



**EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT  
AND HEALTH PROCESS**



World Health  
Organization  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR  
**Europe**



**UNECE**

**UN**  
environment  
programme

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# EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH PROCESS NEWSLETTER

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**October–December 2021**

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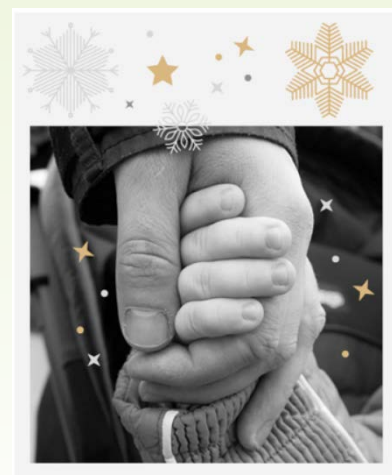
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## 1. EDITORIAL

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

It offers updates on preparations and developments related to implementation of the [Ostrava Declaration](#), and calls 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.

Enjoy the read and we wish you a happy and healthy 2022.



Best regards,  
EHP Secretariat

## 2. TOP STORIES

### WHO Bonn School on Environment and Health: Leading transformation in environment and health

**9 November–2 December 2021**

November saw the second edition of the [Bonn School on Environment and Health](#), focused on creating transformative public health leadership in the WHO European Region and at country level. The Bonn School also addressed technical gaps and raised awareness on environment and health challenges in countries, building capacity at the national level to strive for safer and healthier communities.

Organized by the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (WHO ECEH), the

Bonn School gathered online more than 100 participants from 40 countries. Over the 4 weeks, participants were immersed in state-of-the-art science and knowledge, in areas such as: air quality, climate change, green recovery, redevelopment of contaminated sites, and defining the environment and health research agenda. The Bonn School has also established a cross-sectoral collaboration and exchange network to build a community of practice for environment and health professionals across the Region.



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## Health urgency for climate action at COP26: WHO ECEH led event

### Glasgow, 11 November 2021

WHO/Europe hosted a side event within the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) Health Pavilion, “[Act now! Policies and tools for health-centric climate action](#)”, to promote policies that are good for both the climate and for health. In particular, high-level panellists from a range of organizations spoke of the need for a change in the policy environment

and presented existing tools and approaches that support countries, regions and cities to take health-focused actions, such as reducing air pollution and promoting active mobility.

- [Video recording of the event](#)
- [Web story](#)
- [Statement of the WHO Regional Director for Europe](#)

## Universal right to a healthy environment

The United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a [resolution](#) on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, the first formal recognition of this right at the global level.

Join us in celebrating this decision, which is the culmination of over 40 years of efforts to recognize the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.



### 3. COUNTRY ACTIVITIES

- On 20 October 2021, WHO ECEH in cooperation with the Ministry of Health of **Kazakhstan**, organized a training for national experts within the framework of the project “Strengthening of national capacities for assessment of chemicals risks to guide risk reduction decision”. The training informed participants on assessment of risks for children from combined exposure to multiple chemicals in indoor air in public settings. The training also aimed at strengthening competencies in applying risk assessment methodologies at national level.
- During [International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week](#) (24–30 October 2021), WHO ECEH focused on supporting the organization of events held in **Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Turkmenistan and Ukraine**. The aims of awareness raising events were to draw attention to the health impacts of lead exposure, highlight efforts by countries and partners to prevent childhood lead exposure, and accelerate efforts to phase out the use of lead in paint. The meetings made clear that even though there is widespread recognition of the harmful effects of lead and many countries have taken action, exposure to lead, particularly in childhood, remains of key concern to health-care providers and public health officials worldwide.
- WHO ECEH organized 2 training webinars (on 27 October and 3 November 2021) to support implementation of the WHO-led, [UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-water \(GLAAS\) 2021–2022](#) reporting cycle – in support of monitoring progress with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6. Representatives from **Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Italy, Hungary, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine** and **Uzbekistan** participated in the sessions, which addressed the main elements, benefits and processes of the GLAAS 2021–2022 country survey and country-specific plans for its implementation.
- On 23–30 November 2021, WHO ECEH contributed to the virtual country mission of the WHO-Belgium Public Health Review, carried out upon request of the Belgian Federal Public Health Service. The country review investigates noncommunicable disease risk factors, their determinants and related inequalities in **Belgium**, and aims to provide recommendations from WHO to support formulating health targets and strategies for the upcoming national health plans. The final country mission in December provided a draft set of WHO conclusions and key messages, including environment and health aspects.



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## 4. ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND COVID-19

### The One Health definition

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WHO [welcomed the newly formed operational definition of One Health](#) from their advisory panel, the [One Health High-Level Expert Panel](#), whose members represent a broad range of disciplines in science and policy-related sectors relevant to One Health from around the world.

The 4 organizations are working together to mainstream One Health, so that they are better prepared to prevent, predict, detect and

respond to global health threats and promote sustainable development.

With representatives of concerned parties in Europe and central Asia, the [first dialogue meeting of the One Health partner platform](#) took place on 22 November in Budapest, Hungary, with the aim of addressing health threats to animals, humans, plants and the environment in a more effective and coordinated manner. The dialogue was initiated by the FAO, OIE, UNEP and WHO during [World Antimicrobial Awareness Week](#) (18–24 November 2021).

One Health is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent. The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food; taking action on climate change; and contributing to sustainable development. These interconnections and vulnerabilities were once more demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic.



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## Links between COVID-19 and the SDGs, reinforcing the need for bold action in the recovery process

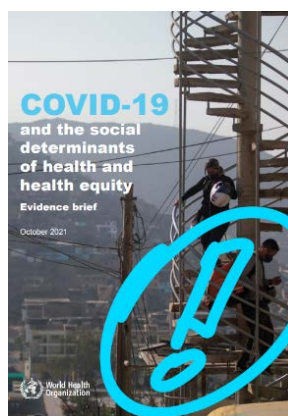
The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us of the need to catalyse positive change to meet the SDGs and fulfil the environment and health agenda.

In a [new paper](#) published in The Lancet Planetary Health, a group of WHO and independent researchers used WHO/Europe's **E4As approach – “engage to assess, align, accelerate and account”** – to show how policy-makers can ensure that recovery from COVID-19 leads to healthier and more sustainable societies.



## COVID-19 and its impacts on health and health equity

WHO has published an [evidence brief](#) to summarize the recent knowledge on the impacts of COVID-19 on health equity. The brief shows that across the world, COVID-19 infection and related hospitalization and mortality have been grossly unequal between population groups – driven by inequalities in the social determinants of health.







## 5. RECENT EVENTS



Who cares about toilets in health-care facilities?

On 19 November 2021, on **World Toilet Day**, WHO ECEH reminded us that half the world's population lives without a “safely managed sanitation service” – a toilet, not shared with other households, which either treats or disposes of human waste on-site, stores it safely to be emptied and treated off-site, or connects to a functioning sewer. Take a look at a new inspiring video “[Who cares about toilets?](#)” where Enisa takes you on a journey through her work on toilets in health facilities in Montenegro – work that WHO ECEH and the WHO Country Office in Montenegro have been supporting.

- The **Expert consultation on on-site sanitation in the pan-European region** was held on 5–7 October 2021. While on-site systems can be managed just as safely as centralized systems, they frequently pose a particular challenge because they are often built and operated by individuals. Typical challenges include the lack of regulatory mechanisms for safe management, in-situ treatment and/or disposal of faecal sludge, and limited access to qualified desludging services and/or professional support and advice. The consultation provided a better understanding of the situation of on-site sanitation in the pan-European region and increased commitments to its improvement through the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health and the [recommendations of the WHO Guidelines on sanitation and health](#).
- WHO ECEH organized the **3rd and 4th expert group meetings** (on 13 October and 17 November 2021) of **Sharing key air pollution and health information in Europe**, a project cofunded by the European Commission. The project aims to build on WHO evaluations of the knowledge base and to provide advice on personal interventions and related public health aspects of air pollution in Europe, taking also into account the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- On 18–20 October 2021, the **7th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters** (Aarhus Convention) took place in Geneva combining on-site and remote participation. Marking the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Aarhus Convention, the events provided a platform for Parties, signatories, international organizations, civil society and other stakeholders to discuss achievements and challenges in promoting environmental democracy, digital transformation and sustainable development.
- On 25–28 October 2021, at the **26th Regions for Health Network (RHN) annual meeting**, 80 speakers from 15 countries and 26 regions, along with numerous international partners, discussed key future priorities, COVID-19, and climate change and the environment. Hosted by the Government of Moscow, the meeting took place online and marked the first time that RHN had met since the endorsement of the [European Programme of Work 2020–2025](#) – “[United Action for Better Health in Europe](#)”.



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- On 27–28 October 2021, members of the **Steering Committee of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme** (THE PEP) met at its [19th session](#). 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 THE PEP communication strategy; the workplan for 2021–2025; and THE PEP Partnerships. On 13–14 January 2022, THE PEP will mark its 20th anniversary, the event will be held within the framework of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Stay tuned for events related to this occasion.
- The [12th meeting of the Task Force on Target Setting and Reporting](#) took place on 17 November 2021 in Geneva (hybrid format). The Task Force reviewed progress by Parties to the [Protocol on Water and Health](#) and other states in setting, revising and implementing their targets in accordance with Article 6 of the Protocol; launched the 5th reporting cycle under the Protocol (November 2021–April 2022); and discussed the future programme of work of the Protocol for 2023–2025 in the context of the regional priorities in the area of water, sanitation, hygiene and health.
- On 18–19 November 2021, WHO ECEH and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) organized the [26th meeting of the Bureau of the Protocol on Water and Health](#). The meeting kicked off the preparations for the 6th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health (scheduled for 16–18 November 2022) and its programme of work for 2023–2025.
- In 2021, the [World Day of Remembrance](#) for road traffic victims (21 November) coincided with the signing of a new United Nations General Assembly Resolution – Decade of Action for Road Safety, where 193 countries committed to reduce deaths and injuries on our roads by 50% by 2030. This commitment contributes to the reduction of the environmental burden of disease through injury prevention. Launched in October, the [Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030](#) provides tools and blueprints for how such an ambitious objective becomes realistic and achievable.
- On 30 November–2 December 2021, WHO ECEH organized the **Expert meeting on prevention and control of legionellosis in the pan-European region** in cooperation with UNECE, and the governments of Belarus, Hungary and Norway. The meeting addressed the burden of legionellosis in the pan-European region and existing legal frameworks and surveillance system capacities, and identified enabling factors and available tools that support the establishment, implementation and maintenance of effective systems for the prevention and control of the disease. The expert meeting supported the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health.
- On 1–3 December 2021, WHO ECEH participated in the 10th meeting of the **Working Group of the UNECE Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment**. WHO ECEH representatives delivered a statement supporting the “Draft guidance on assessing health impacts in strategic environmental assessment” calling on the European Union and its Member States to come back to the table to finalize this important document. In addition, WHO ECEH representatives





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- delivered a presentation on “Assessing health impact to support sustainable infrastructure: the cases of waste and seaports” in a seminar on “Sustainable infrastructure”, in which the Working Group showcased the importance of health assessment.
- On 6 December 2021, WHO ECEH presented key messages from a project addressing the environmental and health aspects of redeveloping contaminated sites at the **virtual launch of the WHO planning brief “Protecting health through urban redevelopment of contaminated sites”** (see “Publications” section). The planning brief looked at how such urban renewal projects can be effectively coordinated by local authorities, drawing from data across the WHO European Region.
  - The **10th Global Conference on Health Promotion**, held on 13–15 December 2021, marked the start of a global movement on the concept of well-being in societies. Over 4500 participants of the Global Conference, who met virtually and in Geneva, Switzerland, agreed on a **Geneva Charter for Well-being**. It highlighted the need for global commitments to achieve equitable health and social outcomes now and for future generations, without destroying the health of our planet. Moving forward, countries must prioritize health as part of a larger ecosystem that encompasses environmental, social, economic and political factors. The Charter will drive policy-makers and world leaders to adopt this approach and commit to concrete action.



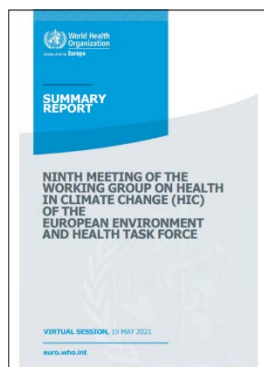
## 6. LATEST PUBLICATIONS

### Effective risk communication for environment and health



This [report](#) provides a strategic overview of effective risk communication for environment and health globally, with a focus on Europe. An overview is provided of the latest trends, theories and concepts of risk communication for environment and health, and key challenges and good practices are identified. The report's findings are complemented by 3 cases studies: promoting indoor air quality in schools in Hungary; water contamination in the Veneto region, Italy; and heat health action in Styria, Austria.

### Climate change and health



This [report](#) summarizes the conclusions of the 9th meeting of the Working Group on Health in Climate Change (HIC) of the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF), which took place on 19 May 2021. The HIC meeting was held in conjunction with a civil society event arranged by the WHO Civil Society Working Group to Advance Action on Climate Change and Health, which took place on the following day. Together, both meetings were organized to facilitate dialogue and cooperation among Member States of the WHO European Region and civil society stakeholders on addressing the health challenges posed by climate change. The HIC meeting also provided updates on global and European Region policy developments on climate change and health, and articulated key messages in preparation for regional and global meetings on climate change.

### Mercury and human health



This [educational course](#) was developed to support the training of public health and health-care professionals, medical and other allied students and professionals, and decision-makers in the health and environmental sectors. It compiles information on human exposure to different types of mercury and their health effects, the use of mercury in the health sector, and the policy and technical documents guiding preventive actions at a national level.



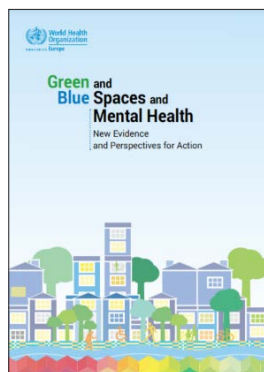
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## Urban redevelopment of contaminated sites



This [planning brief](#) summarizes the lessons learned across the WHO European Region on the redevelopment of contaminated sites as a part of urban planning and renewal. Specifically, it aims to provide information on the health and environmental impacts to be considered during site redevelopment projects, and to identify good practice and relevant local experiences to support effective, healthy and sustainable redevelopment of contaminated sites. The planning brief is available in English and Russian, and Czech, French and German versions will follow.

## Green and blue spaces and mental health



WHO ECEH has been closely following the research on green and blue spaces because of their importance in addressing human and ecosystem health in urban planning, especially in the context of climate change. This [report](#) summarizes the key findings of two systematic reviews on the types and characteristics of green and blue spaces, in relation to a broad set of mental health aspects. It briefly looks at the relevant WHO tools and strategies, and reflects on future needs for research and action.

## Water, sanitation and hygiene in schools

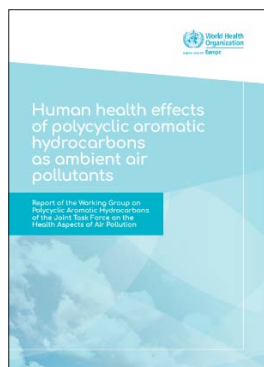


This [report](#) summarizes key messages from the Subregional workshop on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools held on 6–8 July 2021, jointly hosted by WHO ECEH and the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Hygiene of the Ministry of Health of Belarus. Participants included over 30 health and education experts and decision-makers from Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine. The purpose of the workshop was to provide an up-to-date overview of WASH-relevant health and education considerations for schools. It also provided a forum to discuss regional priorities for improvements at the national and local levels, and for the safe reopening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.



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## Human health effects of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons as ambient air pollutants



This [report](#) provides a resource for those interested in the current state of the scientific discussion on polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) as ambient air pollutants, as well as knowledge gaps and ideas for future directions of work. It includes selected studies on human health effects, emissions and sources, exposure, and current national work on PAHs in the countries of the Working Group on Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons of the Joint Task Force on the Health Aspects of Air Pollution.

## Interesting pick for this winter's reading

### Too much for one planet: WHO study proposes new tools to make our diets healthy and environmentally friendly

This new WHO study, a [systematic review on sustainable food profiling models to inform the development of food labels that account for nutrition and the environment](#), published in The Lancet Planetary Health, proposes a procedure for labelling foods according to their environmental and nutritional impact.



## 7. EHP CORNER



WHO ECEH, under the auspices of the European Environment and Health Process (EHP), held the first and second high-level

### [Bonn Dialogues on Environment and Health.](#)

The Bonn Dialogues are meant to provide the EHTF with evidence and reflection points to support the identification of priorities and the formulation of possible commitments to be put forward by the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region at the 7th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, which will take place in Budapest in 2023.

- The **8th meeting of the EHTF Bureau** was held on 14 October 2021 and brought together over 30 participants from more than 20 Member States of the European Region. The main objective of the 8th meeting was to advance preparations for the 11th EHTF meeting, including the implementation of the EHP Roadmap. The EHP Secretariat invited the EHTF to express their interest in acting as the virtual host to any of the Bonn Dialogues, scheduled in 2021–2023 and/or leading any of its thematic areas.
- On 9–10 December 2021, WHO ECEH organized the **11th meeting of the EHTF**. The meeting was attended by around 110 participants from more than 30 Member States, and many international stakeholders and partners. Participants exchanged views on the possible priorities and outcomes for the 7th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. The EHP Secretariat wishes to express their sincere gratitude to the **Hungarian government** for announcing the decision to host the next Ministerial Conference. We look forward to convening in Budapest in 2023.
- Also, the EHTF discussed and provided further input to its proposed programme of work for 2022–2023 and elected the new Bureau. The composition of the Bureau is available on the WHO/Europe website [here](#).
- WHO ECEH outlined the collective progress of Member States in implementing the EHP, as well as the efforts made by WHO/Europe to support this implementation at the **27th session of the Committee on Environmental Policy**, which took place on 3–5 November 2021.

**1** This [first Dialogue](#) held on 14 October 2021 focused on air quality and health, following the recent publication of the [WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines](#), and provided new impetus to the discussion on how to plan and implement policies in the Region to efficiently tackle the challenge of air pollution.

**2** On 8 December 2021, the [second Bonn Dialogue](#) on nature, biodiversity and health was attended virtually by some 190 participants. It offered participants an opportunity to meet experts to discuss blue and green space tools ([GreenUr: the Green Urban spaces and health tool](#) and "[BlueHealth – Decision Support Tool](#)") and related mental health aspects in break out rooms.





## 8. NEWS FROM EHP STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

### A continuously growing interest in transboundary water cooperation and the Water Convention

The [9th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention](#) was organized by UNECE in cooperation with the Government of Estonia. It was a milestone for reviewing and accelerating progress towards achieving SDG target 6.5, and discussing challenges and good practices related to transboundary water cooperation and the role of the Convention.

More than 30 high-level participants (ministers, heads of organizations and others) confirmed that transboundary water cooperation was crucial for peace and preventing conflict and often leads to benefits beyond water.

### The Emissions Gap Report 2021: The Heat Is On

The [Emissions Gap Report 2021: The Heat Is On](#), developed by the UNEP in collaboration with the UNEP DTU Partnership (Technical University of Denmark), is the 12th edition in an annual series that provides an overview of the difference between where greenhouse emissions are predicted to be in 2030 and where they should be to avert the worst impacts of climate change.

The Emissions Gap Report shows that new national climate pledges combined with other mitigation measures put the world on track for a global temperature rise of 2.7 °C by the end of the century.

The Adaptation Gap Report 2021: The gathering storm – Adapting to climate change in a post-pandemic world

UNEP in collaboration with the UNEP DTU Partnership also developed the 6th edition of the [Adaptation Gap Report 2021: The gathering storm](#), which looks at how the world is doing in adapting to climate change impacts. Estimated adaptation costs in developing countries are 5 to 10 times greater than current public adaptation finance flows, and the adaptation finance gap is widening. Less than a third of 66 countries studied had explicitly funded COVID-19 recovery measures that address climate risks, up to June 2021.

Climate change adaptation is increasingly being embedded in policy and planning. Overall, though, the report finds that further ambition is needed to progress in national-level adaptation planning, finance and implementation worldwide.



## 9. UPCOMING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

Launch of **WHO publication on global analysis of health-care waste in the context of COVID-19: status, impacts and recommendations** (virtual, 1 February 2022, 13:00–14:00 Central European Time (CET)). [Register here](#).

27th meeting of the **Bureau of the Protocol on Water and Health** (Geneva, 2–3 February 2022).

Launch of **WHO fact sheet series on environmental health inequalities** (virtual, 16 February 2022, 11.00–12.30 CET). The event will be held in English with Russian interpretation. [Register here](#).

Online consultation on the **Implementation of Health Impact Assessment and Health in Environmental Assessment** (virtual, 17 February 2022, 11:00–13:00 CET). [Register here](#).

13th meeting of the **Working Group on Water and Health** (Geneva, 17–18 May 2022).

28th meeting of the **Bureau of the Protocol on Water and Health** (Geneva, 19–20 May 2022).

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



### News for film makers

Unleash your creativity and apply for the #HealthForAll Film Festival. Your #Film4Health can make a difference, influence health and catalyse change. Short film submissions are open until **30 January 2022**. This is your opportunity, [apply here](#).



## 10. CONTACT US

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