



Kompetenzzentrum  
**Klima und Gesundheit**

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# Addressing climate and environment change and related health risks – the role of health professionals

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2nd Live Webinar: Thematic Network on Mental Health in All Policies

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Gesundheitsförderung

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Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege  
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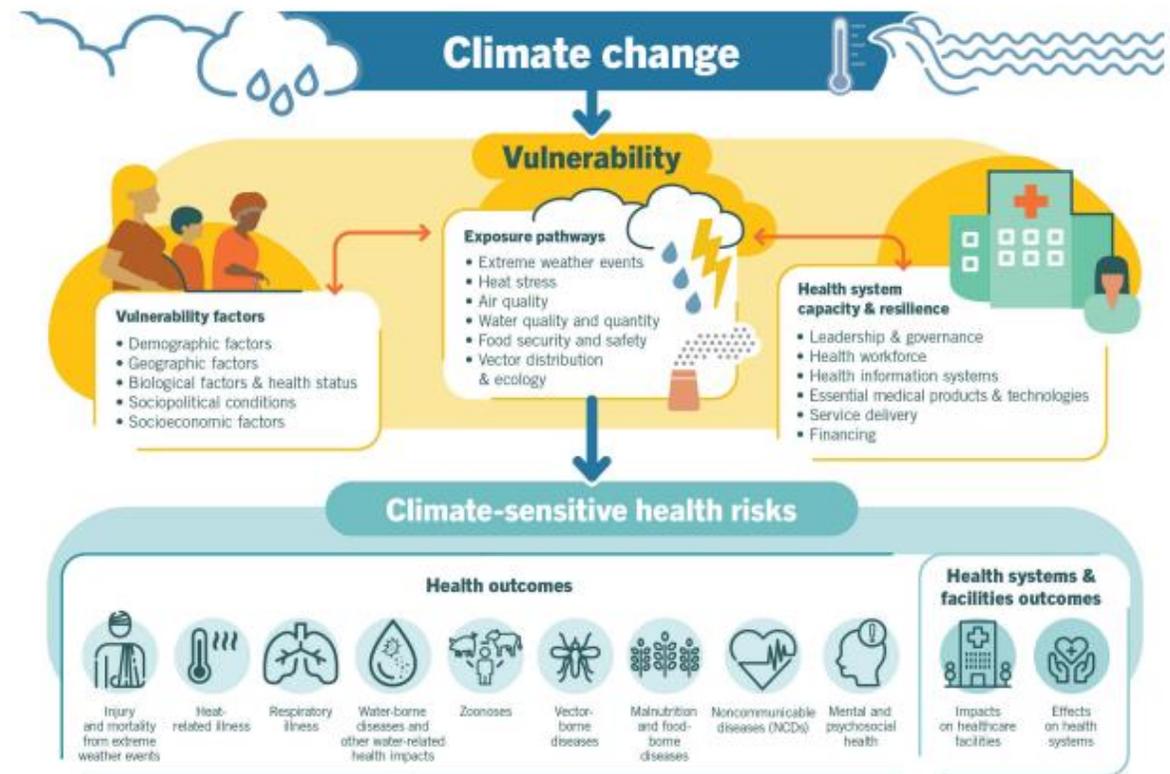
Gesundheit Österreich  
GmbH 



# Unequal distribution of climate change impacts

- The health consequences of climate change are unevenly distributed
- Population groups with pre-existing health burdens are disproportionately at risk from climate change-related hazards
- Mental health burden can be a
  - pre-existing vulnerability
  - Climate-sensitive health risk

Figure 2. Major health risks associated with climate change



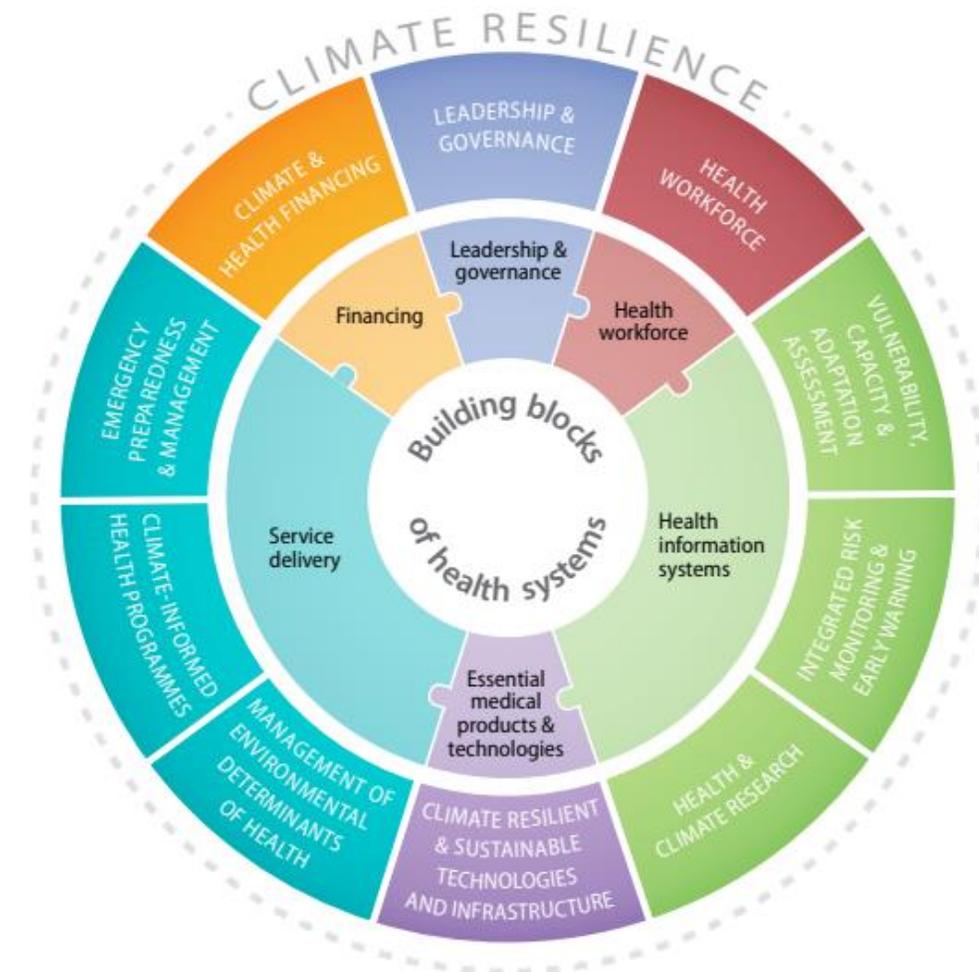
Source: Quality criteria for health national adaptation plans. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021.

# Climate resiliency of health systems

The extent of climate-related health risks highly depends on how well health systems can promote and protect human health: *"Strengthening the climate resiliency of health systems will protect and promote human health and well-being"*. (IPCC 2022)

**Capacity building on system level:** health professionals, health services and individuals are essential building blocks (IANPHI 2021; WHO 2015).

FIGURE 3: Ten components comprising the WHO operational framework for building climate resilient health systems, and the main connections to the building blocks of health systems



WHO 2015. Operational framework for building climate resilient health systems



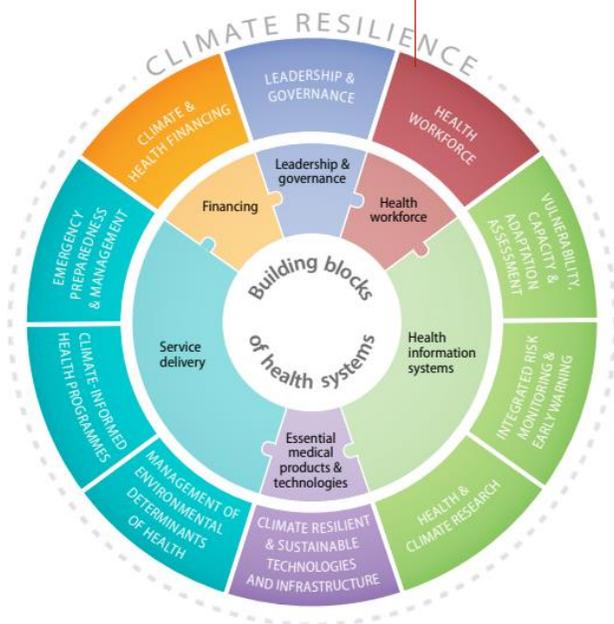
# Capacity building in health workforce

## CLIMATE LITERACY

describes a person's abilities,

- to understand the essential principles of the earth's climate system and to know about the influence of one's own behavior on the climate and vice versa,
- recognize the (in)direct interrelation between climate and health,
- find, understand, evaluate, and communicate scientifically sound information on this topic,
- make **informed and responsible decisions** for oneself and others that **promote and maintain health and protect the climate**;
- make **informed and responsible choices** for oneself and others to **manage the health impacts of climate change**.

FIGURE 3: Ten components comprising the WHO operational framework for building climate resilient health systems, and the main connections to the building blocks of health systems





# Climate literacy for mental health care professionals

**Mental health care professionals** can make a valuable contribution to tackle climate-related mental health risks, because:

- Access to diverse vulnerable groups
- Routine contact with clients and patients
- Good trust ratings in society

Two areas:

1, **perceive, mitigate and treat climate-related health and mental health problems** (e.g. as a result of heat damage or dehydration) as well as **preventing** them (e.g. jointly drawing up an individual heat protection plan with patients)

2, use the **role of key multipliers** for transformative action at the behavioral and system levels.



# What is needed

## **Foster climate-related professional practice**

- Integration of health-related climate literacy in curricula
- Interdisciplinary trainings on climate literacy for (mental) health care professionals
- Development of capacity of health-care workers to understand the mental health and psychosocial impacts of climate change

## **Establish a pool of teachers**

- To bring knowledge and its implementation into professional practice

## **Share common practice and experiences within networks and initiatives**

- KLUG e.V. (Germany): <https://www.klimawandel-gesundheit.de>
- Nurses Climate Challenge Europe: <https://eur.nursesclimatechallenge.org>



# Sources

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# Thank you for your attention

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