

H.O.P.E.

Key Policy Recommendations: a summary



HOPE

Responding to Heatwaves
in Older People Ecosystem

Overview

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- 3. A European framework for municipal heat strategies: the 3H approach (Habitat, Housing, Health)**
- 4. Organising an annual Heat Action Day (June 2nd)**
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- 13. Providing access to green urban social spaces**
- 14. White rooftops**

1.Improving communications during heatwaves



This policy recommendation highlights the **critical need for better communication** to mitigate health risks during heatwaves.

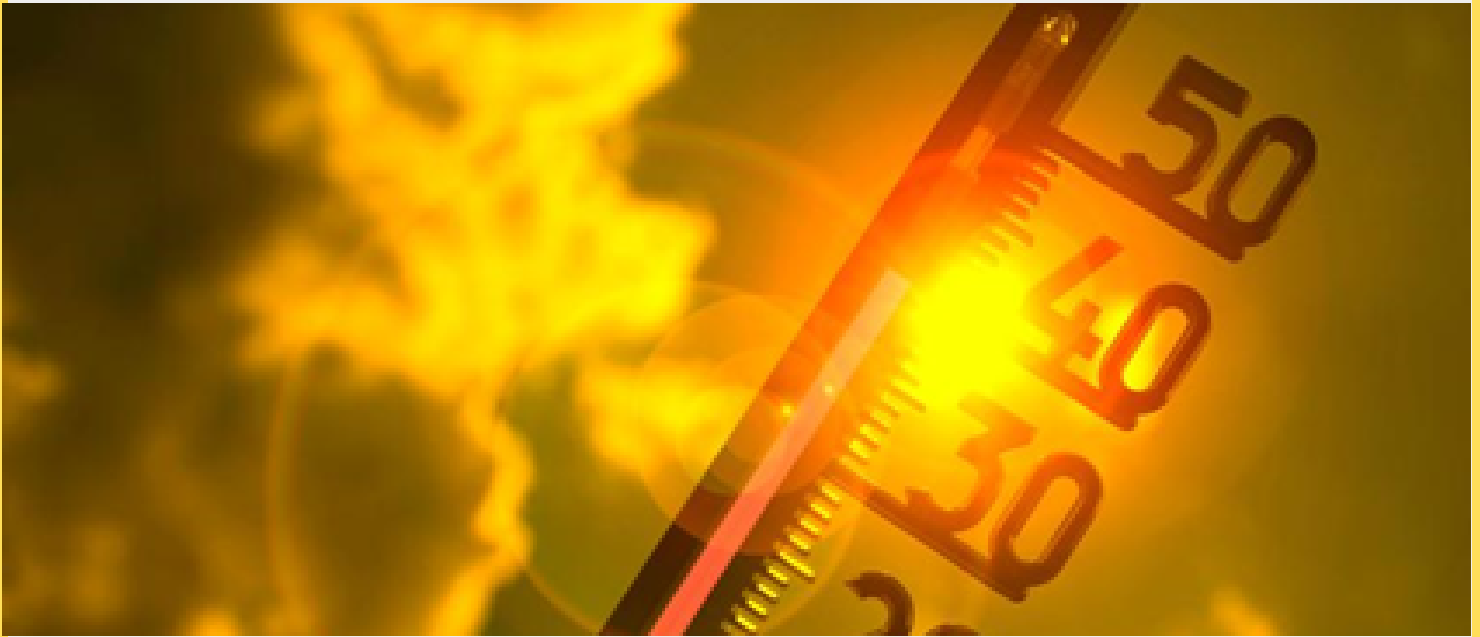
It identifies **deficiencies** such as lack of timely warning systems, insufficient public awareness, limited information accessibility, and inadequate stakeholder collaboration.

The proposed **solution** involves developing a heat coding system activated by biometeorological indicators, enhancing public awareness through targeted communication, ensuring information accessibility for vulnerable populations, and strengthening collaboration among governments, medical-social institutes, and public transport companies.

Challenges include ensuring public perception of danger, mobilising sectors with limited heat experience, securing resources, and reaching isolated individuals.

Advantages include low-cost intervention, community mobilisation, increased awareness, and reduced health impacts. The recommendation emphasises a collaborative approach to enhance community resilience and reduce health impacts during heatwaves.

2. Directive for local governing bodies to develop a heat wave emergency plan



This policy recommendation emphasises the **need for local governments to create comprehensive heat wave emergency plans due to the increasing frequency and intensity of heat waves caused by climate change.**

Vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, children, and those with chronic health conditions, are particularly at risk.

The proposed **solution** is for the EU to issue a directive requiring local governments to develop and implement these plans, allowing them to tailor the plans to their specific needs while drawing on national expertise and resources.

Challenges include ensuring stakeholder engagement, allocating sufficient resources, and monitoring the effectiveness of the plans.

However, a **national directive** would standardise the development and implementation of these plans, ensuring all communities have access to the same level of support and resources. It would also facilitate coordination between different levels of government and organisations, leading to more efficient and effective responses to heat waves. This approach would ultimately enhance community resilience and reduce the health impacts of extreme heat.

3. A European framework for municipal heat strategies: the 3H approach (Habitat, Housing, Health)



This policy recommendation outlines a **strategy to address the increasing frequency and intensity of heat waves in Europe.**

The **decentralised development** of heat action plans has led to inefficiency and inequality in emergency responses. The 3H approach provides a unified framework focusing on three areas:

1. **Habitat:** Implementing environmental measures such as increasing shaded areas, urban forestry, and access to drinking water to reduce the heat burden.
2. **Housing:** Introducing housing-specific measures like subsidies for sun protection, setting standards for maximum home overheating, and requiring residential care institutions to develop heat plans.
3. **Health:** Targeting vulnerable populations with interventions like heat protocols for care organisations, public cooling centres, and identifying at-risk individuals.

The EU could issue a directive for member states to develop local heat action plans. **Challenges** include contextualising the 3H approach for diverse European contexts, engaging stakeholders, and ensuring sufficient resources for implementation and monitoring.

The **advantages** of a European framework include uniform strategies, knowledge sharing, resource efficiency, and fostering innovation in heat resilience. The 3H approach aims to reduce the health burden of extreme heat, improve community resilience, and promote inclusive policies.

4. Organising an annual Heat Action Day (June 2nd)



This policy recommendation proposes a local implementation of the **annual "Heat Action Day"** on June 2nd to raise global awareness of heat waves, which are more deadly than many natural disasters but often underestimated.

The initiative, started by the IFRC in partnership with local branches and NGOs, aims to educate communities on heat risks and protective measures.

Key **challenges** include the complexity of climate change communication, timing the campaign effectively, and ensuring long-term behavioural change. Despite these barriers, leveraging the IFRC's established local networks, resources, and goodwill can enhance outreach and impact.

A successful Heat Action Day would enhance public awareness, promote community resilience, and protect vulnerable populations from extreme heat.

5. Increasing awareness

HOW CAN YOU
#BEATTHEHEAT?

WATER

SHADE

REST

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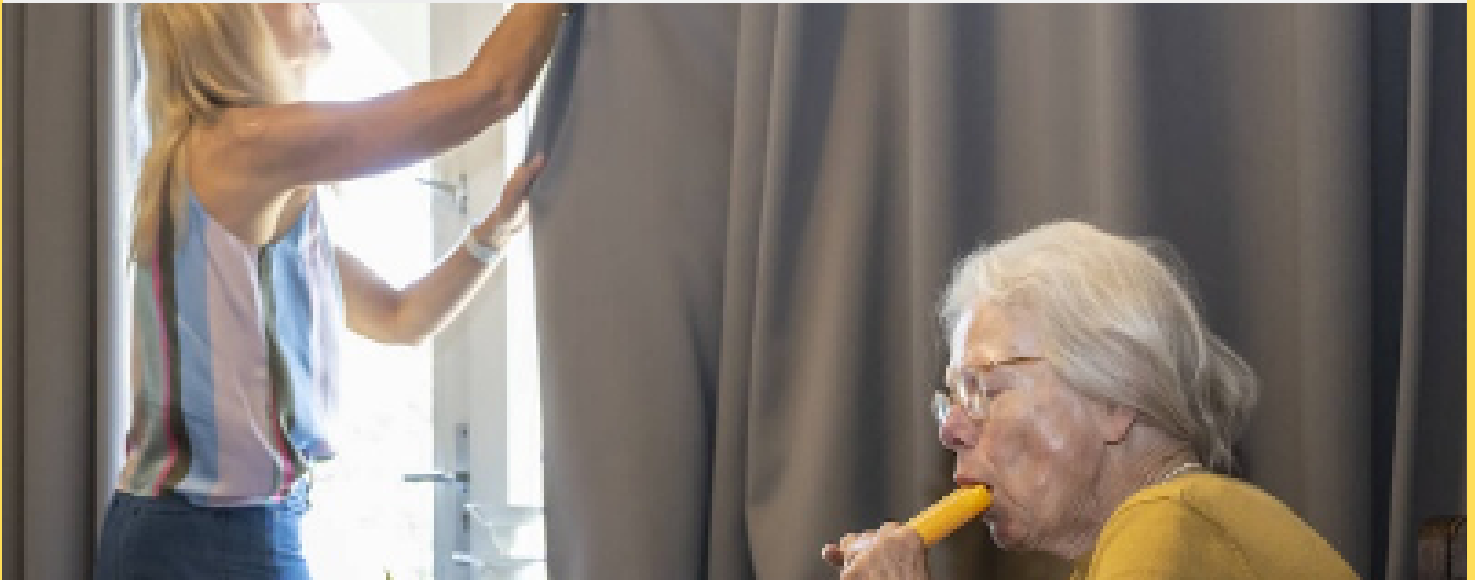
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6. Occupational health caregivers, a potential blind spot



This policy recommendation highlights the overlooked risk of **heat-related illnesses faced by social workers and healthcare professionals during heatwaves, which can impact their well-being and performance.**

It **recommends** national-level occupational safety and health (OSH) policies locally tailored to different work environments, supported by EU frameworks. Solutions include improving work environments (e.g., better access to shade), increasing awareness, adjusting work schedules, and ensuring adequate hydration

Challenges include funding constraints, staff shortages, and overcoming norms of prioritising patient care over self-care. Successful implementation could improve worker health, productivity, morale, and retention, while enhancing the quality of care and public health outcomes.

7. Mandatory blinds



This policy recommendation proposes **mandatory installation of blinds in buildings housing older adults and other vulnerable populations to prevent overheating during heatwaves, which poses serious health risks.**

Blinds are a cost-effective solution, outperforming interior climate control measures by reducing heat buildup and energy consumption. Though high installation costs and user operation issues present challenges, government subsidies and automated systems could mitigate these problems.

The proposed policy would improve living conditions, reduce heat-related health risks, and lower energy use, with benefits significantly outweighing implementation costs.

8. Code red



This policy recommendation addresses the increasing frequency and intensity of heat waves due to climate change, which pose serious health risks, especially to vulnerable populations like Older Adults, children, and those with chronic conditions.

It highlights the lack of heat wave emergency plans in most countries, leading to delayed responses and increased health impacts.

The proposed **solution** is a national crisis response policy, exemplified by France's heat coding system (code yellow, orange, red) initiated after the 2003 heat wave. This system involves coordinated efforts by the ministry of health, local governments, NGOs, and various sectors to implement emergency plans during extreme heat events.

The recommendation emphasises the need for national governments to develop and implement such policies, with regional and local governments tailoring them to their specific situations.

Challenges include creating a sense of urgency and ensuring collaboration among diverse sectors. The advantages of a national crisis response policy include a unified approach, efficient resource allocation, improved health outcomes, and reduced healthcare costs. Establishing a European framework for such policies could enhance resilience, reduce health and economic burdens, and ensure consistent and effective responses to heat-related emergencies across member states

9. Open Protection Centres for the Older Adults



The document outlines the establishment and purpose of Open Protection Centres for the Elderly (K.A.P.I.) in Greece.

These centres aim to prevent psychological and social problems among the Older Adults, ensuring they remain active and integrated within their communities.

K.A.P.I. centres provide a range of services including medical care, nursing, social work, physical therapy, emotional support, and organised recreational activities. They also offer educational programs and health education to promote healthy aging.

The initiative, started in 1984, has grown to over 900 centers across Greece, supported by local municipalities.

K.A.P.I. centres play a crucial role in protecting Older Adults during extreme heat events by providing air-conditioned spaces. The centres emphasize the importance of maintaining Older Adults' social rights and active participation in society, while fostering cooperation between government and local organisations to address the needs and challenges faced by the Older Adult population.

10. Emergency heat shelter



This policy recommendation addresses the increasing frequency and intensity of heat waves in Europe, which pose significant health risks to vulnerable populations such as Older Adults, pregnant individuals, and those unable to find shelter from the heat.

It **recommends** that local authorities implement plans to provide emergency heat shelters in buildings like libraries, churches, and supermarkets during prolonged heat waves. These shelters would offer a safe space for people to escape the heat, with considerations for adequate capacity, reasonable distance, and minimal temperature differences to prevent sudden changes.

Challenges include ensuring sufficient capacity, accessible transportation, and managing the impact on regular business activities, which may require financial compensation. A crisis team would be needed to coordinate and monitor the shelter operations.

The health benefits of such shelters are significant, potentially preventing heat-related illnesses and deaths, with relatively low financial costs compared to hospital admissions. An example of a successful strategy is Barcelona's "Climate Shelters Network," which uses existing locations like public parks and libraries to provide year-round climate relief and social activities, making the shelters pleasant and well-known to citizens.

11. Heat Emergency for Older Adults



This policy recommendation addresses the challenge of protecting older adults during heat waves.

It highlights the lack of a holistic and integrated approach among public organisations in Europe.

The proposed **solution** involves structured collaboration between municipalities and key local stakeholders, such as volunteering organisations, nursing homes, and public security organisations. This collaboration could be formalised through a memorandum of understanding, leading to services like air-conditioned locations, transport for isolated citizens, meal provision adapted to climatic conditions, and information campaigns. The local municipality should initiate this policy, leveraging its trust and coordination capabilities.

Challenges include the need for third-sector organisations, reaching isolated citizens, and using appropriate communication channels like press and local TV. The approach offers advantages such as increased services for seniors, reduced adverse heat-related events, and decreased social isolation. The "Heat Emergency" project by the Municipality of Treviso could be used as an example. The approach is replicable in different European contexts, provided there is collaboration with third-sector organisations.

12. Providing (social) monitoring of (vulnerable) Older Adults during heatwaves



This policy recommendation addresses the need to protect Older Adults during heatwaves, given the aging population in Europe and increasing extreme heat events.

It proposes **solutions** such as disseminating educational materials in community spaces, using SMS alerts and wearable health monitoring devices, partnering with local businesses to create health guidance videos, targeted outreach in residential areas, leveraging community infrastructure, and using anonymised data for policy development. Municipalities, in cooperation with local organisations, should lead this initiative, integrating community organisations, businesses, and social and health professionals.

Challenges include health literacy gaps, the digital divide, weakened social networks, and the need for multigenerational engagement.

However, the advantages include enhanced community engagement, cost-efficiency, scalability, economic synergies, and social solidarity, emphasising the importance of integrating technology and fostering community collaboration to protect the elderly during heatwaves and other public health emergencies.

13. Providing access to green urban social spaces



European cities are experiencing rising temperatures partially due to the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect, caused by heat-absorbing materials, lack of vegetation, waste heat, and building density.

This exacerbates heat-related risks, especially for vulnerable populations, such as Older Adults. To mitigate this, all citizens should have access to green urban social spaces near their homes, which provide cooling through shade, evapotranspiration, and water features, and foster social cohesion. Implementation requires proximity, policy integration, and collaboration among local authorities, residents, and institutions.

Challenges include health misinterpretation, unintended side effects, accessibility, and maintenance. Despite these, green spaces offer numerous benefits, including UHI reduction, health improvements, social cohesion, and climate resilience.

14. White rooftops



This policy recommendation addresses the need to reduce indoor temperatures during heat waves, particularly for vulnerable populations like Older Adults.

It proposes the implementation of white rooftops on existing and new buildings, prioritising those housing elderly residents. White rooftops reflect sunlight, reducing heat absorption and lowering urban temperatures by an average of 0.6°C, with greater effects in hotter regions. This cost-effective solution can decrease heat-related morbidity and mortality, improve quality of life, and reduce healthcare costs.

Challenges include the variability of effectiveness due to factors like building materials, design, surrounding structures, maintenance, and climate.

Despite these challenges, white rooftops offer a practical and economical way to mitigate the adverse health effects of extreme heat.



“Climate change is a major threat to the resilience of cities and their inhabitants, particularly the Older Adults who are more vulnerable to the impacts of extreme heat. Achieving SDG 11 requires not only reducing exposure to heatwaves but also ensuring that urban spaces are designed to protect the most vulnerable populations, enhancing their resilience and well-being”.

– United Nations, SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.



Picture by Henk Rosendal

For further information:

<https://www.hope-heatwaves.eu/>



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