

EuroHealthNet Feedback on the European Climate Law

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EuroHealthNet is a not-for-profit partnership of organisations, agencies and statutory bodies working on public health, disease prevention, promoting health, and reducing inequalities. EuroHealthNet has long been committed to sustainable development in Europe and globally. We welcome the European Green Deal and proposed European Climate Law in principle as crucial steps towards ensuring a transition to a more sustainable future.

We particularly welcome the Commission's emphasis on the need for the transition to be "just and socially fair", and its acknowledgement of the impact of the climate crisis on wellbeing. **We would like to take this opportunity to highlight the strong links between the environment, health, and inequalities, and urge the Commission to take these links into account in all aspects of the proposed climate law, building environmental policy whilst looking through health and equity lenses.** Environmental determinants of health – such as clean air, green space and sustainable transport – have a critical impact on people's health, and transitioning to a more sustainable, cleaner environment, could thus have important long-lasting health benefits. In parallel, those who are less well-off suffer most from the negative impacts of the climate crisis and environmental degradation, and benefit least from measures taken to address them, contributing to widening health inequalities.

The recent Horizon 2020 INHERIT initiative, which EuroHealthNet coordinated, drew attention to the need to jointly consider opportunities for a "triple-win" between the environment, health and equity. The INHERIT Policy Brief attached to this feedback, "*Putting health equity at the heart of sustainable transitions*", presents some relevant recommendations for the proposed Climate Law. Specifically, EuroHealthNet recommends that the foreseen studies and assessments take into account inequalities and the distributional impacts of policies or interventions on people across socio-economic gradients.

Further INHERIT recommendations and tools applicable to the Climate Law and European Green Deal as a whole can be found in a policy toolkit, which sets out how policymakers can invest in measures that simultaneously protect and promote health, address growing inequities and improve environmental sustainability: <https://inherit.eu/policy-toolkit/>. The toolkit provides details on the INHERIT conceptual model, which we recommend environmental policymakers use as a tool for screening climate policies for their potential unintended health and wellbeing consequences. EuroHealthNet was pleased to note the Climate Law includes a reference to the need to work across sectors – the INHERIT toolkit provides further guidance on how to foster integrated governance and align policies to achieve the triple-win.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the perils of not addressing the grave challenges we face in relation to the environment, health and social inequities, and of not addressing these issues in integrated ways. The need to mitigate the economic damage resulting from the pandemic provides an opportunity to do so now, in more systematic ways, and to build an economy fit for the 21st century.

EuroHealthNet recognises that EU Institutions have limited competencies to ensure Member States' compliance with the law, but wonders if stronger measures could not be included that lie within the scope of their powers to hold EU Member States accountable. Measures that encourage and enable Member States to monitor implementation as well as effects on health and distributional effects, and benchmarking of Member States performance will in this respect be crucial.