



**EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT  
AND HEALTH PROCESS**



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# EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH PROCESS NEWSLETTER

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**January–March 2022**

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## 1. EDITORIAL

Welcome to the spring issue of the [European Environment and Health Process](#) (EHP) newsletter.

In this newsletter we offer updates on preparations and developments related to implementation of the [Ostrava Declaration](#), and call on national governments, regional and global organizations, and stakeholders to engage in far-reaching environment and health activities, drawing lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We look forward to increasing cooperation in the WHO European Region.

Best regards,  
EHP Secretariat



## Happy World Health Day 2022!

This year World Health Day (7 April 2022) was dedicated to environment and health, under the theme “Our Planet, Our Health”. On this occasion WHO launched a new social media campaign that urges governments and the public to share stories of steps they are taking to protect the planet and their health, and prioritize the well-being of societies (#HealthierTomorrow). Please take a look at the additional information [here](#) and feel free to download the campaign toolkit [here](#).

We are also happy to flag that in the lead-up to World Health Day, WHO released the **WHO Air Quality database of more than 6000 cities**, which compiles data on ground measurements of annual mean concentrations of particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide. The database is featured on the [WHO Global Health Observatory](#).



## 2. TOP STORY

### Twenty years of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme

Multilateral cooperation on fostering healthy and sustainable transport in the WHO European Region has just passed a major milestone: 20 years ago WHO/Europe, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and Member States from across the UNECE pan-European region\* established the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP).

To mark the occasion, the Government of France organized and hosted an event within the context of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU). WHO/Europe took part in the event, providing insights on active mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic and offering recommendations on how urban areas could enhance cycling or walking to work to improve mobility, as well as on reducing the spread of COVID-19.



*"It is really remarkable for a policy platform of such a voluntary nature to celebrate its 20th anniversary: this is a clear indication that Member States continue to value the benefits of working in partnership across sectoral boundaries on concrete projects that support the transition towards healthier, safer and greener transport."*

Francesca Racioppi, Head of the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, Bonn, Germany

\* The UNECE pan-European region consists of 56 Member States and includes all 53 Member States of the WHO European Region.

### What is THE PEP?

THE PEP is a unique intergovernmental, cross-sectoral policy platform for policy-makers and stakeholders of the countries of the pan-European region for accelerating the transformation towards clean, safe and healthy mobility and net-zero-emission transport.

It is driven and guided by its Steering Committee of Member States and jointly serviced by UNECE and WHO/Europe.

For more information on THE PEP click [here](#).



### 3. COUNTRY ACTIVITIES

- On 27 January 2022, WHO ECEH, together with the WHO Country Office in **Kazakhstan**, organized an introductory training on the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-water (GLAAS). The training was attended by over 40 participants from the Committee for Sanitary and Epidemiological Control, other relevant authorities of Kazakhstan, and WHO headquarters, as well as representatives from Belarus and Serbia who shared their experiences of GLAAS implementation.
- In **Poland**, on 16 February 2022, the WHO Country Office, with WHO ECEH support and in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the National Institute of Public Health, organized the science policy dialogue “Cleaner air for better health in Poland”. This event gathered around 300 participants representing the health and environment sector, from the national and local authorities, academia and civil society. It was also an opportunity to launch the Polish language versions of the [AirQ+](#) tool and the accompanying documentation – for example, the executive summary of the [WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines](#) (AQGs) and the paper “[Zero regrets: scaling up action on climate change mitigation and adaptation for health in the WHO European Region](#)”.
- On 23 February 2022, WHO ECEH took part in the final meeting of the project on occupational health, “Actions to strengthen resilience of health workers in South East Europe in response to COVID-19 and beyond – implementation of WHO/ILO guidance and mapping of priority needs for occupational safety and health programmes for health workers”. This project was technically and financially supported by WHO ECEH, in coordination with WHO headquarters and implemented by the South-East European Network on Workers’ Health. The project involved 7 Member States: **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Turkey**. Through a series of online trainings delivered in national languages, approximately 1600 health workers in the subregion were trained on different aspects of occupational health and safety in the COVID-19 context.
- On 25 February 2022, WHO ECEH, together with the WHO Country Office, co-organized and participated in a high-level science–policy dialogue in **Bulgaria**, to discuss the implementation of the new AQGs, and to launch the Bulgarian language version of the executive summary of the AQGs and of the “[Zero regrets](#)” paper.
- A rapid assessment mission was conducted in the **Republic of Moldova** on 14–17 March 2022 by WHO ECEH and WHO headquarters to assess water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) conditions in refugee accommodation centres and to provide recommendations on any possible improvement interventions to strengthen the health, well-being and dignity of the residents. To read more about the rapid assessment mission, click [here](#).
- On 30 March 2022 **Lithuania** celebrated the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Institute of Public Health at the University of Vilnius. The celebration was marked by a national conference on environment and health, with a focus on children’s health and the environment. In addition, on 29 March a round table discussion between Lithuanian



and WHO ECEH experts was organized around water, sanitation and hygiene, along with an event on youth engagement in environment and health policy-making.

- WHO completed 2 projects on chemical safety and health: (i) assessment of the usage of mercury-containing preparations (amalgam) and medical devices in dental-care facilities in **Armenia**; and (ii)

improvement of the national legislation on the management of chemicals in **Ukraine** (strengthening of the health sector involvement). The main outcomes are an inventory of mercury use in dental clinics in Armenia and the implementation of pilot activities for phasing down use of dental amalgam in the country, and a road map for strengthening health sector involvement in chemicals management in Ukraine.

## 4. ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND COVID-19

### Global analysis of health care waste in the context of COVID-19: status, impacts and recommendations



On 2 February 2022, WHO held a webinar to mark the launch of a new WHO publication “[Global analysis of health care waste in the context of COVID-19: Status, impacts and recommendations](#)”, which quantifies the additional health-care waste generated in relation to COVID-19, describes current health-care waste management systems and their deficiencies, and summarizes emerging best practices and solutions to reduce the impact of waste on human and environmental health. The webinar recording is [available here](#).

The recommendations included in the report build on actions in the “[WHO manifesto for a healthy recovery from COVID-19: prescriptions and actionables for a healthy and green recovery](#)”.





## 5. RECENT EVENTS

- On 12 January 2022, the meeting of the **Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) Partnership on Active Mobility** took place. It was organized by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology together with the French Ministry of Ecological Transition. The members of the partnership decided to develop the Pan-European Master Plan for Walking.
- On 25 January 2022, WHO ECEH organized a virtual “Question and Answer” session to support a **country data consultation on water, sanitation and hygiene for Sustainable Development Goal 6 reporting**. The meeting was attended by representatives from Croatia, Georgia, Norway, Russian Federation and Turkmenistan, and staff from the [WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene](#).
- On 2–3 February 2022, WHO ECEH together with UNECE, organized the **27th meeting of the Bureau of the Protocol on Water and Health** in Geneva. The meeting focused on the preparations for the 6th session of the Meeting of the Parties (Geneva, 16–18 November 2022) and on discussing the draft programme of work for 2023–2025, including priority areas, activities and financial implications.
- On 16 February 2022, WHO ECEH launched the **[fact sheet series on environmental health inequalities in Europe](#)**, focusing on inequalities related to housing conditions and WASH (see Publications). The virtual event, with 148 participants, marked the start of a series of fact sheets, prepared annually by the WHO Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health Inequalities at the University of Bremen, Germany.
- On 17 February 2022, WHO ECEH organized an online **[consultation on the implementation of health impact assessment \(HIA\) and health in environmental assessment](#)**, at which it launched the report “[Learning from practice: case studies of health in strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment across the WHO European Region](#)” (see Publications) and presented the preliminary results of an online survey on HIA implementation. Meeting participants also contributed to the discussion on strengthening the practice of HIA and health coverage in environmental assessments.
- On 1 March 2022, members of THE PEP Bureau gathered at its **[39th meeting](#)**. Participants discussed the outcomes of the **[5th High-level Meeting](#)** (17–18 May 2021) and the implementation of the **[Vienna Declaration](#)**, including a comprehensive strategy on transport, health and the environment; a proposal for a possible legal instrument; THE PEP communication strategy; the workplan for 2021–2025; and THE PEP Partnerships.



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- On 21 March 2022, the [webinar on “Urban nature, green spaces and health”](#), co-organized by the Union for the Mediterranean and WHO/Europe, provided an opportunity for participants interested in green spaces and urban nature to take stock of the latest evidence and good practice related to green spaces on human health, including mental health. For more information, please see the work that WHO has already done on these matters, which resulted in 2 recent publications: an [overview report on the relevance of nature for health and well-being](#), and a [report on the mental health implications of green and blue spaces](#).
- On 21 March 2022, the world celebrated **World Water Day**, which aimed to make groundwater more visible. For WHO, that means highlighting groundwater’s importance for people’s health. On this day, WHO published a feature story “[Groundwater, invisible but vital to health](#)”, and the [United Nations World Water Development Report 2022 “Groundwater – making the invisible visible”](#) was launched.
- On 23 March 2022, WHO ECEH organized the **5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Coordination Group (CG) for deriving novel disability weights for selected health outcomes considered in assessments of health impacts of environmental noise**. The objective of this meeting was to obtain and discuss the CG’s feedback on different disease models related to environmental noise as well as on the list of health state descriptions to be used in the disability weight study.
- On 31 March 2022, WHO ECEH organized the initial meeting for updating the “**Health Risks of Air Pollution in Europe (HRAPIE) project**: recommendations for concentration—response functions for cost—benefit analysis”. This meeting involved experts in environmental epidemiology, health impact assessment and health economics from across the European Region, and had as a main objective to agree on the scope of the update.



## 6. LATEST PUBLICATIONS

### Fact sheet series on environmental health inequalities in Europe (also available in Russian)

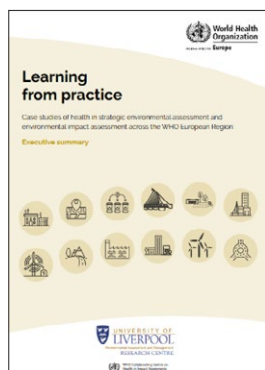


The [fact sheet series](#) continues WHO/Europe's work on monitoring of environmental health inequalities, which included the publication of 2 assessment reports on this issue (in 2012 and 2019), and aims to regularly update environmental inequality data in topic-specific and easily accessible fact sheet formats. The fact sheets aim to cover inequalities related to 5

themes: housing conditions; urban environments and transport; basic services (such as drinking water, sanitation and energy); injuries; and work settings.

...and did you know that in late 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council passed a resolution recognizing access to a healthy and sustainable environment as a universal right? For more information [click here](#).

### Case studies of health in strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment



The [report](#) focuses on the way that human health is considered in environmental assessment reports across all the Member States of the WHO European Region. It investigates how human health is interpreted and

covered in strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment. It presents a set of good practices that document the benefits of adopting a “broad” definition of health in these assessments to reach better-informed decisions and to improve the identification of health impacts and opportunities to prevent, mitigate and manage them.

### European Health Report 2021



The aims of the [European Health Report 2021](#) are to provide insight into Regional progress towards the health-related Sustainable Development Goals and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on population health, thereby focusing on health

inequalities and how the pandemic is affecting these. In addition, the report describes how WHO/Europe, through implementation of the European Programme of Work 2020–2025, aims to support Member States in tackling the major challenges in the Region and building back better after the pandemic.

For the report's highlights, factsheets, supplement and video click [here](#).



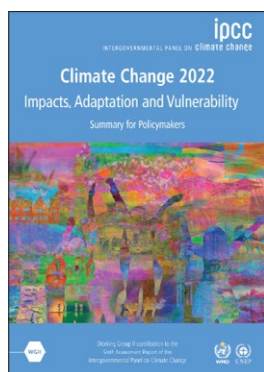


## Repository on urban health



WHO's new [repository on urban health](#) gives access to a broad range of WHO-generated resources to enhance local action for health.

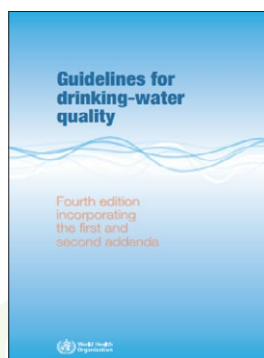
## Climate change: impacts, adaptation and vulnerability



The [Sixth Assessment Report](#) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (contribution of Working Group II) assesses the impacts of climate change, looking at ecosystems, biodiversity and human

communities at global and regional levels. It also reviews vulnerabilities and the capacities and limits of the natural world and human societies to adapt to climate change. Chapter 7 “Health, wellbeing and the changing structure of communities” of the report, provides a global assessment of current climate change impacts and projected risks to health and well-being, as well as adaptation solutions and limits.

## Guidelines for drinking-water quality



The updated “[Guidelines for drinking-water quality](#)” ([fourth edition incorporating the first and second addenda](#)) provide an authoritative basis for the setting of national regulations and standards for water safety in support of public health. The

guidelines are accompanied by a series of supporting publications. These include internationally peer-reviewed risk assessments for [specific chemicals](#), and other publications providing the scientific basis for the recommendations in the Guidelines and providing guidance on good practice in their implementation. The full list of WHO drinking-water publications can be accessed [here](#).



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## Water and sanitation data portals

### GLAAS data portal

The new interactive GLAAS data portal is now online – your one-stop repository for data on the WASH enabling environment. The data portal allows users to display [visualizations](#) of GLAAS indicators, download [GLAAS data](#), and see [key findings](#) in governance, monitoring, human resources, finance, equity and external aid. Data from the past 3 GLAAS cycles are available and allow for trend analysis. Watch out over the coming months for additional data on the portal, including financial data from [WASH accounts](#), as well as enhanced country highlights. The GLAAS data portal can be accessed at <https://glaas.who.int>

### WHO/UNICEF Country Progress Tracker on WASH in health-care facilities

The country tracker provides an overview of which countries are taking action on the practical steps to improve universal access to quality WASH services, and importantly highlights where further efforts are needed. The aim is to track global progress against the [2019 World Health Assembly Resolution on WASH in health-care facilities](#). All countries are invited to submit progress on 5 of the [8 practical steps](#). These steps inform the country progress tracker. To submit a country progress update to be included in the tracker, please use [this form](#) (Microsoft Forms). The country progress tracker can be accessed [here](#).

## Child and adolescent participation in policy development



WHO/Europe urges governments to include young people in decisions about their health and environment. Check out a

new [guide](#) which calls on governments and policy-makers to listen to and understand the perspectives, experiences and needs of young people when making policies or decisions affecting their health.

### Check out 2021 materials that are now available in Russian language:

- [Green and blue spaces and mental health: new evidence and perspectives for action](#)
- [Methods for sampling and analysis of chemical pollutants in indoor air: supplementary publication to the screening tool for assessment of health risks from combined exposure to multiple chemicals in indoor air](#)
- [Screening questionnaire for selection of sampling sites for assessment of risks from combined exposure to multiple chemicals in indoor air](#)
- [Chemical pollution of indoor air and its risk for children's health: educational course](#)
- [Mercury and human health: educational course](#)
- [WHO global air quality guidelines: particulate matter \(PM2.5 and PM10\), ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide: executive summary](#)
- [Developing drinking-water quality regulations and standards](#)
- [Environmental health inequalities fact sheet series](#)
- [Protecting health through urban redevelopment of contaminated sites: planning brief](#)



## 7. EHP CORNER

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On 24 February 2022, WHO ECEH and the WHO European Healthy Cities Network Working Group on Environment and Health organized the **third meeting of the Working Group on Collaboration of Local and Subnational Authorities (CoLSA)**, a body established by the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF) to advance implementation of the Ostrava Declaration. CoLSA working group members and partners from international networks discussed developments on relevant partnerships and progress in the implementation of the CoLSA programme of work.
  - To promote and facilitate a wider active engagement of Member States in the **Bonn Dialogues on Environment and Health** that will take place in 2022 and 2023, the EHP secretariat welcomes expressions of interest to act as virtual hosts, and/or contribute to the Dialogues by making available keynote speakers and/or panellists.
- Please feel free to contact the EHP Secretariat at [euceh@who.int](mailto:euceh@who.int) if you have any questions or wish to receive additional information.
- To accelerate the preparations for the 7th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, which takes place in Budapest in 2023, the **EHTF Bureau is going to gather at its 9th meeting on 9 May 2022**. The main objectives of the meeting are to follow up on the decisions of the 11th EHTF meeting (9–10 December 2021), including the discussion on different aspects related to the ministerial conference preparatory process (overall concept of the conference, its structure and outcomes, and the roadmap towards the conference). As in the previous meetings, this Bureau meeting will be conducted in an extended format, therefore it will be open for participation to all members of the EHTF.



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## 8. NEWS FROM EHP STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

### Fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

Hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme, the first part of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) was held virtually on 22 and 23 February 2021, with a revised and streamlined agenda that focused on urgent and procedural decisions. The second part of the session took place in Nairobi on 28 February–2 March 2022.

The overall theme for UNEA-5 was “[Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals](#)”, highlighting the pivotal role that nature plays in our lives and in social, economic and environmental sustainable development.

UNEA-5 was an opportunity for Member States to share best practices for sustainability. It aimed to create momentum for governments to

build on and catalyse the impact of multilateral environmental efforts to protect and restore the natural world on which our economies and societies depend.

The UNEP has adopted a [resolution linking animal welfare to sustainability](#) for the first time. The move is seen as historic and, potentially, a catalyst for widespread governmental action to protect animals and, by proxy, the environment.

To explore more UNEA outcomes, including the ministerial declaration, please click [here](#).

Immediately after UNEA-5 the Assembly convened a Special Session on 3–4 March 2022, devoted to the commemoration of the [50th anniversary of the creation of the UNEP in 1972](#) (UNEP@50).

### Managing air quality in Europe

Air quality remains a persistent problem in Europe, harming health and ecosystems. The [briefing on air quality](#) produced by the European Environment Agency (EEA) reviews the status of countries' air quality plans, put in place for situations where air pollution limits are exceeded. It also identifies the sources

behind such exceedances. The assessment covers 21 EU Member States, as well as Norway and the United Kingdom. The European-level assessment is complemented by case studies providing examples of measures that have led to improvements in air quality in 7 European cities or regions.



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## Social inequalities in access to urban green and blue spaces across Europe

Parks, urban forests, tree-lined streets and riverbanks support urban well-being by providing space for rest, relaxation and exercise, and by keeping temperatures down. However, not everyone across Europe enjoys equal access to green space in cities. This EEA [briefing](#) reviews the evidence of socioeconomic and

demographic inequalities in access to the health benefits derived from urban green and blue spaces across Europe. It showcases examples of green spaces that were designed to meet the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups.

## Final version of the HERA EU Research Agenda now available

The [final version of the EU Research Agenda](#) developed by the Health Environment Research Agenda for Europe (HERA) project consortium is a result of extensive reviews of current knowledge, policies and activities in the environment, health and climate change

nexus in the EU. The final version of the EU Research Agenda identifies 6 major research goals in the environment, climate and health fields to be addressed, and numerous specific recommendations for research topics.

## Addressing climate change impacts on health through national policies

On 16 March 2022, the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, the Directorate-General for Climate Action and the EEA jointly organized a webinar on “[Addressing climate change impacts on health through national policies](#)”. The webinar marked the first anniversary

of the launch of the [European Climate and Health Observatory](#) under the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, and presented examples of integration of health and climate into national governance structures, policy and action from Finland, France and Germany.





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## 9. UPCOMING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

Technical consultation on COP26 Health Programme commitments by countries in the WHO European Region (virtual, 3 May 2022).

World Hand Hygiene Day 2022: “Unite for safety – clean your hands!” (5 May 2022). For more information click [here](#).

9th meeting of the EHTF Bureau (virtual, 9 May 2022).

[Special session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy](#) (Geneva, 9–12 May 2022).

25th meeting of the Joint Convention/WHO Task Force on Health Aspects of Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (virtual, 10–11 May 2022).

[28th meeting of the Bureau of the Protocol on Water and Health](#) (Geneva, 17–18 May 2022).

[13th meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health](#) (Geneva, 19–20 May 2022).

4th meeting of the Working Group on Collaboration of Local and Subnational Authorities (virtual, 25 May 2022).

[Stockholm +50 meeting](#) (Stockholm, 2–3 June 2022).

Bonn Dialogue on green, healthy and sustainable transport and mobility (virtual, 3 June 2022).

6th session of the Meeting of the Parties of the Protocol on Water and Health (Geneva, 16–18 November 2022).



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## Call for case studies and national projects on valuing urban green and blue spaces

The WHO ECEH is working on a report on the economic value of urban blue and green spaces for health. The report aims to present and describe various economic methodologies commonly used to value the contribution of green and blue spaces to health and well-being. These might include economic approaches to valuing nature (such as cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis), disability adjusted life-year (DALY) quantifications or other methods).

To demonstrate these practices, the report will include various case studies of projects that have assessed the value of green and blue spaces for health, providing some examples of the economic approaches taken and the resulting findings. If you are interested in submitting a case study based on work done in your country on the value of nature for health, please send a short description of the respective project (up to 250 words and related references) to Matthias Braubach at [braubachm@who.int](mailto:braubachm@who.int). Please let us know as well if you are aware of national projects on valuing green and blue spaces, by sending relevant reports and publications (we will then approach the respective project coordinators). The deadline for submission of projects and proposals is **1 June 2022**.



## 10. CONTACT US

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