



Heat and Health: Approaches in North Rhine-Westphalia

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Unit Fundamental Issues, Heat and Health Protection



Status quo in Germany

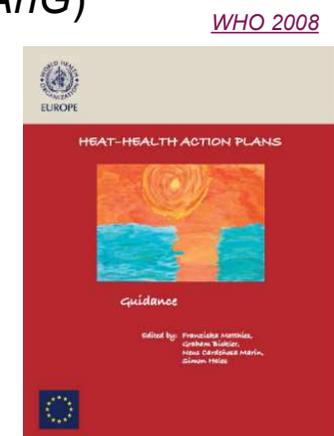
Climate Adaptation

- Federal Climate Adaptation Act 2024 (“*Klimaanpassungsgesetz*” - KAnG)
- Federal Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change 2024
- No legal obligation for heat health action planning –
“*climate adaptation concepts must take into account relevant plans (...)* such as existing heat health action plans (...)” (KAnG §12)

Heat Health Action Planning

- WHO 2008 guidance → German recommendations 2017
- Various political, scientific and umbrella organisation emphasise the importance of heat health action planning

→ Growing consensus on importance, but no legal mandate



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Bundesministerium
für Umwelt, Naturschutz,
Bau und Reaktorsicherheit

AG GAK 2017

Bund/Länder Ad-hoc Arbeitsgruppe ‚Gesundheitliche Anpassung an die Folgen
des Klimawandels (GAK)‘
Berlin, Deutschland

Handlungsempfehlungen für die
Erstellung von Hitzeaktionsplänen
zum Schutz der menschlichen
Gesundheit



Status quo in North Rhine-Westphalia

2022: NRW Health Conference 2022, focus on *"Climate change and climate adaptation from the perspective of health protection"*, demanding e.g.,

- Examine the creation of an integrated heat health action plan at state level
- Substantial support for heat health action planning at municipal level

2023: *"Key measures for heat and health protection"*

- Coordination and cooperation
- Strengthening communication
- Supporting municipalities
- Evaluating and monitoring

2025: *"Law on the Public Health Service of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (ÖGDG NRW)"*

- §9 (4): *"recommended to monitor and assess the consequences of climate change on human health, to educate the population (...) take appropriate measures within its own area of responsibility, including heat protection"*



MAGS 2022

Kernmaßnahmen
Gesundheitsbezogener
Hitzeschutz Nordrhein-Westfalen
Landesebene

Umsetzungsbeginn 2023
Stand: 12.04.2023



State Coordination Centre for Heat and Health Protection



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- Established in May 2023 with goals of:
 - strengthening communication and cooperation at state level,
 - supporting municipalities on heat and health protection etc.
- “Central Network for Heat and Health Protection in NRW” (ZNGH NRW)
 - interdisciplinary network, meeting 2x yearly (before and after summer)
 - 4 working groups: heat and health in healthcare facilities, municipal heat health action planning, heat and health communication, equality for heat and health





Strengthening communication on heat and health protection

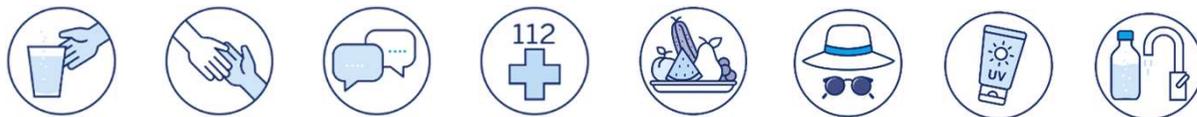
- **High costs** – Developing own materials is costly
- **Design restrictions** – External materials limited by corporate design & printing rules
- **Inconsistent messages** – Information on heat & health varies across sources
- **Limited expertise** – Lack of experience in creating effective information materials
- **Duplication of efforts** – Parallel processes in municipalities



Strengthening communication on heat and health

Campaign “Sun. Heat. Protection!”

- Features:
 - General population focus with target-group specific information
 - Simple texts, graphics and pictograms
 - Multilingual (de, en, tr, pl, ar, ru)
 - Adaptable for municipalities, healthcare facilities etc.
- Flyer and three poster designs:
 - “*stay cool indoors*”
 - “*stay safe outdoors*”
 - “*stay strong together*”



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Strengthening communication on heat and health

Communication Catalogue

- Freely copyable heat-related health information:
 - Risks & effects of heat
 - Heat-related illnesses, symptoms and measures
 - Practical tips (home, outdoors, food, sleep etc.)
 - Personal heat protection for workers
- Tailored to four target groups:
 - General population
 - Children & families
 - Patients, people in need of care, elderly
 - Healthcare employees
- Guidance for implementation:
 - How to design flyers & posters
 - Social media content creation

for local authorities,
healthcare providers
and anyone who wants
to communicate on
heat and health





Advising municipalities on heat and health protection

- **Voluntary framework** – No legally binding requirements
- **Limited funding** – Lack of financial support for resources, staff, implementation etc.
- **Low perceived relevance** – Doubts about effectiveness or lack of urgency
- **Uneven progress** – Municipalities are at very different planning stages
- **Different focus and scope** – Municipalities are free to define individual focus and scope of heat health action planning



Advising municipalities on heat health protection

Practical Guides

- Facility-specific heat protection plans:
 - Hospitals
 - Inpatient care and residential facilities

- Municipal heat health action planning:
 - Districts (*Kreise*)
 - District-free cities (*kreisfreie Städte*)

- Outlines systematic and comprehensive approach (public health policy-cycle)
- Modular structure enables individualised-application
- Recommendations for action





Resources for municipal heat health action planning



Checklist

A-01 Quick start checklist

Framework conditions

- B-01** Climate change and health in NRW
- B-02** Heat warnings from the DWD
- B-03** Health effects
- B-04** Risk factors
- B-05** Legal framework
- B-06** Overarching plans
- B-07** Positions on heat action planning
- B-08** Historical origins
- B-09** Further resources

Overall process management

- C-01** Structuring planning
- C-02** Establishing heat health action planning
- C-03** Defining responsibilities
- C-04** Providing resources
- C-05** Organising participation
- C-06** Designing communication

Analysis

- C-07** Reviewing preliminary work
- C-08** Determining heat exposure
- C-09** Determining heat sensitivity
- C-10** Analysing heat health impact

Conception

- C-11** Defining objectives
- C-12** Defining areas of action
- C-13** Developing measures
- C-14** Writing up measure-profiles
- C-15** Drawing up a heat health action plan

Implementation

- C-16** Utilising a communication cascade
- C-17** Implementing measures

Evaluation

- C-18** Establishing monitoring
- C-19** Conducting evaluations



Advising municipalities on heat health protection

Networking

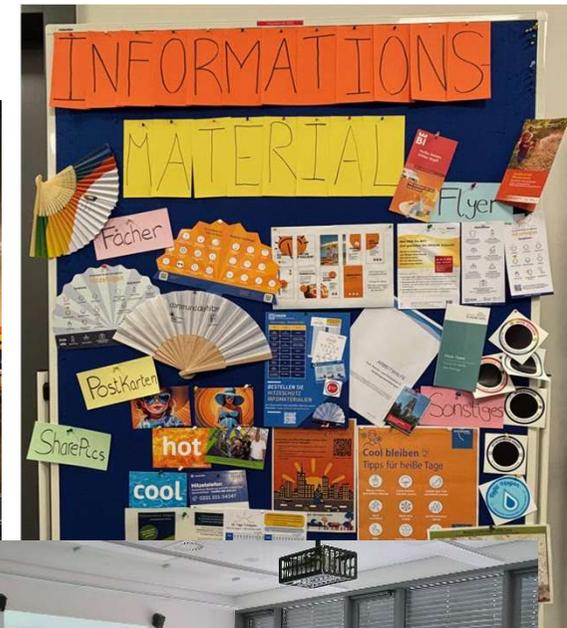
- Municipal network meetings on heat health action planning:
 - Platform for inter-municipal exchange
 - Practical experiences and best practices
 - Promoting cooperative structures

Tailored Support

- Individual consultations based on municipal needs and planning progress

Knowledge Transfer

- Regular dissemination of relevant information
- Keynote speeches in municipal committees





Challenges, success factors and indicators of success

Challenges

- No legal obligation to implement municipal heat health action plans
- Limitations for support when health sector is not involved

Success factors

- Networking meetings as a platform for knowledge sharing and collaboration
- Practical guides developed collaboratively – created with and for municipalities

Indicators of success

- Active participation and engagement in networking meetings
- Continuous evaluation and feedback on practical guides and other materials



Contact

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