
PRESS RELEASE

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Cities need to build resilience towards increasingly common heatwaves

The coronavirus has exposed elderly citizens as a high-risk group, but an increasingly warmer Europe poses yet another serious threat. More Europeans are dying from heatwaves than from all other natural hazards combined. We need to do more to prepare and adapt our cities for the future, concludes Sweco in the latest of its Urban Insight reports.

Extreme heat events will increase in intensity, frequency and duration in the future. The effects of these and other climate changes are becoming increasingly tangible in our fast-growing, densely populated cities. Meanwhile, Europeans are getting older. The number of people older than 65 is rapidly increasing, with those aged over 80 expected to more than double by 2060.

Inhabitants who are already vulnerable, such as the elderly and the very young, usually pay the highest price. Therefore, we need to manage and implement the necessary measures in our cities now in order to protect the most vulnerable.

“In the future, it is likely that more global pandemics will occur. What we need during such times is almost exactly the same as what we need during periods of heat. We need access to spacious green and blue areas close to our homes where we can safely walk, play, run, cycle and play sports: places where we can maintain physical distance while supporting our mental and physical well-being,” says Enrico Moens, Senior Expert Climate Change Adaptation at Sweco in the Netherlands.

An increasing number of technologies are available today for managing the threat of extreme heat. A more passive design for buildings, and dynamic thermoregulation of buildings through building envelope shading, are good examples. Improved and innovative spatial planning techniques for integrating urban resilience in plans and projects are also positive examples. Social solutions, like behaviour change and building effective communication networks are also vital.

[Building resilience: being young and getting old in a hotter Europe](#) is the third in a series of [Urban Insight](#) reports from Sweco on the topic Climate Action. In the report, our experts highlight the specific data, facts and science that are needed to plan and design safe and resilient future urban environments.

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