

Lancet Countdown Europe: New Report on Health and Climate Change

Europe's dependence on fossil fuels is not only making the continent economically and politically vulnerable, it also has dramatic consequences for the population's health. Growing air pollution, heat damage and the climate-related spread of infectious diseases are looming, warns the 2026 Europe Report of the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change, which its co-directors Prof. Dr Joacim Rocklöv (Heidelberg University) and Prof. Dr Cathryn Tonne (Barcelona Institute for Global Health) are about to present to the public. Together with other experts from academia, practice and policy they will discuss the report's results during a public event at Heidelberg University, comparing the current findings with successful measures for climate action and health protection. The launch event with livestreaming is to take place on 22 April 2026.

The Lancet Countdown Europe is an interdisciplinary research collaboration made up of 65 experts from research institutions and United Nations organizations. Established in 2021 as a regional center of the global Lancet Countdown, the collaboration tracks the connections between health and climate change in Europe across five domains. These include health risks and impacts, adaptation and mitigation action taken, the areas of economy and finance, and engagement with climate change and health across societal actors. The third Europe report, which will be published in the journal "Lancet Public Health", presents a total of 43 indicators.

"We are seeing very clearly that fossil-fuel driven climate change constitutes a growing threat to the health of an ever greater number of people in Europe," Prof. Rocklöv underlines. But at the same time, he adds, there are also positive examples from climate action and health protection. "A host of steps being taken nationally and locally allow us to hope that the climate crisis can be contained and its impacts reduced," says the epidemiologist, mathematician, and statistician, who, as an Alexander von Humboldt Professor at Heidelberg University, conducts research in a number of large-scale projects at the university and Heidelberg University Hospital on the impacts of climate and environmental change on public health. Since 2024, together with Prof. Tonne, he has co-chaired the research collaboration of the Lancet Countdown Europe.

The Dean of the Medical Faculty Heidelberg of Heidelberg University, Prof. Dr Michael Boutros, will open the launch event for the 2026 Europe Report of the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change. Then Prof. Rocklöv and Prof. Tonne will present the main results. Some of the success stories in climate action and health protection will follow, with speakers Aleksandra Kazmierczak, who is both coordinator of the European Climate and Health Observatory and the European Environment Agency's climate and health expert, and Francesca Racioppi, head of the World Health Organization's European Centre for Environment and Health. Experts from the Robert Koch Institute (Germany), the Austrian Competence Centre for Climate and Health, and the Agence Nationale de Santé Publique (France) will comment on the findings and report on ways in which their countries have responded to, for example, cases of climate-related infectious diseases, which have been rising rapidly in the past years. A panel discussion with federal, state, and local policy-makers will focus on how measures for climate action and health protection can be successfully implemented.

The event on 22 April will take place in the Great Hall of the Old University (Grabengasse 1, Heidelberg) and also be livestreamed, starting at 1pm. The interested public is also invited. Those attending in the Great Hall must take their seats by 12.45pm. The launch event will be in English with simultaneous interpretation into German for those attending in person. Attendance – both in person and online – requires registration at <https://pretix.eu/uni-heidelberg/lcde-rp-2026>

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Source: Heidelberg University

Further information

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