Joint Statement of the 19th European Public Health Conference 2026

Urban and global synergies: shaping the future of public health with climate resilience, equity and innovation

Bilbao, 11–13 November 2026

We, the undersigned partners of the 19th European Public Health Conference, gathered in Bilbao, renew our commitment to healthy, equitable and climate-resilient places for all.

Bilbao — a recognised example of an industrial city transformed into a city of services, culture, and innovation, where urban planning is allied with nature — provides the setting for our commitment to developing healthier, more livable, and more equitable living environments. Global synergies connect people and places alike: cities, towns, and rural areas, in Europe and beyond. Our commitment is to health that meets people's needs wherever they live.

Aware that multilateralism is a necessity and not a luxury, at both European and global levels, we call for renewed efforts to build global planetary, urban and One Health approaches that leave no community behind.

From accommodation to habitability: from living in cities to places to live in

Health is shaped by place: by the homes, services, and landscapes around us, and by the access they give us to green space, clean air, mobility, and work. Urban health is the foundation of livable, inclusive city models that respect their environment, and the same lessons apply to every community. Applying health criteria makes it possible to plan green spaces, traffic routes, and friendly transport, promoting clean energy and environmental quality, local commerce, and designing homes adapted to people's needs.

To this end, cities and communities must be people-centred, incorporating functional diversity and healthy habits, and integrated into a European and global network of healthy places that foster equitable and peaceful economic and cultural exchange.

Key commitments

1. Urban health as the backbone of sustainable growth for cities and the places around them — a European and global priority.

By 2050, two thirds of the world's population will live in cities with densities of thousands of inhabitants per km². Regulating urban development is an unavoidable necessity for the well-being of populations in Europe and worldwide.

2. Climate change is a reality that must be mitigated and integrated into health, urban and territorial policies.

The challenges of climate change, such as heat and cold waves, floods, prolonged droughts, or emerging zoonoses, must be addressed and managed proactively, through coordinated European and global action.Their impacts fall unevenly across places and people, so action must reach those most exposed, wherever they live.

3. The right to decent and affordable housing is public health — everywhere.

A dignified life includes a home that is secure, affordable, safe and healthy: sufficient space,, warmth in the winter and coolness in summer, clean water and sanitation, and a clean environment around it.

Housing can also act as a commercial determinant of health. Where homes are treated as financial assets, speculation, financialisation and short-term letting push prices up and people out, while other places are left with neglected housing. Both deepen social and health inequalities within and between places.

4. Humanity has been a migratory species since the beginning of history, and movement continues to shape our places.

People move between countries and within them: cities grow, while rural and peripheral areas lose residents, services, and opportunities. Migrants are human beings with the same basic rights as the nationals of a country. Ensuring access to healthcare and basic services in all settings and for all people benefits society as a whole, within Europe and across the globe. Health is a common wealth, and it underpins social cohesion in urbanising and depopulating places alike.

5. Peace is a necessary condition for public health, in Europe and globally.

Respect for international law is an achievement for the well-being of nations that we cannot afford to lose. Current crises must drive us to improve global governance, multilateralism, mutual socioeconomic development, and innovation, with cooperation that links global, national and local levels, engaging with the public about what levels of welfare it has delivered while acknowledging disparities and disproportional burdens. Global synergies endure only when people in every place can see their benefits.

Call to action

1. Implement health criteria in urban and territorial planning, at local, national, European and global level.
2. Anticipate the challenges of climate change by incorporating them into city design and territorial planning across European and global contexts.
3. Work with housing, planning and social policy partners to make healthy, affordable housing a shared priority: embed health criteria in housing and planning standards, assess the health impacts of housing policies, and monitor the impacts of unaffordable, insecure and substandard housing.

4. Promote social cohesion by supporting inclusion, equity and care for migrants, newcomers and long-standing residents alike, with attention to mental health and access to services.
5. Contribute to strong international cooperation for health by sharing evidence and good practices, supporting the work of multilateral organisations such as the UN and WHO, and bringing local experience into European and global health policy.

"Because what matters is not arriving alone or early,
but arriving with everyone and on time."[1]

These five commitments will form the thematic backbone of European Public Health Week 2027.

[1] León Felipe- Versos y oraciones del caminante / Verses and Prayers of a Walker