

## **ERS statement on the request for an EU strategy on climate and health**

The European Respiratory Society (ERS)<sup>1</sup> back the request made by the Netherlands (and backed by Austria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain) to add an ‘EU Strategy on Climate and Health’ agenda point to the EPSCO meeting.

Climate change is a great threat to health worldwide, with particularly severe consequences for respiratory health, and this is why we share the Member States’ urgency. Rising temperatures, worsening air pollution, more frequent wildfires, dust storms, heavy rainfall and floodings, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, changes in pollen exposure and easier transmission of infectious diseases all have serious effects on lung health. Air pollution alone is responsible for over 300,000 premature deaths per year in Europe, predominantly due to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, and climate change further intensify these harms. People living with chronic respiratory conditions such as asthma and COPD are disproportionately affected by air pollution, heatwaves, and climate-induced extreme events. Children, older people, and vulnerable populations face the highest risks, also exacerbating health inequalities.<sup>2,3,4,5</sup>

An EU strategy on climate and health is urgently needed and long overdue, not only to improve people’s health and prevent the further exacerbation of respiratory diseases but also to reduce the growing strain placed on the health systems across Europe. A strategy would enable better coordination across the continent and EU policies, enabling the EU to act as a more proactive, coherent and impactful lead actor, while maintaining its position at the forefront of global climate action.

ERS highlights several priorities that should remain at the top of the political agenda:

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<sup>1</sup> European Respiratory Society. <https://www.ersnet.org/the-society/who-we-are/>. Date last updated n.d. Date last accessed December 9 2025.

<sup>2</sup> European Parliament. Air pollution: Parliament adopts revised law to improve air quality. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240419IPR20587/air-pollution-parliamentadopts-revised-law-to-improve-air-quality>. Date last updated April 24 2024. Date last accessed December 9 2025.

<sup>3</sup> European Environment Agency. Exposures aggravated by climate change. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/beating-chronic-respiratory-disease/climate-change-and-respiratory-disease>. Date last updated November 7 2024. Date last accessed December 9 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Lewy J R, Karim A N, Lokotola C L, The impact of climate change on respiratory care: A scoping review Science Direct <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joclim.2024.100313>

<sup>5</sup> Tran H M, Chuang T, Chuang H, Climate change and mortality rates of COPD and asthma: A global analysis from 2000 to 2018 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envres.2023.116448>

- Strengthening both climate mitigation and adaptation, reducing emissions and preparing health systems for climate effects;<sup>6</sup>
- Addressing the growing frequency and severity of extreme weather events (including heatwaves, storms, and floods);
- Integrating climate–health considerations across all EU policies;
- Raising awareness by promoting healthier and more resilient communities, including greener and cleaner cities, sustainable mobility.

[ends]

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<sup>6</sup> Vicedo-Cabrera A M, Melén E, Forastiere F, Climate change and respiratory health: a European Respiratory Society position statement <https://doi.org/10.1183/13993003.01960-2022>