
CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLEDGE

(KAUNAS, LITHUANIA – SEPTEMBER 2025)

PREAMBLE

The HEPA Europe Network recognizes that climate change and the loss of biodiversity are urgent threats to the health of humans, animals, and the planet. As a network devoted to improving health and well-being through physical activity, we acknowledge our responsibility to minimize our environmental impact and to engage, among other topics, in research on the interconnections between physical activity, climate change, and planetary health and well-being. HEPA Europe strives to lead by example in aligning with the 1.5-degree Celsius goal of the 2015 COP Paris Agreement. Action on increasing planetary health and well-being is integral to promoting sustainable, healthy lives now and for future generations.

DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT

We, members of the HEPA Europe network, hereby make this formal Climate and Sustainability Action Pledge, committing our organization to ambitious yet achievable actions that support the Paris Agreement, foster climate- and sustainability-related research, and strengthen our advocacy for a healthy planet. In solidarity with the international community's efforts to limit global warming, HEPA Europe pledges to:

CUT HEPA EUROPE'S CO₂ EMISSIONS IN LINE WITH THE PARIS-AGREEMENT

- Reduce carbon emissions from HEPA Europe's activities – especially our conferences, meetings, and events – aligning with the Paris Agreement. This target aligns with global goals, signaling our commitment to doing our fair share.
- Commit to measuring, as data allow, our operational greenhouse gas emissions, and report each year on movement towards a reduction. Our long-term aspiration is to limit our CO₂ emissions as much as possible, reaching near-zero emissions by 2040 or sooner through deep emissions cuts. HEPA Europe will use mitigation measures to lower its carbon footprint only if scientific evidence supports their credibility.

HOST GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

We will transform the way HEPA Europe organizes conferences and meetings to drastically reduce their carbon footprint by:

- Holding events in locations that are easily accessible by low-carbon transport and reducing the need for long-haul flights. We will encourage and incentivize participants to travel by rail, bus, or carpool and avoid air travel when feasible.
- Expanding virtual and hybrid meeting options to reduce travel frequency and provide low-carbon alternatives for members.
- Ensuring that venues and suppliers adhere to robust sustainability criteria, selecting conference venues and hotels with energy-efficient infrastructure, renewable energy use, and strong environmental policies (e.g., waste reduction, recycling) including the circular economy. Ensuring that venues are in walking distance to hotels.
- Making plant-based catering the recommended option at HEPA Europe events, offering healthy vegetarian or vegan menus sourced from local, sustainable producers. This recognizes the high carbon footprint of meat-heavy diets and long supply chains, promoting locally sourced or plant-forward diets to support both climate and health objectives.
- Minimizing food waste by carefully planning portions and donating excess food to local communities, where feasible.
- Eliminating single-use plastics and reducing waste at all HEPA Europe-sponsored events.
- Providing conference materials and programs digitally by default, with any necessary printed materials (name badges, signage), considering the circular economy, made from recycled or reusable materials whenever possible.
- Work with local hosts to prepare a sustainability factsheet for each HEPA conference.

PROMOTE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ON PLANETARY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING CONNECTED TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Leverage HEPA Europe's platform to integrate planetary health and well-being into research priorities, education, and advocacy within the physical activity field. We will commit to stimulating and supporting research at the intersection of sustainability and physical activity.
- Ensure that sustainability, planetary health and well-being, and human health are prominently featured in our scientific programs. We will invite abstracts and symposia on topics such as climate change, planetary health and exercise, active transportation and emissions, urban green space, and the co-benefits of physical activity for human and planetary well-being.
- Integrate criteria related to research on physical activity and planetary health and well-being into our award structure. We will recognize early-career investigators who are breaking new ground in exploring how physical activity promotion can contribute to sustainability and climate solutions.
- Encourage energy-efficient research practices. Sending large files burdens email servers and complicates version management. Therefore, collaborative research practices should prioritize cloud-based document sharing to facilitate remote collaboration.

ADVOCATE FOR MORE FUNDING IN RESEARCH ON PLANETARY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING CONNECTED TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Advocate for greater investment in research and policies linking physical activity, climate change, planetary health and well-being, and human health.
- Collaborate with partners and stakeholders (including the World Health Organization, the European Commission, national research councils, foundations, and health ministries) to emphasize the importance of planetary health and well-being in funding calls and policy agendas. Our goal is to see more European funding streams (e.g., Horizon Europe research programs) prioritize how physical activity, sport, and exercise intersect with planetary health, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and urban design.

ROADMAP

- Regularly review our climate action progress and update this declaration every five years at a minimum. In 2025, we will finalize this pledge as part of our annual HEPA conference. Thereafter, we will reassess our goals in 2030, 2035, and beyond, strengthening commitments in line with the latest science, innovations, and the global stock take of the Paris Agreement. This would be through actions such as recognizing CO₂ emissions from earlier HEPA conferences, and produce regular progress reports on meeting the Paris Agreement of cutting 50% of CO₂ emissions by 2030.
- Support and advise our members, particularly those interested in hosting annual meetings, in identifying ways to highlight the circular economy, reduce carbon emissions and increase sustainability at these events. This includes recommending low-carbon venues, providing sustainable event planning guidelines, and encouraging best practices in transportation, catering, and waste management.
- Explore and agree the most appropriate governance arrangement (mandate, reporting lines, membership) for a HEPA Europe Sustainability Task Force. Subject to this agreement, the Task Force will monitor progress annually and report on achievements, challenges, and opportunities. We will consider adopting even more ambitious pro-environmental targets for 2035 or advancing the timeline toward near net-zero emissions. If certain strategies prove unfeasible, we will adapt our approach to ensure that significant decarbonization remains on track.
- Engage with peer societies and partner organizations to share tools, coordinate initiatives, and mutually support more climate- and sustainability-friendly operations. This could involve simple shared resources and knowledge-exchange sessions, and—where appropriate—joint working groups or statements.

CONCLUSION

Through this Climate and Sustainability Action Pledge, HEPA Europe commits to embedding sustainability into all aspects of our work, from organizing conferences to promoting research. Our pledge is ambitious but pragmatic—it reflects both the urgency of the climate crisis, awareness of biodiversity loss, encouraging research in this area, and provide practical steps we can take as a network to be part of the solution. By honoring this pledge, climate and sustainability action will be fully integrated into health-enhancing physical activity initiatives across Europe.