

To: Members of the European Council

Brussels, 16 March 2026

Subject: Health for all: the next EU budget (MFF) as a driver for clean air for all investments

Dear Member of the European Council,

As you are negotiating the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the EU Healthy Air Coalition ([EUHAC](#)), a coalition of diverse constituencies of the health sector, urges you to ensure that the next EU budget will help the EU substantially advance towards clean air and the prevention of the major diseases caused by air pollution.

The EU Healthy Air Coalition calls on you to speed up on reducing and preventing air pollution emissions from all sources. To safeguard the Union's security, equitable prosperity and wellbeing, the sufficient and dedicated investment for the implementation of clean air legislation needs to be a top priority.

In addition, the phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies is overdue, especially from an energy security and sovereignty perspective. Based on the latest science, and our coalition's health expertise, we recommend a swift phase-out of direct and indirect EU funding for fossil fuels (coal, oil, gas) as well as biomass burning and the redirection of investments towards pollution reduction and prevention. A key lesson from the economic and social burden caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is the need to invest in preventing threats to health and the environment.

There's an urgency to act to protect health from air pollution, the top environmental risk to health in Europe, resulting in hundreds of thousands of premature deaths and hundreds of billions of euros of costs annually. Everyone is vulnerable to harm caused by air pollution. According to the European Environment Agency (EEA) [latest figures](#), the vast majority (94%) of the EU urban population remains exposed to PM2.5 concentrations above the World Health Organization (WHO) guideline level. The major driver for poor air quality in the EU is the [burning of fossil fuels](#).

The large body of evidence demonstrates that air pollution is a key cause for all major non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, stroke, diabetes, dementia, and lung cancer, as well as acute respiratory infections, with growing evidence on adverse impacts on mental and neurological health. You have the unique power to prevent these health impacts, and to protect those most vulnerable – pregnant women, children, the elderly, those with pre-existing health conditions or facing socio-economic health inequities. At the same time, climate change and air pollution are interlinked: [new studies](#) point to increased mortality rates for patients with cardiovascular and respiratory disease during heatwaves when air pollution is high.

Air pollution not only is a major burden for our health, but also for public finances. According to the Commission's Fourth Clean Air Outlook [published](#) in March last year, the health damages caused by air pollution are estimated at between EUR 290-950 billion per year by 2030 under the baseline scenario and burden already strained health care systems in EU member states. Moreover, all scenarios leading to cleaner air would increase EU GDP in 2030 compared to the baseline scenario.

Setting the next EU budget up to be a driver for clean air measures would recognise the clear global momentum for urgent clean air action and fossil fuel phase-out and confirm EU leadership. The [Declaration](#) of the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (July 2023) recognises the importance of planning and investing in health-promoting and equitable environments to achieve resilient and healthy communities. Last year, nearly [50 million people](#) from the health sector [called](#) for clean air action for better health ahead of the WHO 2nd Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health.

We thank you in advance for considering our call.

Sincerely,

Anne Stauffer, Deputy Director – *Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)*

On behalf of the EU Healthy Air Coalition (EUHAC) other founding members:

Dr Ole Johan Bakke, President – Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)

Dr. Wolfgang Fecke, Director – Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL)

Susanna Palkonen, Director – European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA)

Dimitris Kontopidis, Chair – European Lung Foundation (ELF)

Dr. Milka Sokolović, Director General – European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)

Prof. Barbara Hoffmann, Advocacy Council Chair – European Respiratory Society (ERS)

Xavier Brenez, Chief Executive Officer – Independent Health Insurance Funds (Mutualités Libres)