

Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

Advocacy for air quality in Europe

22/01/2019
Sophie Perroud
Policy coordinator

HEAL's member network

>70 organizations
in 28 countries

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:



Facts

- Indoor and outdoor air pollution is 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**

Examples of WHO on air pollution

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



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



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

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'*



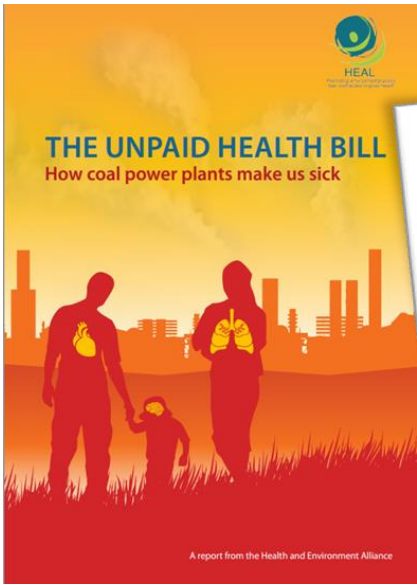
8 demands for clean air in the European region includes demand to prioritise those measures that have benefits for health, air quality and climate

Communicating on air quality and health

- Inform stakeholders to raise awareness (e.g. science-policy)
- 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



available in *English, Romanian, German, Polish, Turkish and for Western Balkans* <http://www.env-health.org/unpaidhealthbill>



How inhalation of particulate matter may affect our health

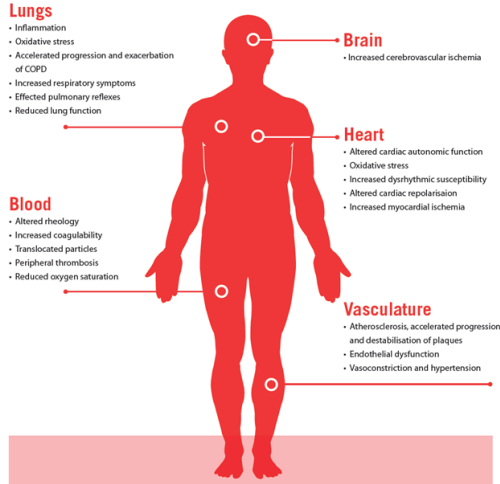


Figure 2: Exposure to particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) causes a multitude of health impacts
Adapted from source: Apehion project (2012); Summary report of the Apehion project 2008-2011



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

What's
**good for
climate
is good
for
health**
+ the
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

www.thelancet.com

The health benefits of tackling climate change

An Executive Summary for *The Lancet* Series

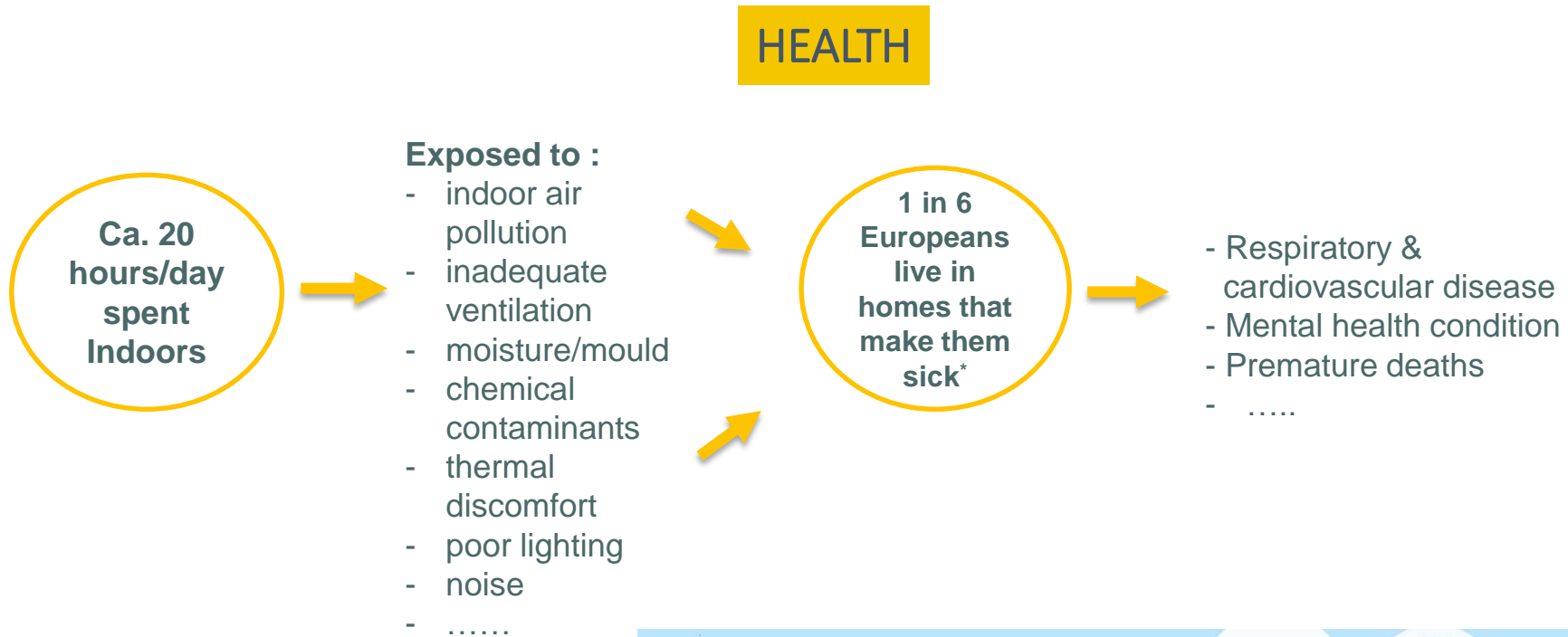


"If properly chosen, action to combat climate change can, of itself, lead to improvements in health. The news is not all bad."

HEAL Briefing 2018



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



When our buildings get healthier, so do we.

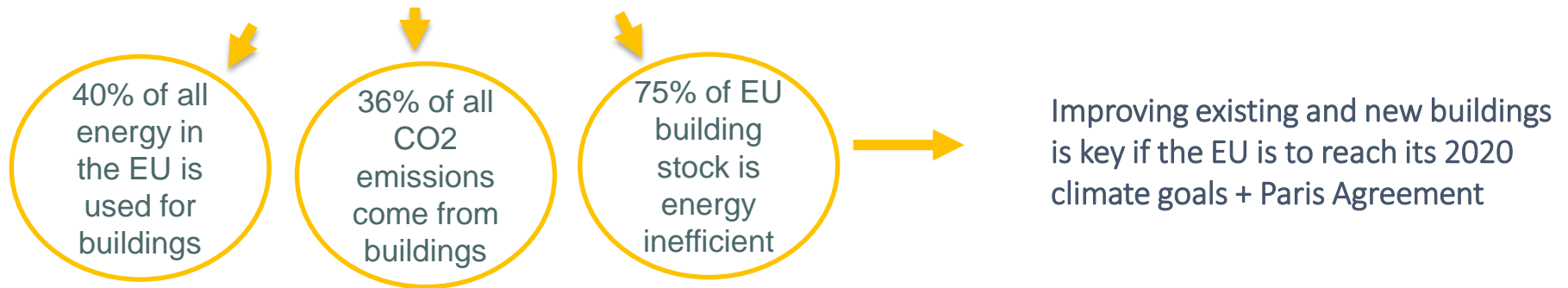


*Data taken from '[Healthy Homes Barometer 2017](#)', (p. 5). For more information on health and buildings see the [HEAL](#) and [World Health Organisation](#) dedicated webpages.

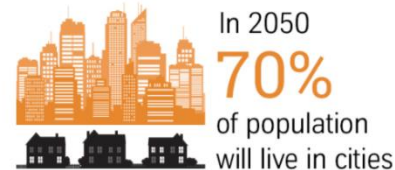
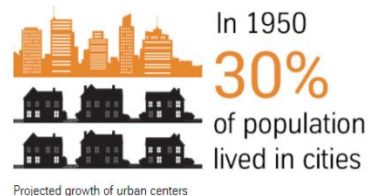
Buildings, climate & health: what's the link?

CLIMATE

Buildings are a key sector to tackle climate change



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

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

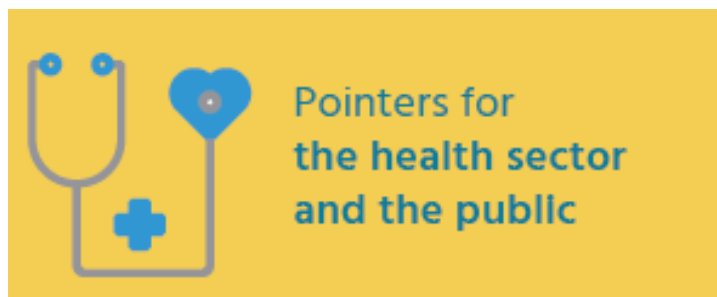


Pointers for local level officials

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 health-based 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?



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.

Engaging the medical community HOW?



- ✓ 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

Challenges to overcome

- ✓ **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 1st half of 2019

EU elections 23-26 May 2019

- amplifying manifesto messaging
- preparing questions for MEPs for the Commissioners's hearings
- making sure the next EU Commission continues work of ambient air fitness check

Thank you for your attention!

Contact us: info@env-health.org

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