

European Climate and Health Observatory

- Thematic priorities and key actions for 2023 and 2024 -

About the European Climate and Health Observatory

The European Climate and Health Observatory is a partnership between the European Commission, the European Environment Agency and several other organisations, including Copernicus Programme Services, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, European Food Safety Authority, Lancet Countdown in Europe, and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe.

The Observatory aims to support Europe in preparing for and adapting to the impacts of climate change on human health by providing access to relevant information and tools. It also fosters information exchange and cooperation between relevant international, European, national, sub-national and non-governmental actors. It contributes to the European Green Deal and the EU4Health vision for a healthier European Union. For more information about the Observatory, see [here](#).

Strategic vision for the Observatory

The Observatory aims to become the authoritative source of actionable knowledge on the past, current and projected climate-related risks to human health at all life stages and in all settings, as well as on policies and actions addressing these climate-related health risks, within the broader context of the One Health approach.

The Observatory partners will contribute to the following strategic objectives to be reached by 2030, in collaboration with public administrations, civil society organisations, the research community and other relevant stakeholders:

1. Observatory users can monitor key climate-related health risks, impacts and adaptive responses through robust indicators
2. National and sub-national health policies and systems can integrate adaptation more systematically and consistently
3. Public authorities have greater capacity to anticipate and prevent climate-related threats to health in a timely manner
4. The health community in Europe is climate-literate and better involved into adaptation decision-making
5. Evidence-based efficient, effective and inclusive adaptation solutions and public health and healthcare interventions are widely known

See the details of the above strategic objectives [here](#).

The Observatory is operating according to two-year workplans agreed by the partners. The work in 2021-22 focussed on climate-sensitive infectious disease and heat stress (see [workplan 2021—22](#)).

Focus of the 2023—2024 Observatory workplan

During 2023 and 2024, the Observatory will build on the work carried out in 2021-22 by developing further insights in selected areas related to heat stress and climate-sensitive infectious disease, while exploring in depth a new topic: **Water, climate change and health**.

New topic for 2023—24: Water, climate change and health

Water will be the main focus of the 2023-24 workplan, including the publication of the Observatory's second **European climate and health report** in April 2024. Climate change is making water resources scarcer; flooding more extreme and unpredictable; and leading to deteriorating water quality. These impacts throughout the water cycle threaten people's health, but also ecosystems and biodiversity, and the opportunities for sustainable development overall. Both the impacts of **water quantity and quality** will be assessed, including the following example themes:

- direct and indirect impacts of floods on health, including physical and mental health impacts, spread of infectious diseases (water-borne and vector-borne diseases);
- health implications of changing rainfall patterns, droughts, water scarcity, including increased concentration of pollutants in water, risks to food security, implications for farmer communities, disease vectors, and others;
- impacts on health associated with changing water temperature and chemical composition (e.g. algal blooms; marine biotoxins; water-borne diseases);
- impacts on health cause by the rise of sea levels, including salt water intrusion into groundwater reservoirs;
- health issues associated with permafrost thawing.

Guided by the [strategic objectives](#), the Observatory will aim to collate knowledge on these themes allowing better understanding of the risks and solutions in policy and practice.

Continued focus on heat and climate-sensitive infectious diseases

Following up on the insights collected in 2021—22 and the data that is continuously being updated and made available through the Observatory website, two focus areas of policy action (adapting to heat impacts and higher likelihood of infectious diseases) will be further elaborated in 2023—24, with the aim to provide guidance to policy makers and actors in the field:

- **Impacts of heat on people in home, work and public facility settings:** this work stream will aim to assess existing standards, regulations and guidelines on maximum temperatures in those settings, report on effective ways of improving thermal comfort, with a view to providing recommendations;
- **Heat Health Warning Systems:** This work stream with aim to take stock of existing heat warning systems, collect experiences and good practices and provide guidance to Member States for establishing or enhancing warning systems.
- **Solutions aimed at preventing heat impacts or limiting the occurrence and disease burden of infectious diseases.** This work stream will focus on developing case studies and policy analyses;

Cross-cutting theme: Climate and health literacy

- This work stream will consider existing advice and training programmes provided to health professionals and citizens on how to prevent and minimise impacts on climate on health, what to watch out for and how to react in an emergency. It will include the development of training materials, capacity building, and course modules for public health students and professionals .

These focus areas set the strategic direction for the Observatory's work in the short term. However, they do not preclude the continuation of actions from the 2021—22 work strand on infectious

diseases or work on other topics – including newly emerging priorities – that the partners are interested and able to contribute to in 2023–24.

Key actions for 2023 and 2024

Action	Lead partners	Associated partners	Strategic Objectives addressed				
			1	2	3	4	5
New topic for 2023-24: water, climate change and health							
Evidence review and policy brief on water scarcity impacts on health in Europe	WHO European Region		✓			✓	
Case studies of solutions on addressing water scarcity, flooding or poor water quality risk to human health in the context of climate change	EEA						✓
Updating and developing new data on health impacts of floods, droughts and wildfires	EEA		✓			✓	
Report on climate and health, April 2024 (reports to be published every 18 months)	EEA		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Outputs of the Eurocigua and Eurocigua 2 project on ciguatera fish poisoning integrated into the Observatory	EFSA, ECDC	EEA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
New Lancet Countdown in Europe indicators (e.g., floods, droughts, wildfires, smoke, water-borne infectious diseases, algal blooms...)	Lancet Countdown in Europe		✓			✓	
Future challenges for the safety of food and feed from the oceans: a foresight study (Jan 2023—Jun 2024)	EFSA		✓		✓	✓	
Continued focus on heat and climate-sensitive infectious diseases							
Review of national and subnational regulations and guidelines for maximum temperatures in home, work, education and public facility settings	EEA				✓		
Overview of the national approaches on recording heat-related deaths (modelling, reporting), sharing of experiences among the countries	EEA, WHO European Region ¹		✓		✓		
Second edition of Heat Health Action Planning Guidance (ongoing WHO European Region /EC Project 2022-25)	WHO European Region			✓	✓	✓	✓
Development of series of fact sheets on climate-sensitive vector-borne, food-borne and water-borne diseases (Q2 2023)	WHO European Region					✓	
Webpages with information on climate-sensitive diseases, including map viewers, and data updates in 2023 and 2024	EEA, ECDC	WHO European Region	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ArboRisk tool finalised	ECDC				✓		
New indicator for vector-borne disease in the Mediterranean basin	C3S		✓		✓		
Update of the European Climate Data Explorer health apps related to heat waves	C3S		✓		✓		

¹ Possibly in collaboration with the International Association of National Public Health Institutes (IANPHI)

Action	Lead partners	Associated partners	Strategic Objectives addressed				
			1	2	3	4	5
New Lancet Countdown in Europe indicators	Lancet Countdown in Europe		✓				
Assess and report on shorter and longer term health threats of environmental origin, including those due to climate change	DG SANTE	ECDC	✓		✓		
Other topics							
Short-term forecasts on various air pollution species: NO ₂ , PM _{2.5} , PM ₁₀ , pollen (alder, birch, grass, olive, ragweed, mugwort); PM ₁₀ from wildfires only; dust	CAMS				✓	✓	
New Lancet Countdown in Europe indicators (e.g., urban pests, food security, dust...)	Lancet Countdown in Europe		✓			✓	
Policy analysis on addressing climate risks to health in occupational settings (TBC)	OSHA, EEA				✓	✓	
Case studies of solutions on addressing occupational health risks (TBC)	OSHA, EEA						✓
Assessment of impact of climate change on labour productivity	JRC, DG EMPL		✓	✓			
Cross-cutting actions							
Development and recommendations of training materials and capacity building for public health students and professionals	ASPHER					✓	
Case studies to illustrate how climate-health competencies in schools are being implemented across the European Region	ASPHER					✓	
Update of the ASPHER Climate-Health Education and Climate Action Survey in Schools of Public Health	ASPHER					✓	
European Climate Risk Assessment (focus on health)	EEA, DG CLIMA	JRC	✓				
Update of climate and health country profiles with national reporting 2023 under the Governance Regulation and other resources	EEA	WHO European Region	✓	✓		✓	
Outputs of the health-related DestinE use cases, if relevant, integrated into the Observatory	C3S					✓	✓
Outputs of the 6 research projects of the cluster on climate change and health integrated into the Observatory	DG RTD		✓				✓
Inclusion of climate-related threats in the scope of the HERA ITGA platform, and of the HERA threat prioritisation for preparedness and response in the area of MCM	HERA		✓		✓		✓
Further development of the Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources (EIOS) Platform	JRC, HERA, WHO		✓		✓		
Recommendations and e-tools for the public under the 'European climate code'	DG SANTE				✓	✓	



Action	Lead partners	Associated partners	Strategic Objectives addressed				
			1	2	3	4	5
Focus on health in the 2023 work programme of the Horizon Europe Mission ‘Adaptation to Climate Change’	DG CLIMA			✓		✓	✓
Continuation PESETA project, with focus on health sector	JRC, DG ECHO		✓				
Call on ‘Planetary Health: understanding the links between environmental degradation and health impacts’ under the Health work programme 2023—24 of Horizon Europe (opens in Jan 2023, closes in April 2023)	DG RTD		✓		✓		✓
Call on ‘Testing and demonstrating transformative solutions to build resilience towards health risks caused by the effects of climate change’ (opens in Jan 2023, closes in Sep 2023)	DG RTD		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Second edition of WHO Zero regrets: scaling up action on climate change mitigation and adaptation for health in the WHO European Region	WHO European Region			✓		✓	
Collaboration among partners and outreach							
Annual physical partners and stakeholders meeting (May 2023, Copenhagen)	EEA	All		✓		✓	
Advisory Board of the Copernicus Thematic Hub on Health	CAMS	DG SANTE, EEA, Lancet Countdown in Europe	✓				
2 webinars per year organised via the EU Health Policy Platform	SANTE, CLIMA, EEA			✓		✓	
Conference “Research Perspectives on the Health Impacts of Climate Change”	DG RTD			✓		✓	
7 th Ministerial Conference on Environment & Health, 5—7 July 2023 in Budapest	WHO European Region			✓		✓	
High-level conference on Climate, Health, Water Scarcity (late 2023 —early 2024)	WHO European Region			✓		✓	
Attendance of relevant meetings, events and conferences to present the Observatory and get feedback from stakeholders	All	All		✓		✓	