

# €970M for Health Research in 2025, €0 for Climate Change and Health— Let's Close This Critical Gap

## SPHERA Statement on EU Research Funding for Climate Change and Health

On the basis of information about the **upcoming Horizon Europe 2025 call for proposals**, the European Commission has proposed a budget of around **€970 million** for health research—yet, alarmingly, no funds are allocated to research on the effects of climate change on health. This needs to change.

The **SPHERA consortium**, gathering Europe's leading institutions in environmental, climate, and health research, calls for an urgent re-evaluation of this **funding gap**. We urge the inclusion of dedicated research topics focused on the **health impacts of climate change**, aligning with the priorities set out in the 2020 HERA report.

The EU cannot afford to delay—**funding for climate and health nexus research is critical for safeguarding public health** and ensuring the resilience of our societies. Health equity must be at the heart of our climate solutions, especially for communities, countries and regions that urgently need it (**Lancet Countdown report, 2024**). Health shall be the main argument for policy makers to act on climate (**COP 29 Special report on climate and health**). Recent devastating events such as the floods in Valencia, Spain, in Italy, in Germany, in Poland and Central Europe, as well as the rising heat-related mortality in Europe, underscore the urgent need to address the intersection of climate change and human health. In 2022 and 2023 alone, summer heat-related mortality led to an estimated 70,000 and 47,000 deaths, respectively. **Half of these deaths** are attributable to anthropogenic climate change, with **new record-breaking temperatures** occurring in 2024, both in Europe and globally. Recently also **a new report by the World Weather Attribution group and the Imperial College London** analysed the ten deadliest events since the devastating heatwave of 2003 and quantifies that solely together, these events caused more than 570,000 deaths. Furthermore recent results from the large **EXHAUSTION project** pointed out at synergistic health effects of air pollution and heat on cardiorespiratory health across Europe, with more people at risk of dying from these diseases on the days with a mix of high temperature and high air pollution. Longer pollen season and introduction of new pollen species due to global warming pose additional challenges to allergic and asthmatic patients. Sharp increases in wildfires and related air pollution episodes pose additional burden that demands more research into health impacts and adaptation strategies. These tragic statistics and alarming **alarming projections for the future**—with the Mediterranean region warming faster than the global average—highlight why research on the health impacts of climate change must become a central priority for the EU.

The European Union, along with the World Health Assembly and global authorities, has recognized the grave risks climate change poses to human health. COP28 emphasized this issue, urging prompt action on health **adaptation and mitigation strategies**. **Evaluating climate-related risks** and promoting effective health measures are **critical research areas for European science**, with direct implications for policy and societal well-being.

While DG Research has demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing climate-health intersections in the past, the current draft of Horizon Europe 2025, disappointingly, omits any specific focus on climate change and health. This omission contradicts both the EU's stated priorities and the recommendations on research for policy development from the HERA project that was funded by DG Research & Innovation/Horizon 2020 (Grant agreement ID: 825417) and which was coordinated by the SPHERA centres.

Our institutions stand ready to support the EU in developing and delivering the **evidence-based solutions needed to protect public health and build a resilient Europe** in the face of climate change.

Let's not wait for the next crisis to act.

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