



Health integration in climate-related policies: evidence and gaps in the EU policy context

Claudia de Luca¹, Benedetta Cavalieri¹, Benedetta Baldassarre¹, Joy Ommer^{2,3}, and Milan Kalas²

¹Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna, Department of Architecture, Italy (claudia.deluca5@unibo.it)

²KAJO s.r.o., Sladkovicova 228/8, 01401 Bytca, Slovakia

³Department of Geography and Environmental Science, University of Reading, Reading, United Kingdom

Climate change represents the greatest threat to human health, with both direct and indirect effects.

The direct increase of deaths, due to extreme weather and climate events, the emergence and spread of infectious diseases related to changing temperature, habitat and precipitation patterns, and eventually climate shocks and growing stress and anxiety that are affecting mental health. Moreover, extreme weather events cause issues on our health systems and infrastructures, reducing capacity to provide health coverage.

An increasing awareness on adverse effects of climate change is leading to an update of the EU policy framework through the introduction of the EU Green Deal, a 'package' of directive, policies and strategies to ensure planning, monitoring and reporting of progress towards responsive climate adaptation and climate neutrality; however, a clear demonstration of the health-relevant outcomes of climate policies and actions is still missing, and current policies do not properly consider human health protection.

The study is developed within the Horizon Europe-funded project TRIGGER, aimed at deepening the understanding of the linkage between climate change and health and advancing society uptake at policy level.

Starting from mapping and screening the existing climate-related policies and measures at European level, this study assesses the integration of health in such documents. Specifically, through a keyword-based content analysis, it evaluates the integration of health-relevant considerations in 11 European plans and strategies, referring to climate mitigation and adaptation, environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation. To establish to what extent they consider the direct and indirect impacts of climate change on human health, a qualitative

assessment of health integration is performed, exploring also, when available, cost-benefits estimation to possible health impacts and health-related indicators developed.

The results show that extreme events, such as heat waves and droughts, heavy precipitation and flooding, are the climate-related hazards mostly mentioned in relation to health, even though the policy integration remains limited. Indeed, just few policies contain references to physical health impacts determined by climate change, such as infectious and vector borne diseases, injuries from extreme weather events and cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, while social and mental health effects are even less considered.