

Adaptation actions on climate change and health (through education and training)

Scope of future joint statement

Human-induced climate change is putting the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at risk. Any increase in global warming leads to negative impacts on human health and well-being: directly affecting the social and environmental determinants of health and indirectly through consequences of climate change such as migration, conflicts, and political instability.¹ The World Health Organisation expects the number of affected people will be hundreds of millions between 2030 and 2050.² Particularly vulnerable groups are at risk, and social vulnerability and exposure to adverse health impacts vary across Europe, widening health inequities in the region.³

An improvement of the collective understanding of climate and health, and more evidence-based and efficient communication regarding the health risks, efficient solutions and strategies, their costs, and effective implementation are needed to develop and implement proper mitigation and adaptation policies.⁴ Universities have a key function in leading change in society and have a social responsibility. Yet, schools and institutes in public health are taking insufficient action in preparing the current and future public health workforce. Orhan et al. showed that most of the surveyed European public health schools are taking climate action and have some climate-health offerings, albeit ad hoc: a systematic, collaborative approach is missing in most schools.⁵ The authors argued that these deficiencies insufficiently respond to the growing demand for public health graduates with training in climate and health, as shown by Krasna et al.⁶

Our future joint statement will therefore focus on institutions to implement climate and health education and training for current and future health professionals in Europe and beyond. Our statement will also be directed towards these institutions to implement good corporate citizen policies which demonstrate reducing their carbon footprint.

Relevance and synergy

Expanding public health and medical education to address climate change is critical, as it is improving the infrastructure to meet anticipated needs. It is essential that future health professionals have the knowledge to be able to work on and address the uncertainties faced in this wicked issue. Health professionals need to engage with various stakeholders in the debate on the intricate pathways of direct and indirect adverse effects of climate change on health.

All health professionals need to understand the basics, be able to communicate knowledgeably, and form partnerships and alliances in multidisciplinary settings with experts in these areas. Therefore, interprofessional, interdisciplinary, and transformational educational activities, which require that not only problem-solving skills but also system thinking, change and implementation strategies should be included in modern curricula addressing climate change.

The European Union is fighting climate change through ambitious policies at home and in close cooperation with international partners. Climate action is at the heart of the European Green Deal – an ambitious package of measures ranging from ambitiously cutting greenhouse gas emissions, to investing in cutting-edge research and innovation, to preserving Europe's natural environment.

Objectives

Our objectives are:

- Defining a common stance from relevant stakeholders on climate and health education
- Identifying barriers and facilitators in implementing climate and health education
- Exploring how public health institutions can take climate action (i.e., reducing their carbon footprint)
- Exploring asks from the European Commission for implementation

- Identifying next steps to systematically collaborate in the next years

Possible network

Possible network partners will be:

- The circa 120 member schools and departments of ASPHER
- The 10 ASPHER member exemplar schools in climate-health education
- World Health Organisation European Region
- European Public Health Association (EUPHA)
- European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
- EuroHealthNet
- Health and Environment Alliance
- The Global Climate and Health Alliance
- Health Care Without Harm
- European Medical Students' Association (EMSA)
- EuroNet MRPH
- EUPHAnxt
- Young Forum Gastein
- Global Network for Academic Public Health; consisting of ASPHER, Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH); Asia-Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health (APACPH); Association of Schools of Public Health in Africa (ASPHA); South-East Asia Public Health Education Institutes Network (SEAPHEIN); Latin American Alliance for Global Health (ALASAG); and Arab Public Health Association (ArPHA)
- Global Consortium for Climate and Health Education (GCCHE)

Leading organisation

The leading organisation will be the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER).

Contact person and details

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¹ World Health Organization. COP24 Special Report: Health and Climate Change; World Health Organization: Geneva, Switzerland, 2018.

² World Health Organization. Quantitative Risk Assessment of the Effects of Climate Change on Selected Causes of Death, 2030s and 2050s; World Health Organization: Geneva, Switzerland, 2014.

³ European Environment Agency. The European environment—State and outlook 2020. In Knowledge for Transition to a Sustainable Europe; Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg, 2019.

⁴ Shaman, J.; Knowlton, K. The Need for Climate and Health Education. *Am. J. Public Health* 2018, 108, S66–S67.

⁵ Orhan, R.; Middleton, J.; Krafft, T.; Czabanowska, K. Climate Action at Public Health Schools in the European Region. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2021, 18, 1518. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18041518>

⁶ Krasna, H.; Czabanowska, K.; Jiang, S.; Khadka, S.; Morita, H.; Kornfeld, J.; Shaman, J. The Future of Careers at the Intersection of Climate Change and Public Health: What Can Job Postings and an Employer Survey Tell Us? *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2020, 17, 1310.