



Brussels, 25 June 2024

To: Members of the European Council

Subject: EU strategic agenda: Tackling pollution for healthy people, and a strong and secure Europe

Dear Member of the European Council,

As you are set to adopt the EU's Strategic Agenda 2024-2029 later this week, the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), an alliance of over 80 member organisations working for better health through a healthier environment, urges you to include measures to tackle pollution for people's health in your blueprint for the next five years of [EU policymaking](#). We understand that the latest draft now considers measures on climate change as well as nature protection but is silent on reducing pollution and the positive impacts on people's health.

Pollution, from a cocktail of substances in the air, food, water, and soil, can harm everyone, and is a particular risk for the most vulnerable. Pollution impacts adults' and children's health even at low levels and at all ages, leading to immense suffering for individuals and their families, as well as to high healthcare cost. Through decisive, swift EU policy measures this [burden of disease is largely preventable](#).

Pollution is a risk factor for all major chronic disease, which lead to high health cost: the ubiquitous exposure to harmful chemicals and pesticides is linked to numerous health impacts, including cancer, infertility, a weakened immune, hormonal system and reproductive system in adults, as well as birth defects and negative impacts on the cognitive and physical development of children. Air pollution leads to hundreds of thousands of premature deaths, hundreds of thousands of cases of heart and lung disease, and work days lost. New studies underline that air pollution worsens health impacts during heatwaves, increasing the number of deaths from people with respiratory and cardiovascular disease.

The 2023 WHO Budapest Declaration is signed by ministers and representatives responsible for health and the environment of member states in the European Region of the World Health Organization (WHO) and includes all EU member states. This public health declaration underlines the detrimental and costly effects of pollution throughout people's life course, and ministers commit to act.

HEAL calls on you to mention health clearly in the title of the priority on a *strong and secure Europe*, and to add measures to reduce pollution across the different sectors concerned.

We are not alone in our urgent call which is underpinned by a recent poll showing that more than three-quarters (78%) of Europeans agree that the environment has a direct effect on their health and want to see EU action.

Yours sincerely,



Genon K. Jensen
Executive Director
Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is the leading not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects human health in the European Union (EU) and beyond. HEAL works to shape laws and policies that promote planetary and human health and protect those most affected by pollution, and raise awareness on the benefits of environmental action for health.

HEAL's over 80 member organisations include international, European, national and local groups of health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, patients, citizens, women, youth, and environmental experts representing over 200 million people across the 53 countries of the WHO European Region.

As an alliance, HEAL brings independent and expert evidence from the health community to EU and global decision-making processes to inspire disease prevention and to promote a toxic-free, low-carbon, fair and healthy future.

HEAL's EU Transparency Register Number: 00723343929-96