# Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

#### Advocacy for air quality in Europe



22/01/2019 Sophie Perroud Policy coordinator

### HEAL's member network

## >70 organizations

Doctors associations Patient groups Nurses associations Public health institutes Research institutes Not-for-profit health insurers Women's groups Youth groups Environmental groups



Promoting environmental policy that contributes to good health

### **Air pollution in Europe**

- Air pollution has many severe effects on human health and the environment
- Each year millions suffer from poor health as a result of bad air quality, both indoors and outdoors
- Children and the elderly are especially vulnerable

#### **European Region**:







- Indoor and outdoor air pollution is to the largest single environmental health risk with 6.5 million early deaths worldwide annually
- In the EU-28, poor air quality leads to 399,000 early deaths per year a number about 15 times higher than fatalities from road traffic accidents
- Too often, policy-makers delay action for cleaner air despite legal requirements and political commitments in the EU-28, including the Ambient Air Quality Directive, measures to clean up the air at national and local level have been inadequate
- The region still has a long way to go to achieve truly health-protective air quality levels recommended by WHO



### Key voice in raising air quality, climate and health issues

- Air quality guidelines (2005)
- Review of evidence on health aspects of air pollution REVIHAAP project (2013)
- Health risk assessment of air pollution. General principles (2016)
- Evolution of WHO air quality guidelines: past, present and future (2017...)
- WHO's First Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health, 30 October - 1 November 2018



### WHO Air Quality conference



HEAL/WHO briefing on climate change and air pollution, Feb. 2018

Dr Maria Neira, Director WHO's Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health

> As a strategic partner, HEAL works to canvass health groups input for the conference and work to amplify the message on the urgency to act



HEAL's Executive Director Genon K. Jensen and Dr. Maria Neira



HEAL-WHO briefing: Climate change and air pollution - what is the health diagnosis for the EU?

A dialogue with WHO Director Dr Maria Neira 13 Feb 2018, Brussels

Letter to **all health ministers** in the European region, urging them to 'being involved in your country's activities to tackle climate change and implement the Paris Climate Agreement, promoting those measures that will bring the greatest benefit to health, air quality and the climate and work together with the health sector'





**8 demands** for clean air in the European region includes demand to prioritise those measures that have benefits for health, air quality and climate

### **Communicating on air quality and health**

- Inform stakeholders to raise awareness (e.g. sciencepolicy)
- Increase stakeholders support for clean air measures
- HEAL uses a hands on approach that considers:
- Culture-specific messaging in different languages
- Targeted message(s) to a defined audience (the public, policy-makers, health professionals)
- Hook for the communication activity
- Evidence-based communication
- Message needs to be embedded in overall r strategy

Range of tools including reports, postcards posters, visuals, testimonies etc.



### Communicating on air quality & health for 10+ years



THE UNPAID HEALTH BILL

available in English, Romanian, German, Polish, Turkish and for Western Balkans http://www.envhealth.org/unpaidhealthbill



TOOLKIT Coal power generation and health in Iskenderun Bay, Turkey powietrzal CZY WIESZ, CZYM ODDYCHASZ? KLIMASCHUTZ **ALS PRÄVENTIONSSTRATEGIE** SCHORZENIA WODOWANE PRZEZ ZANIECZYSZCZENIA

#### PARENT INFORMATION LEAFLET: CHILDREN WITH ASTHMA AND ALLERGIES

#### **AIR POLLUTION** AND HEALTH

New findings from the EU-wide research project 'European Study of Cohorts for Air Pollution Effects' (ESCAPE) make raising awareness of the effects on health of exposure to air pollution even more urgent. This leaflet developed by the ESCAPE project in collaboration with the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) explains the latest ews on the links between outdoor air pollution and children's health. It also provides evention tips for parents of children with asthma and alleraies, who are especially inerable to exposure to polluted air.

#### WHAT DOES THE LATEST **RESEARCH SHOW?**

The EU-wide ESCAPE project confirmed the serious impact of exposure to air pollution on children's lung health. Specifically, it showed three new associations. First, that family exposure to fine particles and nitrogen dioxide in the air was related to low birth weight babies. Second, that school children exposed to higher levels of nitrogen dioxide, black carbon and fine particles had a lower lung function than other children. Third, that there was more pneumonia early in life in children exposed to traffic, and to higher levels of almost all pollutants studied.

The findings showed no clear relationships between quality and rates of asthma and allergic sensitisation in children. However, even a large study such as ESCAPE, cannot answer all guestions and needs to be judged in the context of other evidence

kazdego roku 45 000 ludzi w Polsce umiera przedwcześnie z powodu zanieczyszczeń

CZYSTE POWIETRZE DLA POLSKI



Ithough air pollution is rarely visible nowadays, Europe's air quality is still alwage problem. Alropolution and brain development, and even with diabetes. Is responsible for more than ado obo early death in the EU each year [1]. Sensitive and vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, children, the elderly and those already ffering from respiratory and other serious illnesses or from me groups are particularly affected [2].

How inhalation of particulate matter

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Figure 2: Exposure to particulate matter (PM2, a) causes a multitude of health impacts

hekom project (2012): Su

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may affect our health

Lungs

of COPD

Blood

Altered rheology

Increased coagulability

 Translocated particles Peripheral thrombosis Reduced oxygen saturation

Inflammatio

 Oxidative stress · Accelerated progression and exacerbation

· Increased respiratory symptoms

Effected pulmonary reflexes

Reduced lung function

The health effects of air pollution are well documented: not individuals affected, national health services and the economy only is poor air quality a risk factor for heart and respiratory at large. diseases such as asthma and chronic bronchitis, but it is also

Brain

Heart

Increased cerebrovascular ischemia

 Altered cardiac autonomic function Oxidative stress

Increased dysrhythmic susceptibility

· Altered cardiac repolarisaion

Vasculature Atherosclerosis, accelerated prog

and destabilisation of plaque Endothelial dysfunction

Vasoconstriction and hyperten

Around 90 % of Europeans living in cities

are exposed to levels of

air pollution deemed damaging for human health.

Increased myocardial ischemia

The World Health Organization's Cancer Agency (IARC) also confirmed that outdoor air pollution can cause lung cancer [3].

Clearly the quality of indoor and outdoor air plays a major role in many chronic diseases in Europe with high costs for the

### Lessons learnt

- There is no one size fits all approach in communicating on air quality and health
- It's key to develop a message that is targeted towards the stakeholders aimed to reach, different messages will resonate well with different audiences
- Communication should be in national/local language: amplify what our members do
- More and more projects that involve citizens in communication efforts, give them **ownership** as a way to increase awareness and acceptance; this should be promoted & supported financially



Would be useful to issue guidance for local authorities on **communication** (alerts for pollution peaks – currently activities vary greatly, overall communication)

### Linking climate and air policy

to create win-win for health protection

### good for climate isgood health

### economy



#### Climate change poses a grave and immediate threat to human health

Risks from changing patterns of disease, food insecurity, unsafe water and sanitation, damage to human settlements, extreme events and population growth and migration were far more severe for human health than most observers had understood, according to a systematic appraisal of available evidence by the Lancet-UCL Commission in 2009.

#### We can avoid this threat

Action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions leads to direct benefits to human health, and to substantial fiscal savings

Better health improves quality of life and massively reduces the cost to healthcare, for example:

- Less road and air transport means lower emissions and rates of respiratory and cardiovascular disease,
- Active transport means reduced obesity, diabetes, vascular disease, depression, osteoporosis and cancer rates,
- Less red meat production means reduced methane emissions, cardiovascular disease and cancer rates.

To avoid a global public health crisis, leaders must sign a fair, ambitious and binding international climate agreement.

> www.env-health.org/healthyclimate www.noharm.org/europe/issues/climate







## THE LANCET

The health benefits of tackling climate change

An Executive Summary for The Lancet Series



"If properly chosen, action to combat climate change can, of itself, lead to improvements in health. The news is not all bad."

### HEAL Briefing 2018





### Buildings, climate & health: what's the link?



HEAL Promoting environmental policy that contributes to good health

\*Data taken from '<u>Healthy Homes Barometer 2017</u>', (p. 5). For more information on health and buildings see the <u>HEAL</u> and <u>World Health Organisation</u> dedicated webpages.

### Buildings, climate & health: what's the link?



#### Buildings are a key sector to tackle climate change



Improving existing and new buildings is key if the EU is to reach its 2020 climate goals + Paris Agreement

Urbanisation and billions of people acquiring housing and energy access is increasing the urgency to achieve more climate- friendly buildings







#### How to achieve climate-friendly and health-promoting buildings in the EU?

. . . . . .



Pointers for policy-makers on EU and national levels **Prioritise health** e.g. stringent inclusion of health criteria in the minimum energy performance requirements buildings + national building codes to reflect the latest health evidence

**Green renovation without gentrification** to minimise high rent increases which negatively impact health

Swiftly move to 100% renewable energy in building design and renovation and away fossil fuels

**Prioritise buildings** used by vulnerable populations such as children, elderly, energy poverty victims

**Regulate** building materials and replace hazardous chemicals with safer alternatives

**Implement** a green public procurement policy based on highest health and sustainability standards



#### How to achieve climate-friendly and health-promoting buildings in the EU?



Pointers for local level officials **Apply environmental health criteria** in urban planning by ensuring sufficient exclusion zones between a polluting area (polluting industry, traffic, natural source of pollution, etc.) and buildings where people live/work.

• **Improving buildings** by setting i.e. city focused healthbased building policies and by knowing their city's building priorities including areas of greatest concern, while giving consideration to the (health) threats associated with gentrification.

• **Ensure** that public and private landlords provide safe and healthy accommodation to their tenants, provide energy efficiency and remedy energy poverty to residents.



#### How to achieve climate-friendly and health-promoting buildings in the EU?



Pointers for the health sector and the public **Raise awareness** on the importance of indoor environments on building user's health and the potential role that especially primary care physicians hold in identifying the underlying root causes.

- **Engage** around deliberations on the future of European buildings and renovations strategies as part of climate efforts and highlight the centrality of health and the urgency to act.
- **Share and promote** best practices such as the Irish Warmth and Well-Being scheme, and request that progress on both efficiency outcomes and health status is reviewed afterwards
- Lead by example with ensuring that buildings such as hospitals, clinics or public health offices are health- promoting buildings.



Unmask My City is a global initiative by health professionals for clean, safe air in our cities, calling for cities to meet WHO air quality guidelines by 2030.



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- build a long-term engagement with health groups
- build trust and the relationship with medical actors

involve natural scientists to validate the claims

**keep health partners engaged** with small, continuous and concrete steps



engage experts who have both a medical and natural science background

- Hesitation among health professionals to engage on energy & coal issues
- ✓ Focus on **other issues**: medical treatment, research, or domestic coal

pollution, transport, agriculture

- ✓ Conservatism, fear of criticising the government
- Overall political situation difficult in some countries



Data gaps



### **Take Away**

- Health sector engagement has a significant potential of advocating for healthy energy (long-term and science- based cooperation)
- ✓ Health narrative has to be **well-adjusted to the target audience**
- Not enough resources in health sector: environmental groups often don't know how to interpret health data and/or use different techniques
- Media wants local, national doctors, medical experts & health affected groups as messengers
- Air pollution is currently the biggest environmental threat of public health – tackling it can be an opportunity to bring **both health and climate benefits**
- We are given a public health opportunity!



### What's next?

#### National energy and climate plans (NECPs)

- support for national activities such as a joint letter, social media etc.
- air policy priority for the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2019

#### EU elections 23-26 May 2019

- amplifying manifesto messaging
- preparing questions for MEPs for the Commissionners's hearings



### Thank you for your attention!

#### Contact us: info@env-health.org

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