

KEYNOTE 3. Race to the Finish: Our Evolving Understanding of the Role of Active Mobility for a Sustainable Future

Francesca Racioppi

World Health Organization European Centre for Environment and Health, Bonn, Germany

The week after HEPA Europe 2025, political leaders from around the world will meet in New York at the Fourth High-Level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and the promotion of mental health and well-being (HLM4). They will gather with the ambition of adopting a Political Declaration to correct the course towards 2030, based on the findings of a progress report showing that, more than halfway to 2030, the world is not on track to meet the commitment to reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through prevention and treatment and promoting mental health and well-being by 2030 (target 3.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs)¹.

In this challenging context, multisectoral action for NCDs prevention and control emerges as one of the key priority areas to accelerate progress. A key positive driver for action is the growing understanding of the positive role of active mobility on top and above the NCD agenda, allowing to make progress simultaneously on a number of the SDGs, most notably those related to Good health and well-being (SDG3), Reducing inequalities (SDG10), Sustainable cities and communities (SDG11), and Climate Action (SDG13).

Recognising the links between active mobility and the multiple societal aspirations it may contribute to can be highly empowering for policy makers, professionals, and civil society organisations from different policy and disciplinary perspectives, if they can see their own stakes supported. The WHO European Centre for Environment and Health has worked with experts and representatives of Member States from different sectors and competences to bring together the best available evidence underpinning advocacy arguments supporting the promotion of active mobility. The result of this work is a social media campaign launched on World Bicycle Day, targeting diverse audiences and presenting them with “100 reasons for walking and cycling”.

Taking an evolutionary perspective, the intervention will explain how scientific evidence from a range of disciplinary domains has been brought together to advocate the positive role of active mobility for health, the environment, society, and the economy, because “*Whatever your reason, walking and cycling are the best ways to move forward*”.

¹ *Progress on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and the promotion of mental health and well-being, 30 January 2025 (document A/79/762)* [unsg-report-on-ncds-2025.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/pd/datastore/indicators/indicators-ncds-2025.pdf)

