

## P R E S S E M I T T E I L U N G

### **Climate crisis: Greater risk of respiratory disease, kidney disease and other health hazards for millions of children as heatwaves sweep across Europe**

*Europe, Monday 18 July 2022* – Millions of children across Europe are in danger of respiratory disease, kidney disease and other health hazards as record-breaking temperatures sweep across the continent according to warnings from medics.

Save the Children said today that this assessment should be a warning call for leaders to take urgent action on the climate crisis, in order to reduce children's exposure to dangerous heatwaves and protect future generations.

The past week has seen children in France, Spain and Portugal face extreme heatwaves and wildfires that have forced tens of thousands of people from their homes. Already, [more than 360 people](#) have died of the heat in Spain, where temperatures reached 47 degrees Celsius at the end of last week.

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom, for the first time in history, the Met office issued a ['Red' warning](#) for exceptional heat as parts of the country are expected to experience temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius today.

The climate crisis is making these kinds of extreme weather events more frequent and severe. According to research by Save the Children and Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), [Born into the Climate Crisis](#), on average under the initial Paris Agreement reduction pledges, children who were born in 2020 are likely to face almost seven times as many scorching heatwaves and twice as many wildfires as their grandparents.

The more that children are exposed to extreme heat, the greater their risk of respiratory and kidney disease, fever, and electrolyte imbalance, which can disrupt a range of critical functions, including heart and neurological functions, according to a Lancet study. It can also cause severe dehydration, exhaustion and heatstroke, which if untreated can quickly damage the brain, heart, kidneys and muscles, being fatal in some cases.

Keeping hydrated, staying as cool as possible and staying out of the sun can all lower the chances of becoming sick.

And if we take urgent action to limit warming temperatures to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, we will reduce the additional lifetime exposure of babies to heatwaves by 45%, and to wildfires by 10%, Save the Children said.

Yolande Wright, Director of Child Poverty and Climate at Save the Children, said: *"Sadly, the reality of these heatwaves is not simply more leisure time in the park or on the beach. These high temperatures are dangerous to our health and to our lives – particularly for children, who are more vulnerable due to their ongoing physical development and lower capacity to regulate body temperature."*

Children affected by inequality and discrimination, such as those from lower-income families or refugee communities, are more at risk, Save the Children said, because they are most likely to lack access to quality healthcare, have underlying health conditions or be malnourished.

They are also often left behind when adapting to the heat. Across Europe and in the UK, families on lower incomes are less likely to have access to cooler, more spacious housing, and cooling systems such as air conditioning units or fans.

Skyrocketing energy costs and the universal cost of living crisis are also seeing families forced to make critical decisions between using electricity to power fans, fridges and freezers and feeding their children, the child rights group said.

Yolande Wright said: *“As the world gets warmer, and no sign of sufficient action to limit warming, it is children, with their whole lives ahead of them, who bear the brunt. But the climate crisis also disproportionately impacts children from low- and middle-income countries, and in disadvantaged communities.*

*“But there is hope: the world has the resources and tools required to ensure every child’s wellbeing on a healthy planet for generations to come. We need leaders to do everything in their power to limit warming temperatures to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, and to set out proper plans to help communities adapt to our new normal.*

*“We know fundamental changes are needed to address both widening inequalities and climate chaos. Otherwise we are failing our children.”*

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Aktuelle Informationen finden Sie auf Twitter [@SaveChildrenDE](https://twitter.com/SaveChildrenDE).**

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#### **Über Save the Children**

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in rund 120 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben sowie frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.