

Climate crisis is also a health crisis: IPCC 1.5 report shows there are great opportunities to take climate action and protect public health

Leading European Healthcare Institutions call for more ambitious EU Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Targets in wake of the IPCC 1.5 report

Climate change is negatively impacting human health, not only in our communities today, but also for future generations. We see it directly on the front lines of our healthcare institutions when responding to health emergencies in the wake of extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change. We also see it in communities affected by increased incidence of respiratory diseases and other conditions induced by climate change. Tackling climate change is the greatest global health opportunity of the 21st century.¹

A growing number of healthcare organisations around the world already recognise this opportunity and are showing leadership by taking climate action and reducing their own carbon footprint by switching to renewable energy,² increasing energy efficiency,³ and reducing emissions along their supply chains through innovation.⁴ Healthcare institutions, as purchasers of huge amounts of goods and services, have the power to leverage their spending power and accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The European Healthcare Climate Council (EHCC) - Europe's leading coalition of hospitals and health systems committed to strengthening the health sector's response to climate change - call on all stakeholders across all sectors to wake up, step up and join us as we transition to a low-carbon economy together.

At the recent Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco, 18 healthcare institutions from across the globe affirmed their commitment to 100% renewable electricity.⁵ Representing more than 1,200 hospitals and health centres both large and small, these institutions collectively care for over 23 million patients per year at facilities powered by 3.3 billion kilowatt hours of renewable electricity. In doing so - they will have reduced their aggregate annual greenhouse

¹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(15\)60854-6/abstract](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(15)60854-6/abstract)

² <https://noharm-uscanada.org/articles/news/us-canada/health-care-sector-commits-100-clean-electricity-global-climate-action>

³ noharm-europe.org/sites/default/files/documents-files/5213/HCWHEurope_Energy_Efficiency_Factsheet-Dec_2017pdf.pdf

⁴ <https://www.greenhospitals.net/united-nations-development-programme-and-health-care-without-harm-launch-new-sustainable-health-in-procurement-project/>

⁵ <http://noharm-uscanada.org/articles/news/us-canada/health-care-sector-commits-100-clean-electricity-global-climate-action>

gas emissions by **over 1 million metric tons** of carbon dioxide emissions (CO₂e), - equivalent to the annual emissions of 214,133 cars.⁶

And yet, despite this strong commitment, we know that **more must be done**. Observing impacts from the current warming levels⁷ the EHCC concludes that even if warming is limited to 1.5°C, the world will still experience unavoidable impacts and may cross tipping points that lead to irreversible damage and devastating consequences.

Improving energy efficiency and switching to renewable energy throughout the supply chain can significantly lower reliance on fossil fuels - reducing harmful emissions which contribute to undernutrition, respiratory and heart diseases, vector-borne disease, and impact mental health.⁸

In the wake of the recent IPCC 1.5°C report, it is clear that we're a long way off limiting warming to 1.5°C, and the differences between 1.5°C and 2°C could be the difference between life and death for some of the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Limiting global warming to 1.5°C is technically feasible but requires political will. To achieve the ambition of both the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, together with the global community, **the EU must accelerate action to protect our health** and that of future generations. Policies must also be developed that make it possible (and required) for hospitals and health systems to do their part in mitigating this global environmental and health challenge.

Without political action and increased ambition, the effects of climate change will be severe – leading to increased incidence of illness and injuries, mass migration, and worsening health inequities. Climate action will protect both human health and the environment - increased EU ambition for energy efficiency and renewable energy targets will drive this action.

The EU's 2030 Climate and Energy targets and long-term climate ambitions are not compatible with the objective of the Paris Agreement to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C. The EHCC, therefore, calls for more ambitious 2030 and 2040 climate and energy targets.

Specifically we urge increased ambition in the following areas:

- At least **55% greenhouse gas emission reductions** (current 2030 target: at least 40%)
- At least **45% renewable energy** (current 2030 target: at least 32%)
- At least **40% energy savings** (current 2030 target: at least 32.5%)

⁶ Calculated using the EPA's Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator:

<https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator>

⁷ library.wmo.int/index.php?lvl=notice_display&id=20220#.W3hqLrixVPZ

⁸ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(15\)60854-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(15)60854-6/fulltext),
http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/355792/ProtectingHealthEuropeFromClimateChange.pdf?ua=1

In order to stay below 1.5°C warming in the long-term, we also call on the EU and its Member States to target **net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040**.

Finally, we call on people of all nations to engage with their governments and encourage a robust political response. With the right policies and investments today, paired with the ambition demonstrated by the health sector, we have the opportunity to realise our vision of healthy people in healthy communities on a healthy planet.

“Climate change is a health issue – for the sake of future generations, it should be put it as high as possible on the healthcare agenda and we must encourage doctors and nurses all over the world to speak up about this threat to public health and the environment.”

Cathy van Beek, Radboud University Medical Center, and Chairperson of the EHCC

ENDS

The European Healthcare Climate Council (EHCC) have come together today in the European Green Capital 2018 – Nijmegen for CleanMed Europe - Europe's leading conference on sustainable healthcare. The conference addresses the environmental impact of the healthcare sector on a local, regional, and global level and is organised by Health Care Without Harm Europe and Radboudumc.

The conference showcases cutting-edge practices in sustainable healthcare and is the ideal venue for healthcare innovators to gather and share ideas, finding new ways to inspire their organisations and communities. CleanMed Europe provides the optimal platform to hear about the latest industry trends, discuss diverse topics, and network with international thought leaders.

About the European Healthcare Climate Council (EHCC):

The EHCC is convened by Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) Europe, and is Europe’s leading coalition of hospitals and health systems committed to strengthening the health sector’s response to climate change. Built on the recognition that climate change is the largest public health threat of the 21st century, members of the EHCC are dedicated to acting as leaders for low carbon, healthy, and resilient health systems.

The Council provides a platform for members to exchange ideas, progress, and best practices, collaborate in joint projects, and ultimately to inspire hospitals across Europe and globally to take action and protect their communities from the adverse impacts of climate change.

The EHCC currently has seven members:

- Radboud University Medical Center, The Netherlands
- Klinikum Neukölln, Germany
- Istituto Pio XII-Onlus, Italy
- Region Skåne, Sweden
- Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust, U.K.
- Assistance Publique - Hôpitaux de Paris (AP-HP), France
- Centre Hospitalier de Niort, France