

# FOR A NATIONAL PUBLIC ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH POLICY FIRMLY ANCHORED IN THE REGIONS

ESEC OPINION - MAY 2022

The health consequences of environmental deterioration are increasing. This is due to human activities that contribute to the deterioration of our ecosystems, including the overexploitation of natural resources, deforestation, land take, urban sprawl, industrial activities, intensive agriculture and mass tourism.

Although the entire population is affected by these health risks, the most vulnerable populations are the most exposed to environmental risks and have the greatest difficulty in accessing health care and preventive measures.

## 7 million

**PREMATURE DEATHS**  
worldwide each year due to air pollution

*How can we look beyond the “sickness and care” approach to health and move towards a comprehensive and coherent environmental health policy?*

### RAPPORTEURS:

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## HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## 30%

**OF EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES** are attributed to the deterioration of ecosystems due to human activities.

The EESC is putting forward **20 recommendations** in order to move towards an environmental health policy based on the precautionary principle, guaranteeing everyone the right to live in a healthy environment.

# THE EESC'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH POLICY:

## 1 IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE FOR SPEEDY AND WELL-ADAPTED PUBLIC DECISIONS

- Develop a **coordinated strategy for health-environmental research**, strengthening and sustaining the human and financial resources allocated to research and guaranteeing its independence.
- Accelerate the cross-referencing, compatibility and sharing of **environmental and health data**, including local data, by incorporating contributions from the public and associations.
- **Adopt a new approach to risk for public decision-making, based on the precautionary principle:** move from a substance-by-substance, use-by-use approach to a generic approach identifying the hazards to be avoided that are of greatest concern for human health or ecosystems.

## HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT



## 2 MAKE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH A CENTRAL AND CROSS-CUTTING PUBLIC POLICY OBJECTIVE

- Adopt a **policy law** to lay down France's environmental health objectives, organise its governance and establish the main principles for its funding.
- Create an **interministerial delegate** for environmental health, to organise the cross-cutting implementation of environmental health measures in all public policies.
- Generalise the **measurement of the impact of policies** on environmental health, based on indicators such as healthy life expectancy and the impact of public policies on the poorest 20%.
- Put the issue of the **innovative financing** of environmental health back on the political agenda, which could take the form of a tax on activities that have a negative impact on ecosystems, the proceeds of which would be used to reduce pollution in ecosystems and to compensate for unequal effects.
- Create an **independent authority** that could process violations of the constitutional right to live in a balanced environment that respects health, modelled on the Human Rights Defender.

## 3 EMPOWERING LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES AND CITIZENS

- **Formally enshrine the contribution of local and regional authorities** to environmental health in the Local and Regional Authorities Code, giving them the means to identify and achieve their objectives.
- **Consolidate the Regional Health-Environment Plans (PRSE)** and make them more operational: definition of concrete objectives, establishment of indicators to measure progress, designation of those responsible for their implementation and financing.
- Integrate health-environmental impacts into any health **impact assessment** and environmental assessment for any planning or development project (housing, transport and economic development).
- **Involve all those concerned** in the development, implementation and evaluation of public policies: use participatory approaches to develop shared diagnoses of local issues and build responses with the population

