FOR A SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM AND HEALTHIER EU CITIZENS

2024-2029

EUROPE'S HEALTHCARE SECTOR NEEDS YOU. IT NEEDS YOUR LEADERSHIP TO BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE AND ADDRESS THE HEALTH AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE TRIPLE PLANETARY CRISIS OF POLLUTION, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND BIODIVERSITY LOSS. AS A SECTOR THAT PROFOUNDLY AFFECTS EVERY INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY, GIVEN THE RIGHT INCENTIVES AND SUPPORT, HEALTHCARE CAN LEAD SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION AND CREATE PUBLIC VALUE BEYOND ITS OWN REALM.

As one of Europe's largest industries representing over 10% of GDP[1], the healthcare sector has a tremendous environmental, economic, and social footprint. It accounts for around 5% of EU net climate emissions[2]. Chemical and pharmaceutical pollution from its activities harms the health and fertility of EU citizens—something which is both dangerous and preventable. Crucially, this also represents a **missed opportunity.**

Imagine a healthcare system that creates value, both through its direct actions and through proactive environmental stewardship. A system that tackles the climate crisis by minimising its own carbon footprint, addresses pharmaceutical pollution and waste in its supply chain, and advances a circular economy with toxic-free and reusable medical products. A system that can be realised through **innovative and ambitious policy measures.**

This manifesto calls on EU policymakers to deliver on the Green Deal, and recognise the importance of a **Health Union**. It is a plea to provide the necessary regulatory frameworks to catalyse a transformative journey towards a more sustainable and resilient healthcare sector in Europe. We urge you to adopt our 10 policy priorities, which will empower the EU to enhance public and environmental health, reduce costs, and create a healthcare sector **fit for the future**.

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[1] Eurostat (2021). Last updated Jan 2024, data extracted in Nov 2023. Healthcare expenditure statistics by function, provider and financing scheme.
[2] Health Care Without Harm & Arup. 2019. Health care's climate footprint.

OUR 10 POLICY PRIORITIES

1 **Implement a One Health approach**, considering the interconnectedness of health security, food safety, animal welfare, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and environmental pollution in all policy areas.

2 **Demand legally binding and more ambitious climate targets** that incorporate the healthcare sector – specifically 65% emission reduction by 2030, at least a 78-82% emission reduction by 2035, and net-zero by 2040 – and draw a roadmap to reach these goals.

3 **Integrate health into climate action** at subnational, national, and global levels, in line with the Paris Agreement, ensuring climate mainstreaming in the EU budget, across all policy areas.

4 **Strengthen the climate resilience of healthcare systems** to the effects of climate change by expanding funding opportunities. Allocate more funds for climate action in healthcare, including research and infrastructure, through programmes such as EU4Health, LIFE, and Horizon Europe.

5 **Ensure a Chemical Industry Package that fulfils all the commitments of the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability**; deliver the REACH update and ensure grouped restrictions on hazardous chemicals. Accelerate the global phase-out of toxic chemicals and materials, supporting implementation with economic tools like Extended Producer Responsibility.

6 **Promote and enable circular economy practices in healthcare** and require all Member States to permit the reprocessing and further use of single-use devices. The current voluntary policy under the Medical Device Regulation is a missed opportunity to reduce financial costs and lower the healthcare sector's environmental impact.

7 **Build resilience and transparency into the healthcare supply chain.** Establish mandatory Green Public Procurement criteria, incorporating chemical, material, circularity, health, and social aspects, considering the entire product life cycle.

8 **Support the implementation of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2024 targets** on antibiotic resistance reduction. Join the MEP Interest Group on AMR to drive positive change in reducing the acceleration of antibiotic resistance.

9 **Enforce corporate due diligence obligations** and require pharmaceutical companies to report on the environmental impact of their products throughout their entire lifecycle. Reinforce the role of Environmental Risk Assessments to limit the negative impact of the production of medicines in the environment and public health.

10 **Protect the quality of water for generations to come** by committing to set 2033 as the compliance date to meet the new groundwater and surface water substance thresholds, to be monitored by Member States.

WE ENVISION A EUROPE WHERE HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS PROMOTE HEALING AND WELL-BEING WITHOUT HARMING PEOPLE OR THE PLANET.

A European healthcare sector that is climate-friendly, toxic-free and circular, and does not contribute to AMR. We believe that by integrating health and environmental considerations into policymaking, we can create a healthier and more resilient society. Health Care Without Harm Europe's mission is to transform the healthcare sector so that it reduces its environmental footprint, becomes more resilient, and establishes itself as a leader for sustainable development in Europe. We prove that it is possible to deliver the highest quality of care in an environmentally and financially sustainable way.

DID YOU KNOW?

- €200 billion/year in health damage can be avoided, and premature deaths due to fine particulate matter reduced by 40%, if the EU adopts a net-zero economy.[1]

- Chemical restrictions under REACH between 2010-2020 yield over €2.1 billion in health benefits (over four times more than what they cost), protecting the health of over seven million EU citizens.[2]

- The annual cost of AMR in the EU/EEA is ~€11.7 billion/year – over half of it connected to extra health expenditure.[3]

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[1] European Commission. COM(2018) 773 final. A Clean Planet for all: A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy.
[2] European Chemicals Agency. 2021. Costs and benefits of REACH restrictions proposed between 2016 and 2020
[3] European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. 2023. Antimicrobial resistance targets: how can we reach them by 2030?

WHO WE ARE

Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) Europe is a non-profit member-based organisation that exists to create a sustainable healthcare sector – one that does no harm to patients and our planet. We inspire action across society to protect human and environmental health and drive change in communities for people to live more healthily on a healthier planet.

Our members across Europe include health professionals and organisations, healthcare systems, local and regional authorities, academics, and more. Together, we transform how healthcare systems work. We pioneer pilot projects and scale up practical solutions. We foster collaboration to share insights and develop new ideas. We push for policy actions that create more resilient healthcare systems and keep people and our planet safe.

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