate the Responsible Use of Antibiotics in Food Production
- Using Your Voice to Drive Climate Action
- Health Care Without Harm Europe at 20 years

7

publications





# Snapshot of 2023

## News and newsletters

**25**  
news articles

**8,779**  
newsletters subscribers

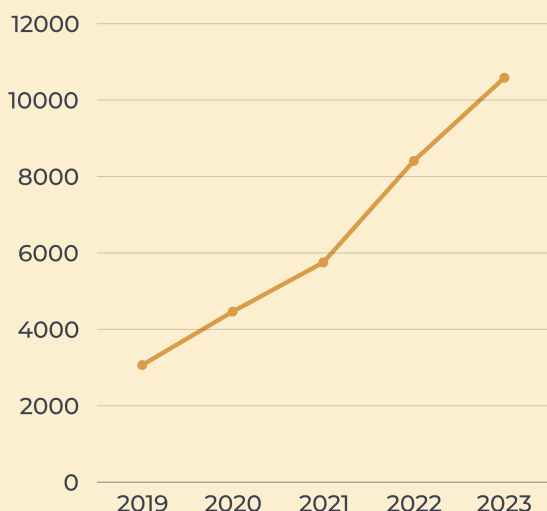
**70**  
newsletters and  
bulletins



**Subscribe** for the latest news on sustainable healthcare in Europe.

## Social media and website

Increase in social media followers over the years



**25%**

increase in social  
media followers

In 2023, our social media channels were **visited 15,790 times** and our **posts clicked 10,820 times**.

The HCWH Europe website saw a **29% increase in the number of sessions**, with over **60,200 users** and **154,300 page views**.

# Our programmes

HCWH Europe's work is organised around three thematic and interconnected programmes. Within each programme we deliver a range of related projects, campaigns, and policy advocacy initiatives in conjunction with our members and partners.



CLIMATE-SMART  
HEALTHCARE



CIRCULAR  
HEALTHCARE



SAFER  
PHARMA







# Climate-smart Healthcare

**Our Climate-smart Healthcare programme aims to transform the healthcare sector into a net zero carbon and climate-resilient sector that protects public health from climate change and accelerates the transition to a low-carbon economy.**

## Our impact in 2023

Over **70 people joined us** for the fifth edition of the **European Healthcare Climate Summit** held in Brussels on 29 November. The conference featured 16 speakers who presented perspectives on tackling critical emissions hotspots in healthcare, from buildings, transport, and the supply chain. The conference was held in-person, providing the opportunity for valuable networking and fruitful discussions contributing to advancing healthcare climate action in Europe.

During the second edition of the **Carbon Management Mentoring Programme**, **12 hospitals in Spain** were empowered to become climate leaders in their region. Through a series of workshops in the Valencia region, the hospitals mentored by HCWH Europe and Hospital Lluís Alcanyís gained critical skills and knowledge for carbon management in healthcare, focusing on issues such as calculating their baselines, setting targets, and creating sustainability teams. These hospitals are now part of a growing Community of Practice, supporting their continued progression towards zero carbon healthcare in Europe.



## Climate-smart Healthcare advocacy

In July 2023, at the 7th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (MCEH) in Budapest, HCWH Europe held a parallel session for policymakers on *Building a Roadmap to Zero Emissions Health Systems*.

Organised in collaboration with our technical partner Arup, and with support from WHO Europe, we demonstrated how the Operation Zero project can support Member States on the path to net zero emissions healthcare. The session provided crucial insight on the challenges and opportunities health authorities face in decarbonising their operations.

*“Without immediate and coordinated action at the system level, healthcare’s climate footprint could triple by 2050. Health Care Without Harm Europe is therefore delighted to see more governments committing to driving healthcare climate action; however, commitments need to be followed up by action. The work we are doing through projects such as Operation Zero are there to support system leaders in doing just that.”*

- Will Clark, Executive Director - Health Care Without Harm Europe





## Climate-smart Healthcare in action

### Operation Zero

2023 saw a direct example of how HCWH Europe's **Operation Zero** project is supporting European Member States on their path to decarbonisation, with Portugal's Central Administration of the Health System calculating its carbon footprint and developing a **national decarbonisation plan** for its healthcare sector. It did so using the Operation Zero methodology, ***Designing a Net Zero Roadmap for Healthcare: Technical Methodology and Guidance***.

For the next phase of the project, we are partnering with two new health authorities to estimate national climate footprints and develop decarbonisation roadmaps for their healthcare systems in Belgium and Ireland. We are also planning to promote the lessons learnt through the project, as well as foster collaboration and share best practice among health authorities endeavouring to drive decarbonisation within the European healthcare sector.

### Healthcare climate resilience

As part of the **LIFE RESYSTAL project**, which will help prepare healthcare infrastructure across Europe for the impacts of climate change, HCWH Europe continued to develop a network committed to the climate adaptation of the European healthcare sector. LIFE RESYSTAL is developing tools and resources to support healthcare facilities to strengthen their climate resilience, by assisting them to identify climate risks and implement cost-effective adaptation measures. In February, we hosted a training event focused on approaches to future-proofing healthcare facilities against the impacts of climate change and making the case for why a system-level climate-smart resilience plan is essential to protect community health.

### Empowering healthcare professionals to drive climate action

In November, we held a workshop for healthcare professionals to explore impactful ways of communicating climate action within and beyond healthcare settings. Led by health journalist and communications specialist Pennie Taylor, *How your voice can drive climate action* aimed to build healthcare professionals' confidence in promoting climate-smart healthcare to peers, management, policymakers, and patients. The training led to the development of the resource ***Using Your Voice to Drive Climate Action***, now available to all healthcare professionals on our website.





# Circular Healthcare

**Our Circular Healthcare programme aims to support European health systems drive markets towards toxic-free products that conserve finite resources, minimise waste, and contribute to an ethical supply chain and circular economy.**

## Our impact in 2023

In January, we conducted an in-person training session on circular healthcare in Madrid, Spain, with 24 professionals, followed by another session in November in Brussels, Belgium, which attracted 36 professionals and is **now available online**. These training sessions were aimed at transforming healthcare practices by implementing waste hierarchy principles tailored for healthcare management, procurement and sustainability teams, waste management professionals, and healthcare practitioners.

Our efforts to ban harmful PVC from healthcare environments made significant progress in 2023. Collaborating with healthcare experts, we produced the report ***Towards PVC-free Healthcare: Reducing Environmental Impact and Exposure to Harmful Chemicals*** and **presented a webinar** to provide critical insights into the health risks associated with PVC, as well as offering practical steps for its removal from healthcare settings.

Reaching the conclusion of the **Greening the Brussels Healthcare Sector project**, a two-year collaboration with six hospitals in Brussels, we published a **joint statement** to strengthen sustainable procurement practices.



*"I have been impressed by the number of projects launched by hospitals to reduce their environmental impact. I consider this issue to be critical and affirm my support for the joint declaration, because without collaboration with industry we will not be able to succeed in this global transition."*

- Alain Maron, Minister of Environment and Health - Brussels-Capital Region



## Circular Healthcare advocacy

In 2023, HCWH Europe launched the EU-wide campaign **Doctors Prescribe No Plastic**, featuring doctors worldwide advocating the reduction of plastics in healthcare and supporting a strong Global Plastics Treaty.

We promoted and disseminated best practices in sustainable procurement and circular economy, including phasing out PVC, toxic chemicals, plastics, and single-use medical devices. By presenting at 11 external events and conferences we also raised awareness and encouraged the adoption of these practices. Our **list of best practices** for reducing plastic in healthcare was updated with five new examples from across Europe, including replacing single-use wipes and urine sample cups with reusables items and replacing IV-delivered paracetamol with tablets.

Our long-term advocacy efforts relating to the phase out of dental amalgam in the EU bore fruit as the European Commission adopted a proposal to revise the Mercury Regulation to protect EU citizens and the environment from toxic mercury. The revision will fully prohibit the use of dental amalgam from 2025, aligning with our 2022 letter to DG ENV advocating this phase-out.

## Circular Healthcare in action

In October 2023, we launched **Born Green Generation**, an ambitious three-year project aimed at protecting vulnerable populations by reducing the use of harmful plastics and phasing out toxic chemicals in maternity, neonatal, and paediatric wards. This initiative focuses on the critical first 1,000 days of a child's life, while also striving to decrease the healthcare sector's plastic and chemical footprint. This will be achieved through cultural shifts, policy transformation, and innovative practices, in partnership with four healthcare providers and two universities.



*"This project has enormous potential to ripple out — hospitals steal best practice aggressively."*

- James Dixon, Associate Director of Sustainability - Newcastle Hospitals







# Safer Pharma

**Our Safer Pharma programme aims to minimise pharmaceutical pollution and its contribution to the development of antibiotic resistance, as well as advocating policies that promote safer pharmaceutical use.**

## Our impact in 2023

HCWH Europe made significant progress in shaping key policy initiatives during 2023. We took part in **five policy initiatives**, including contributions to the EU pharmaceutical package, enhancing the Watch List of substances in waters and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) process.

In addition to these, we carried out **seven impactful advocacy initiatives** aimed at addressing water quality standards, sustainable medicine production, and antibiotic use in farming. We also became members of the **Multistakeholder Partnership Platform** and the **AMR One Health Network**, working alongside transnational institutions including FAO, WHO, WOA, UNEP, and the European Commission.

Our **efforts to improve water quality** led to the inclusion of **pharmaceuticals in surface and groundwater monitoring** for the first time—a critical milestone in environmental and human health protection.

*“The urgency to find a solution to halt and reverse the spread and manage AMR is on all of us. The EU Global Health Strategy prioritises combating AMR under the context of a One Health approach, and we must ensure that concrete provisions to address AMR are included in the context of the negotiation of a potential WHO international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response.”*

- MEP Sarah Wiener - Greens/EFA (Austria)



## Safer Pharma advocacy

In 2023, HCWH Europe continued to support and coordinate the MEP Interest Group on antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The **annual meeting** in Brussels was co-hosted with the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) and focused on ensuring a One Health approach to tackle antibiotic resistance at an EU level. At the event, 126 experts and policymakers gathered to discuss strategies and the importance of strategic partnerships, highlighting the implementation of the European Commission's AMR Council Recommendation and the WHO Roadmap on Antimicrobial Resistance for the WHO European Region 2023-2030.

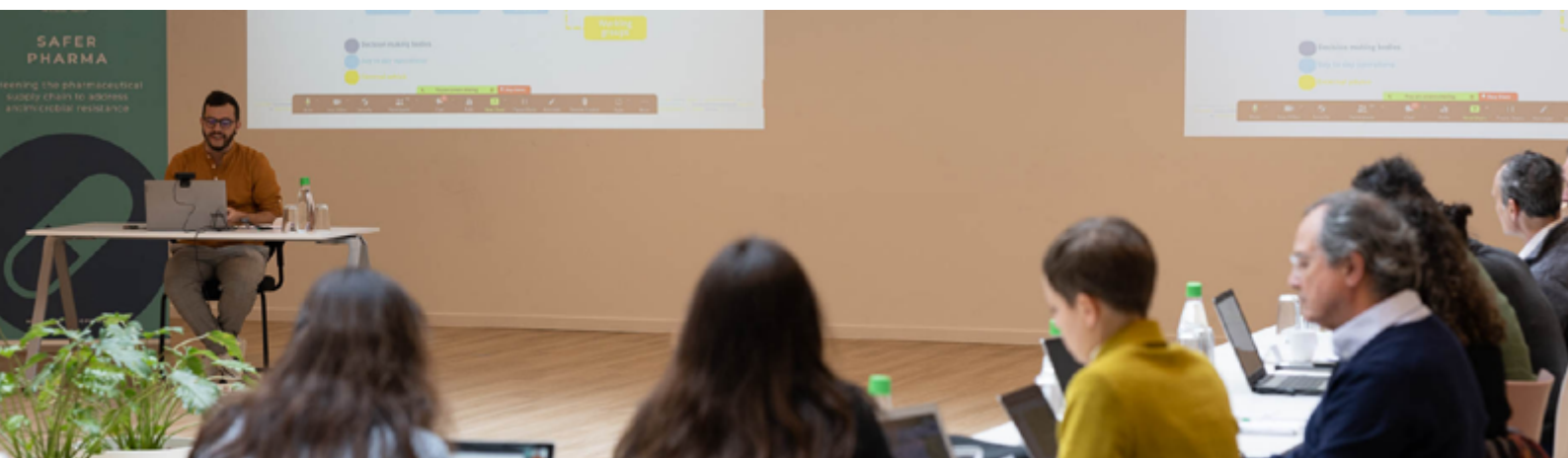
In January, we hosted a **webinar to empower healthcare professionals** in promoting greener healthcare. The session, attended by **88 participants**, provided communication resources, emphasised the need to address antibiotic overuse in food production, and offered guidelines for explaining antibiotic resistance to non-experts. Showcasing HCWH Europe's commitment to driving impactful change and enhancing the role of healthcare professionals in advancing sustainable practices, we also launched our **new toolkit on responsible antibiotic use**.

## Safer Pharma in action

### Reducing antibiotic resistance through health education

Advancing our commitment to raising awareness amongst healthcare professionals about the impact pharmaceutical products have on the environment, and consequently on human health, we launched the **AMREDUCare project**. The project follows a practical teaching methodology that equips healthcare professionals with knowledge and techniques to reduce and better manage antimicrobial waste.

A dedicated module for community pharmacists and nurses, who have a strong influence on patients' antibiotic consumption patterns, will offer essential information on preventative measures, antibiotic treatments, and effective communication strategies. **Over 4,000 professionals in six EU countries** will receive free training between 2024 and 2025, with the learning platform set to launch in late 2024.





## Empowering pharmacists for greener pharmaceuticals

Building on the success of our healthcare professionals networks, the **Pharmacists for Greener Healthcare network** was launched in 2023. Part of the **PharmaSmart project**, this network puts the focus on pharmacists as key actors in reducing pharmaceutical pollution and antibiotic resistance. By creating this new community of sustainable pharmacists we aim to guide this group of health professionals to address the specific challenges that they face when implementing sustainability in clinical practice. This includes interactive webinars, and providing new tools and resources to support them in advocating a more sustainable sector.

## Advancing environmental practices for pharmaceuticals

HCWH Europe has developed several resources to help track and reduce the environmental impact of pharmaceuticals. In our report, ***Procuring for Greener Pharma***, we present recommendations and supporting case studies for pharmaceutical procurers in European healthcare on how to incorporate sustainability criteria in medicines purchasing.

Within the AMREDUCare project, we produced the first ever report to analyse the coverage of AMR in medical education in Europe: ***State-of-the-art and Needs Analysis on AMR Education in Europe***. This publication highlights critical gaps in antibiotic resistance education, such as insufficient integration of the One Health approach (which recognises the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health) and inconsistent education standards across EU countries.



# Our networks

Continuing the plans for growth and development set out in our five-year strategy in 2020, our European networks have continued to attract new members and enjoyed healthy engagement throughout the year; a testament to the ambition and aspirations of European healthcare facilities to become leaders in sustainability.

Alongside our expanding **Global Green and Healthy Hospitals (GGHH) network**, we have also seen encouraging growth of our healthcare professional networks: **Doctors for Greener Healthcare** and **Nurses Climate Challenge Europe**. Healthcare professionals (HCP) are among the most trusted voices in society, and they hold great potential to drive policy changes for greener and more sustainable healthcare that delivers better health outcomes for patients and the planet.

Recognising the impact that pharmaceuticals have on the environment, we were also excited to launch a third HCP network in 2023 - **Pharmacists for Greener Healthcare**. This new network brings together pharmacists to tackle pharmaceutical pollution and its contribution to antimicrobial resistance (AMR).



*“Being part of HCWH Europe’s networks enables you to make new contacts, learn from others that are actually struggling with the same issues, and ultimately work together to make a difference.”*

- Anders Bolmstedt, HCWH Europe Board Chair and GGHH Member, Sweden





# Global Green and Healthy Hospitals

**Global Green and Healthy Hospitals (GGHH) is HCWH Europe's primary membership network and our main implementation channel. GGHH is the largest sustainable healthcare network in the world focused on the interests and needs of healthcare sustainability practitioners. Membership of GGHH is a channel through which hospitals, health systems, and other healthcare facilities can accelerate progress towards becoming sustainable organisations.**

## New GGHH members

In 2023, we grew our network of GGHH members by 39, drawn from 12 different European countries. These new members collectively represent over 550 individual healthcare facilities, employ over 264,800 people, and have a combined 63,596 beds. In 2023, we saw our membership of hospitals and health systems grow by 20% — a testament to the growing reach and impact of the network.

*"Working with Health Care Without Harm Europe has meant a lot to me. It has been very interesting to take part in the knowledge and sharing of ideas and initiatives that are going on in our continent. This is a seriously good initiative."*

- Joel Fredholm, GGHH Member, Sweden



## Our new GGHH members are:

- AZ Delta, Belgium
- Clinique Saint-Luc Bouge, Belgium
- EpiCURA, Belgium
- Institut de Pathologie et de Génétique (IPG), Belgium
- Algemeen Ziekenhuis Turnhout, Belgium
- Ziekenhuis aan de Stroom, Belgium
- SA Põhja-Eesti Regionaalhaigla, Estonia
- Asklepios Kliniken GmbH & Co. KGaA, Germany
- BG Klinikum Bergmannstrost Halle gGmbH, Germany
- Caritas Trägergesellschaft Saarbrücken, Germany
- Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Germany
- ISAR Klinikum, Germany
- Johanniter GmbH, Germany
- Luisenhospital Aachen, Germany
- RoMed Klinikum Rosenheim, Germany
- Universitätsklinikum Würzburg, Germany
- Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Ireland
- Ospidéal Ollscoile Thamlachta, Ireland
- Azienda Ospedaliera Santissimi Antonio e Biagio e Cesare Arrigo di Alessandria, Italy
- ASST Melegnano e Martesana, Italy
- Samodzielny Publiczny Zespół Opieki Zdrowotnej w Gostyniu, Poland
- Poznański Ośrodek Specjalistycznych Usług Medycznych (POSUM), Poland
- Hospital de Cascais - Dr. José de Almeida, Portugal
- Centro Hospitalar do Médio Tejo (CHMT), Portugal
- Centro Hospitalar Universitário do Porto, E.P.E, Portugal
- Fundatia HOSPICE Casa Sperantei-HCS, Romania
- Univerzitná nemocnica sv. Martina, Slovakia
- Hospital Comacral d'Amposta, Spain
- Benito Menni Complejo Asistencial en Salud Mental, Spain
- Departamento de Salud de Elda, Spain
- Fundació Salut Empordà, Spain
- Hospital Universitari Germans Trias i Pujol, Spain
- HM Hospitales, Spain
- IMED Hospitales, Spain
- Fundació Sanitària Mollet (FSM), Spain
- Hôpitaux universitaires de Genève (HUG), Switzerland
- Belford Hospital, UK
- Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, UK
- Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust, UK

# Healthcare professional networks

**Doctors for Greener Healthcare** is a network that brings together doctors from across Europe to collaborate, share best practice, and advocate for a healthy future by reducing the environmental impact of healthcare. By the end of 2023, the network had grown to include 363 members from 28 countries. Throughout the year, members used the network's closed mailing list to share ideas, best practices, resources, and sustainable healthcare news in order to inspire action and motivate other healthcare professionals to take action.



The **Nurses Climate Challenge Europe** aims to mobilise nurses across the continent to educate health professionals on the impacts of climate change on human health. The Challenge provides the necessary resources and networking opportunities to create a movement of health professionals across Europe who want to take action to protect the health of their patients and communities from the worst impacts of climate change. In 2023, the network included 654 members from over 30 countries.



**Pharmacists for Greener Healthcare** brings together pharmacists from across Europe to share best practices and participate in joint advocacy activities to tackle pharmaceutical pollution and its contribution to antibiotic resistance. Our members are committed to working collaboratively to reduce the healthcare sector's environmental and health impacts. We launched the network in 2023, with membership open to pharmacists and pharmacy students in Europe. We quickly saw membership rise to over 100, and by the end of 2023, we had welcomed 115 members from over 15 countries.





# Our events

Events are a crucial element of our work at HCWH Europe. We organise many events across the year that allow us to promote the vital work of our programme teams, build and mobilise our networks, and showcase the great initiatives of our members.

Across a busy schedule of webinars, workshops, training sessions, and conferences, our events bring together healthcare leaders and champions of sustainability to share ideas, innovations, and solutions to accelerate the transition to sustainable healthcare.



# CleanMed Europe

From 5 - 9 June, more than 430 attendees from 37 countries digitally joined **CleanMed Europe** to engage with sustainable healthcare leaders and experts. During the week, we heard a wide range of solutions for *changing the climate of healthcare* - the theme of the 2023 conference. Topics covered included advice on empowering healthcare professionals and engaging senior leaders in sustainable healthcare action, as well as practical guidance for creating carbon management plans, greening pharmaceutical supply chains, and reducing single-use plastic in healthcare.

## European Sustainable Healthcare Awards

In 2023, we launched our new annual European Sustainable Healthcare Awards programme. We received over 30 inspiring applications for the Project of the Year award, from organisations across Europe, showcasing a diverse range of practical initiatives to reduce the environmental impact of healthcare in Europe.

During a live ceremony at CleanMed Europe 2023, the prize was **awarded to NHS Scotland** for their project, Green Anaesthesia Scotland, which has significantly reduced the impact of medical gases across healthcare services in Scotland.





# Our donors

**Our passion for transforming healthcare in Europe is shared by our funding partners, who work with us every day to push the sustainable healthcare movement forward. Their support enables us to undertake advocacy work around key policy issues, to engage with our membership network to share best practice, and to work with hospitals and healthcare providers to trial new solutions in clinical settings.**

HCWH Europe works with a range of government funders, including the European Commission and the Germany Environment Agency (UBA), as well as a growing number of private trusts and foundations, undertaking projects across all our thematic areas.

In 2023, we expanded our partnership with the Flotilla Foundation, a committed supporter of our efforts to reduce the damage caused by plastics used in European healthcare, to launch the **Born Green Generation** project. This long-standing partnership has been key in driving forward an ambitious vision for scaling safer, greener maternity and paediatric units to hospitals across Europe, bringing other funders along in the movement.

Our work in partnership highlights in many ways that we are most successful when we work together. Through a number of European Commission funding streams, we also took the lead on new collaborative initiatives in 2023. This includes the **AMR EDUCare** project under the EU4Health Programme, outlined in the **Our programmes** section above.

Our sincere thanks go out to all our funding partners - it is only with their generous support and collaboration that we are able to take increasingly ambitious and bold steps towards a more sustainable healthcare sector in Europe.



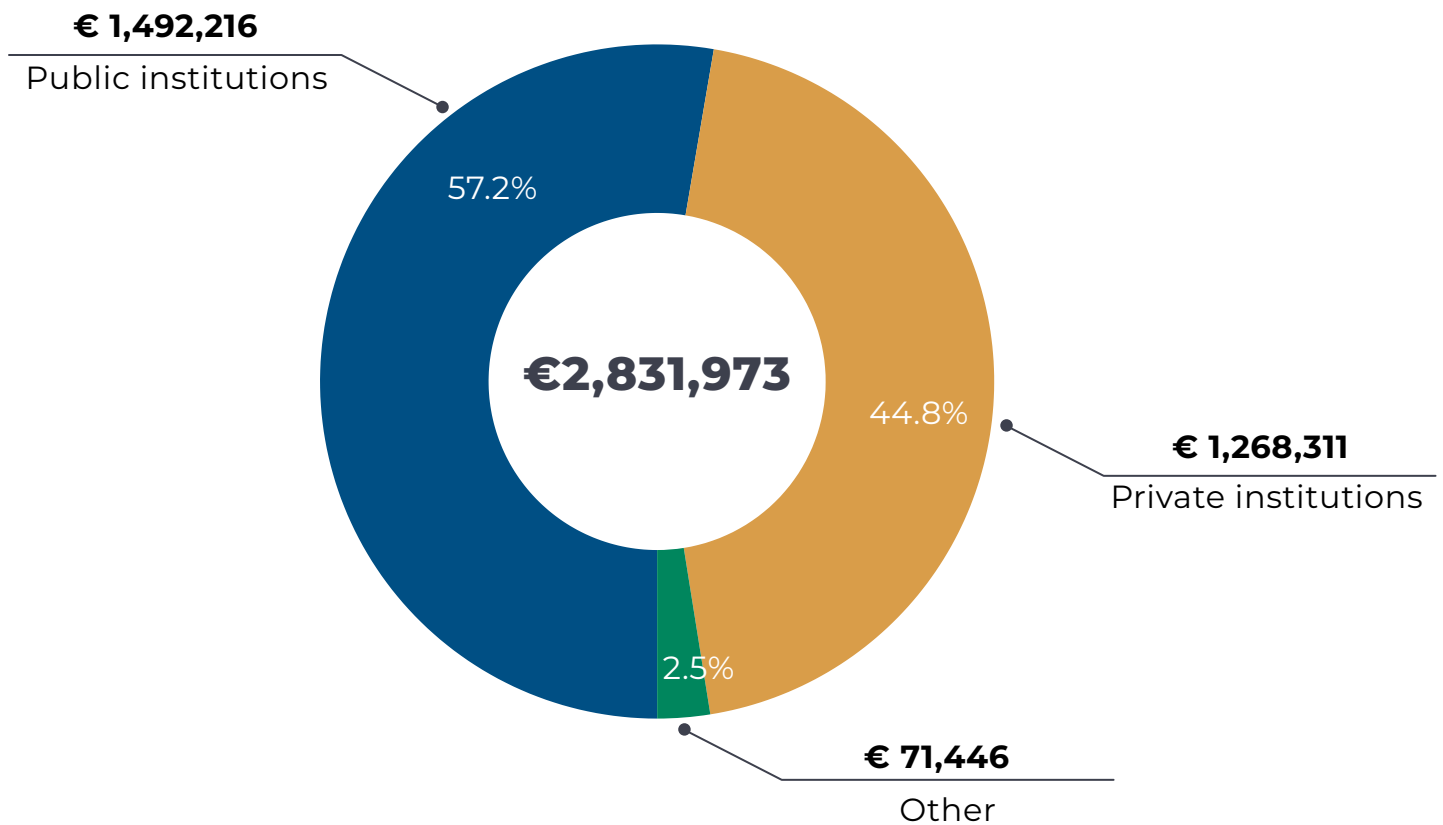
*“The Flotilla Foundation is proud to support Health Care Without Harm Europe’s efforts to reduce children’s exposure to plastics and toxins in their first precious 1000 days of life. Plastic waste pollution is harmful not only to our marine environment, but also to human health. HCWH Europe’s work is crucial for helping to move this critical sector to a more circular, sustainable model, protecting even the most vulnerable of patients at their most important stage of development.”*

- Tamar Matalon, Programme Director and Board Member -  
The Flotilla Foundation



# Our financial accounts

In 2023, HCWH Europe saw its income increase to €2,831,973. We have been successful in attracting new donors and raising funds and, in line with our strategy and development plans, are increasingly mobilising resources to fund major European consortia projects. Audited accounts as filed with NBB (National Bank of Belgium) are available to [view here](#).



## Thank you

Thank you to all our supporters, partners, and members throughout 2023. With your support, enthusiasm, and passion, together we have made a real impact advancing the sustainable healthcare movement in Europe and beyond.



Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) Europe is the European arm of a global not-for-profit NGO whose mission is to transform the healthcare sector so that it reduces its environmental footprint, becomes more resilient, and establishes itself as a leader for sustainable development in Europe. HCWH's vision is that healthcare mobilises its ethical, economical, and political influence to create an ecologically sustainable, equitable, and healthy world.

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 Health Care Without Harm Europe

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