

EU climate plan teases €200bn in health savings per year



Air pollution caused by road transport are one of the contributors to premature deaths in Europe. [Shutterstock]

Europe stands to avoid €200 billion in healthcare costs every year and significantly reduce premature deaths if the EU ends up adopting an ambitious climate change policy for 2050, according to the European Commission's long-term strategy.

Achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 “will reduce premature deaths caused by fine particulate matter by more than 40% and health damage by around €200 billion per annum”, according to the Commission’s climate strategy, obtained by EURACTIV.

On page ten of its 25-page-long communication, the EU executive insists that a combination of decarbonised, decentralised and digitalised power, more efficient and sustainable batteries, highly efficient electric powertrains, connectivity and autonomous driving can also lead to major health benefits for citizens and the European economy.

Air pollution is at the root of severe health problems and almost half a million premature deaths are caused annually by the main sources of pollution and greenhouse gases, like fossil fuels, industrial processes, agriculture and waste.

Climate change is already seen as a new health challenge and the need to increase capacity to respond to it is one of the three strategic objectives of the EU’s health policy, whose legal basis is rooted in Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

At the UN General Assembly in New York last September, EU Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis said that better protection against non-communicable diseases needs “a ‘one-health-approach’ and focusing on environmental determinants of health, such as air pollution and climate change”.

Other studies

The links between health and climate change were highlighted for the first time in the Stern review, a pioneering study conducted by LSE’s Nicholas Stern for the UK government in 2006.

It said that fighting climate change would have significant health benefits, in addition to greater energy security.

The final report of ClimateCost Project, an EU-funded study published in 2011, said “a large number of potential health impacts that could arise from climate change, directly or indirectly”.

The study also highlighted a risk to health infrastructure and other critical infrastructures like water and power supplies from extreme weather events. The costs of adapting health infrastructure could be high, the 2011 report said.

In the non-mitigation baseline scenario included, the 2011 study estimated 90,000 additional heat-related deaths projected each year by 2050 with an expected welfare cost of €30 billion per year.

The 2017 European Environment Agency (EEA) report on air pollution noted that it already causes more than 400,000 premature deaths in the EU.

And in another recent report assessing the implementation of the 7th Environment Action Programme that sets out binding objectives for the EU by 2020, the Parliament's ENVI Committee also expressed concerns on the failure to implement air quality legislation in urban areas.

That was a reaction to the revelation that air pollution continues to be the number one environmental cause of death in the EU.

Efficacité et Transparence des Acteurs Européens © 1999-2018. EURACTIV.COM Ltd. | [Terms and Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact us](#)

By continuing to browse the website, you are agreeing to our [use of cookies](#) **I agree**