

Summary Report: Meeting for G7 National Public Health Institutes on Climate Change and Health

Berlin, 4 October 2022

On 4 October 2022, the Robert Koch Institute hosted a meeting on climate change and health for the national public health institutes (NPHIs) in the G7 on behalf of the German Ministry of Health and as part of Germany's G7 presidency in 2022.

The G7 health ministers identified NPHIs as key players in strengthening environmental health protection in their [Communiqué](#) on 20 May 2022 – the first time for NPHIs to be politically recognised in this regard. The G7 health ministers committed to promoting collaboration between the G7 NPHIs on climate and environmental health impacts as well as supporting the International Association of National Public Health Institutes' (IANPHI) [“Roadmap for Action on Health and Climate Change”](#), a guide for how NPHIs can become “key climate actors”. As part of fulfilling these commitments, the Robert Koch Institute hosted a meeting for the G7 NPHIs within Germany's G7 programme for 2022. The meeting intended to promote learning and exchange on climate change and health activities between the G7 NPHIs and to further strengthen IANPHI's efforts on this topic area. The meeting took place online.

Key messages:

- The G7 NPHIs can play an important role in climate adaptation and mitigation and as “key climate actors”:
 - They are generally well trusted by the public; they have valuable expertise in their core functions, including evidence generation, knowledge transfer and through their focus on health promotion and prevention; and the “health argument” for addressing climate change is indisputable. These could also be considered quick-wins or “low-hanging fruit” for NPHIs, and are to some extent already evident in the G7 countries' work on heat and heatwaves. In addition, the G7 NPHIs shared motivated visions for the roles that they can play and clear goals for what they would like to achieve, which signals their commitment and understanding of climate change as a serious and enduring health issue.
- There are some areas in particular where NPHIs could be effective and fulfil their roles as “key climate actors”:
 - These primarily include the exchange and support of regional and local health authorities with their activities and with data or indicators on climate change; work that focuses on the social determinants of health; and intersectoral working, including with authorities in the environmental sector.

Outlook:

- Further exchange and collaboration between the NPHIs were highlighted as essential for addressing climate change:
 - This is necessary for NPHIs to share learning, knowledge and resources; and collaborate on projects and activities. This can promote mutual support, make best use of expertise, and ensure efficient use of resources by avoiding duplication.
 - Exchange and collaboration between the G7 NPHIs can continue in different forms, such as through bilateral exchanges, through one-off or regular exchanges with a few NPHIs, or through established existing networks or committees. These include the IANPHI Committee on Climate Change and Public Health as well as its subgroup on Planetary Health and One Health, which offer valuable existing fora for strengthening shared learning and mutual support as possible follow up to the G7 NPHI meeting. The subgroup in particular could be used to consider further levers and opportunities for NPHIs to strengthen their work on climate change and health.

The meeting

Participants were welcomed by the German Ministry of Health. Dr. Stier, Head of the Directorate for Public Health and Primary Prevention, emphasised the political interest of the G7 to act on climate change and health this year, as well as Italy for being a pioneer in raising the topic during their G7 presidency, and the United Kingdom for their leadership during COP26.

Prof. Wieler, President of the Robert Koch Institute, underlined the far-reaching health impacts of climate change on all lives worldwide and all areas of health and wellbeing in his introduction. He called for seeing climate change as an opportunity for public health, with win-win or so-called “co-benefit” rewards of many climate mitigation and adaptation efforts; and advocated for the benefit of public health core functions and skills for addressing climate change, such as surveillance and systems approaches.

Dr. Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum, Head of the Climate Change and Health Unit, World Health Organization, gave a short expert presentation and highlighted the valuable role of public health professionals in climate change, and stated that while there is a growing body of evidence on climate change and health, it is essential that this is made accessible and locally relevant in order to have impact. He also emphasised the need for NPHIs to support coherent cross-sectoral policies for health, and acknowledged that there is a need for upfront resources and long-term thinking for this to be feasible. Dr. Campbell-Lendrum suggested that one “low-hanging fruit” for NPHIs is to start with their core functions, and focus for example on climate information in aspects such as assessments and surveillance, rather than attempting to cover everything. WHO is eager to work with NPHIs and IANPHI to find shared solutions.

A short presentation was given on the IANPHI survey of NPHIs and their work on climate change and health, on the [Roadmap for Action on Health and Climate Change](#), as well as on survey results conducted by the Robert Koch Institute with the G7 NPHIs in preparation for the meeting to assess the alignment of their work with IANPHI's Roadmap.

A session was held on the extent to which NPHIs are contributing to work on climate change and in particular on heat, with presentations from each of the representatives from the G7 NPHIs and the European Commission. There was some reported variation between the countries in their work and in terms of how comprehensive or advanced they are. In addition, climate change, including heat and heatwaves, does not appear to be consistently mandated in all NPHIs. There was some alignment between most of the NPHIs as well as with the IANPHI Roadmap on surveillance/monitoring, evidence-informed policy advice, and intersectoral collaboration. The presentations were followed by a discussion on the NPHIs' work on heat. Highlights include the importance of a local focus on heat; the growing concern with combined events, such as heat and wildfires, which are no longer fitting established systems and are making it harder to act; the value of surveillance and information from NPHIs; and the need for more assessment on the effectiveness of heat adaptation measures, including continuous evaluation.

A final session on the next steps for NPHIs confirmed common agreement on the need for continued exchange and collaboration between NPHIs. This includes through the IANPHI Committee on Climate Change and Public Health as well as the [Global Heat Health Information Network](#). Collaborations of particular value include those with institutes in the environmental sector, those that focus on the social determinants of health and social vulnerabilities, and bilateral meetings between NPHIs to offer mutual learning.