Gesundheit Österreich GmbH

Austrian National Public Health Institute

Environmental (or socio-ecological) Sustainability

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Changing the Narrative on Long-Term Care: a celebration of the UN's International Day of Care and Support

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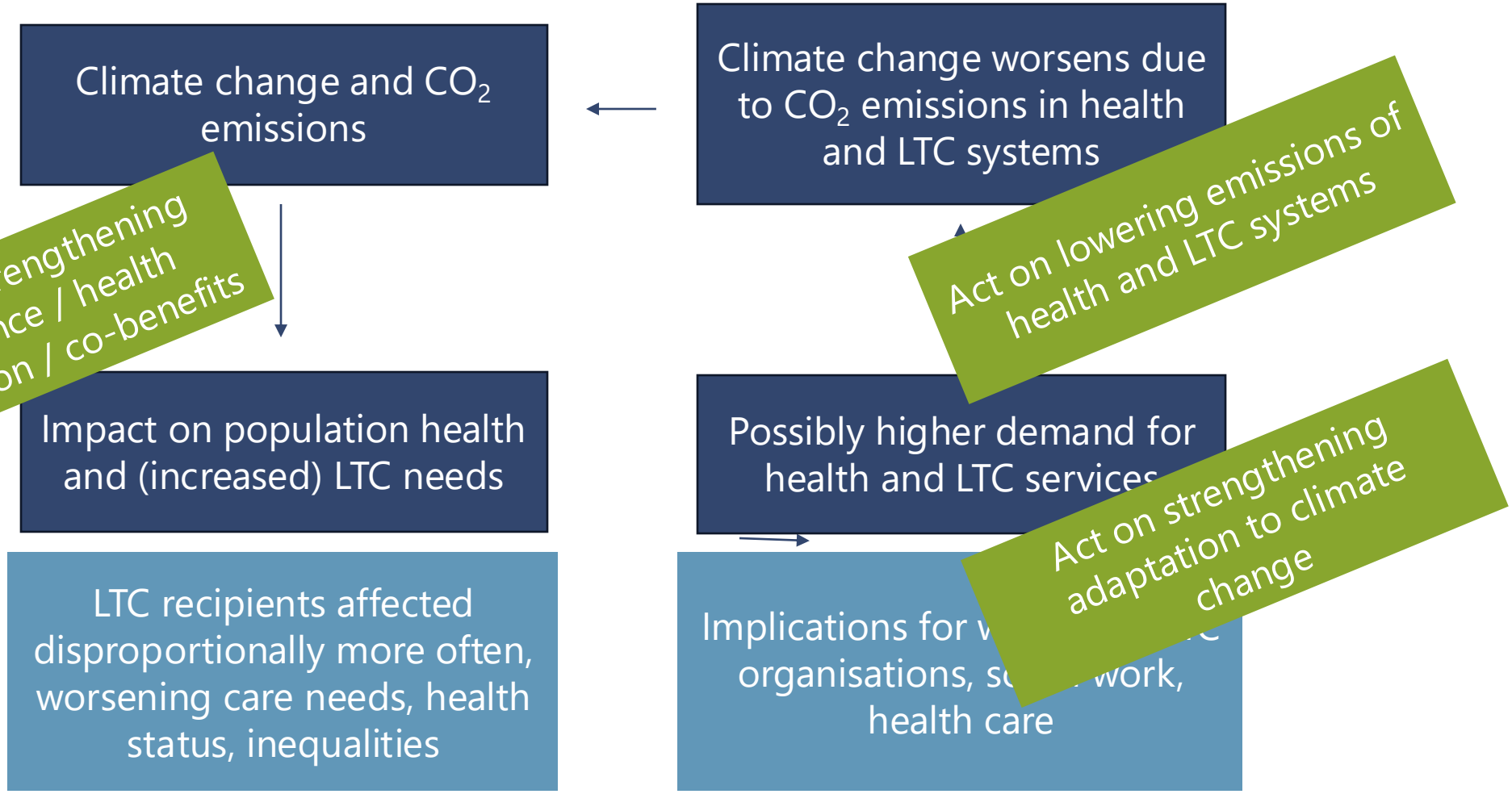
Further reading

- Schmidt, A.E. & Aigner, E. (forthcoming) *Long-Term Care and Climate Change* (Chapter 11), in: Pillemer, K. and Ayalon, L. (eds.) Aging and climate change. Policy Press.
- Schmidt, A.E. et al. (2024) [in German] *Climate change and long-term care*. Vienna: Austrian National Public Health Institute.

Rationale and definition



Definition of (socio-ecological) sustainability: "…meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN, 1987); addressing planetary boundaries also within the context of welfare states (Gough, 2021).

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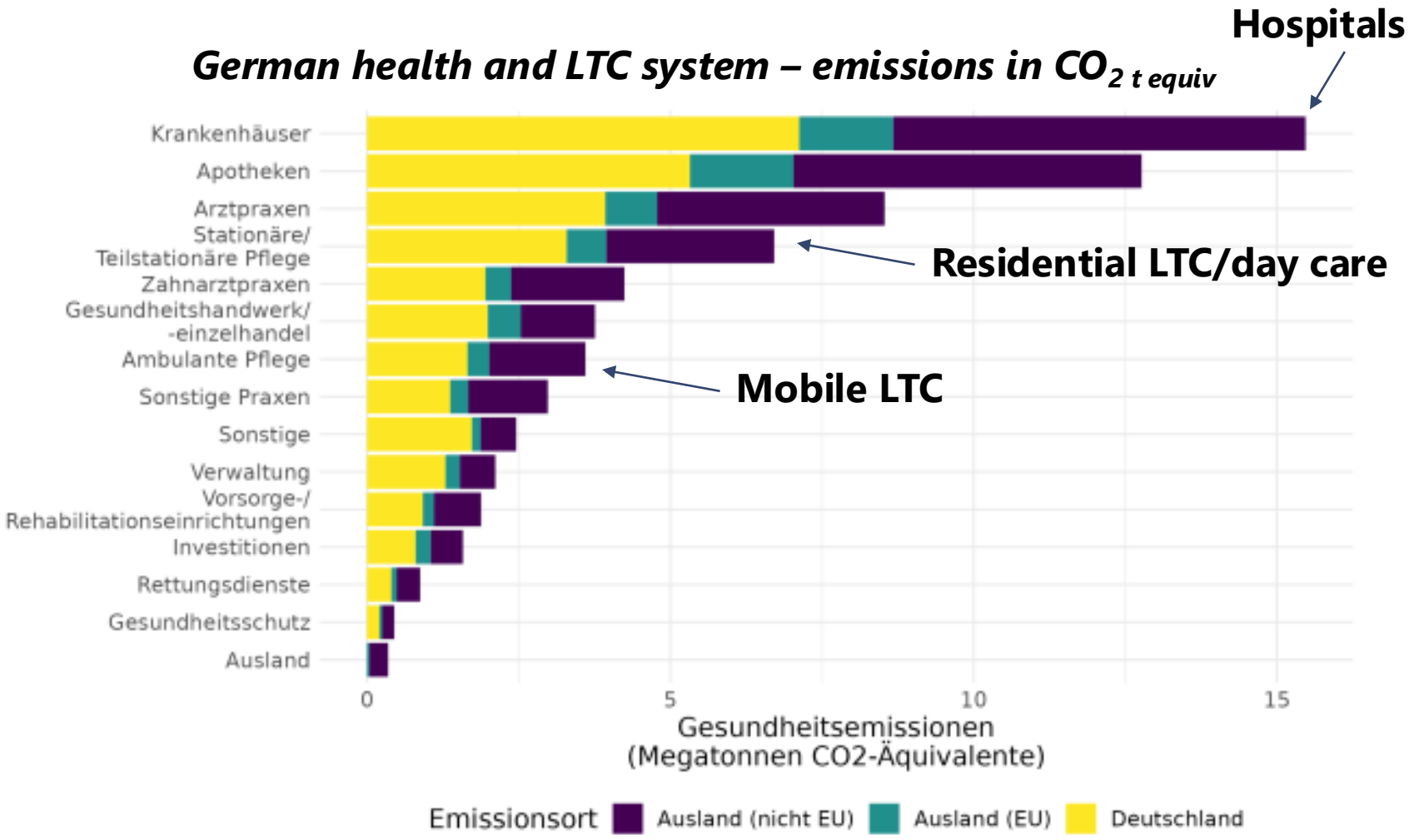
Ecological footprint of the LTC system

Health care systems account for ca. 4% of global carbon emissions (of which LTC is ca. 1/5) (cf. HCWH & ARUP, 2019; Pichler et al., 2023)

In LTC, emission sources include **heating and cooling in buildings, staff transport, single-use medical products, waste management and food systems** (graph cf. Pichler et al., 2023).



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Systemic ways forward – food for thought
(cf. Schmidt & Aigner, forthcoming)

1. **Transformational leadership -** organizational frameworks that emphasize disaster preparedness and ecological sustainability (Ali et al., 2023) but: these need to be reconciled with poor working conditions in LTC sector.
2. **Innovative models for aging-in-place**, supported by cohousing arrangements, embody core gerontological values by promoting autonomy, social integration, and environmental sustainability – see e.g. dementia villages in the Netherlands. Shared housing in walkable neighborhoods not only reduces emissions related to travel and energy use but also may address social isolation and increase resilience.
3. **Urban development models** may be extended to reflect a gerontological commitment to age-friendly environments e.g. creating green spaces and pedestrian zones in heat-vulnerable areas contribute simultaneously to older adults' physical and social well-being and to broader sustainability goals (Nieuwenhuijsen et al., 2024).

References

- Ali, H. et al. (2023). Enabling transformational leadership to foster disaster-resilient hospitals. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *20*(3).
- Gough, I. (2021). From welfare states to planetary wellbeing. In Béland, D., Morgan, K. J., Obinger, H., & Pierson, C. (eds.). The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State (p. 901-920). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Health Care Without Harm & ARUP. (2019). *Health care's climate footprint: How the health sector contributes to the global climate crisis and opportunities for action*. Brussels.
- Nieuwenhuijsen, M., et al. (2024). The Superblock model: A review of an innovative urban model for sustainability, liveability, health and well-being. *Environmental Research*, *251*, 118550. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envres.2024.118550
- Pichler, P.P. et al. (2023). *Sachbericht zum Projekt: Evidenzbasis Treibhausgasemissionen des deutschen Gesundheitswesens (GermanHealthCFP)*. Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.
- Schmidt, A.E. & Aigner, E. (forthcoming) *Long-Term Care and Climate Change* (Chapter 11), in: Pillemer, K. and Ayalon, L. (eds.) Aging and climate change. Policy Press.
- UN (1987) Brundtland, G. (1987). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future. United Nations General Assembly document A/42/427.