

## CAN Europe paper in submission to the consultation on the EU Adaptation Strategy

1. **Introduction**
2. **Europe's vulnerability**
3. **The future of EU Adaptation**
4. **The role of the MFF to support effective adaptation and resilience**

### Introduction

The EU's current Adaptation Strategy was launched in 2013 with the intention to scale up the European Union's resilience to the growing impacts of climate change that it is facing. The Strategy is the first attempt to set out EU-wide adaption and climate resilience and it sets a solid precedence for a more collective, coordinated and transboundary approach towards addressing climate impacts in Europe. However, further efforts are needed across Europe to address the challenges posed by a fast-changing climate.

Through the adoption and ratification of the Paris Agreement, the EU has committed to *"limit global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and of pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels."*

Countries also established an adaptation goal which aims to enhance *"adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change", and an aim to strengthen societies' ability to deal with the impacts of climate change"*.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), also agreed in 2015, identifies climate change as one of the drivers of disaster risk, and prioritises key actions to address the various causal factors associated with disaster risk.<sup>2</sup>

Agenda 2030 and in particular the Sustainable Development Goal no. 13 on climate change pinpoint the objective to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate change as a pre-requisite to achieve and safeguard sustainable development.<sup>3</sup>

Against this backdrop of international objectives and commitments, CAN Europe welcomes the initiative of the European Commission to review and improve its Strategy to adapt to our changing climate. The EU should lead the way in reducing its GHG emissions and limiting the global temperature rise in order to avoid dangerous climate change. However, it must be acknowledged that the global and EU economy will nonetheless face devastating impacts in a consequence of 1.5°C or 2°C global average temperature increase. It is therefore essential that the EU pursues effective and coherent adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts together with its mitigation action.

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/convention/application/pdf/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291\\_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

The opportunity to build the EU's resilience to climate change – particularly in vulnerable sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, infrastructure, biodiversity and development – is evident in many cross-cutting and re-enforcing EU policies.

In addition to the review and revision of the EU's Adaptation Strategy, the design of the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the upcoming Action Plan for sustainable financing, as well as the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) can greatly improve the integration of adaptation needs and measures through their policy direction, operational support, and plans.

## Europe's vulnerability

2016 was the hottest year on record globally, followed by records hit in 2017 and 2015. There is a clear trend in our climate system, with increasing levels of data showing the vulnerability of different regions and countries. However, to date adaptation to climate change in Europe has not been treated by governments with the same level of urgency as other climate-related issues. This status persists despite the stark figures and data available regarding Europe's vulnerability to climate change, and the multiple costs that our economy will face should we not prepare and adapt to current and future climate impacts.

### Temperature increase in Europe:

A 2017 report from the European Court of Auditors points out that by 2071-2100 under a scenario of a global average temperature increase of 2°C, Europe's climate will experience temperatures increases by far more than 2°C in certain regions, compared with 1961 to 1990 temperatures.

Winter temperatures could increase by an average of 5 to 8°C in some parts of Scandinavia while Summer temperatures could increase by an average of 3 to 4°C in most of Spain and in northern Scandinavia.<sup>4</sup>

### Impacts of temperature increase on the real economy:

The impacts and consequences of climate change across Europe will vary from country to country, with different sectors and ecosystems disproportionately affected, depending on geographical location and exposure to risk. Therefore, impacts will vary; from increased rainfall and storms in some regions to more frequent flooding and sea level rise in other regions. Some parts of Europe will suffer severe decreases in rainfall, leading to drought and exposure to extreme heat.

It should be noted that climate impacts in Europe – and their societal and economic consequences – already happening today. The EEA highlights that reported economic losses caused by weather and climate-related extremes in the EEA member countries from 1980 to 2015 was approximately €433 billion. Between 2010 and 2015 alone, the average annual loss amounted to €13.3 billion.<sup>5</sup>

While these figures give a glimpse into Europe's existing vulnerability in a changing climate, the increase in temperature will multiply the risks and costs to economies. Despite this trend, adaptation as a policy tool is **not treated by many governments, institutions or sectors as an essential element to the preparation and implementation of key EU policies and sectors.**

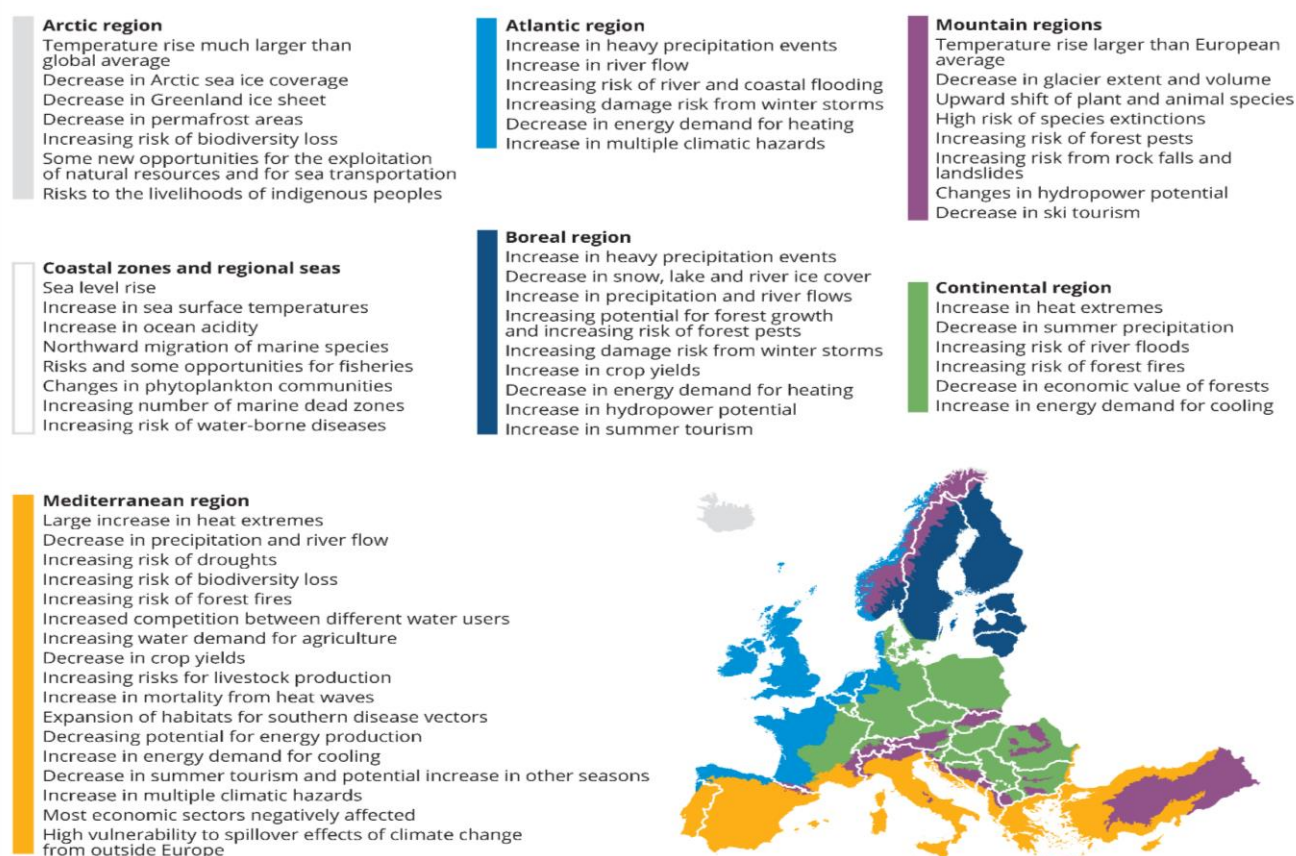
---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/NewsItem.aspx?nid=8787>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/direct-losses-from-weather-disasters-3/assessment>

For example, the European Court of Auditors recently pointed out there are no audits on how climate change can impact sectors such as agriculture or manufacturing in the EU. This lack of preparation is particularly worrying when considering that 56% of all projected economic impacts due to climate change in the future will be caused by productivity losses linked to workplace heat stress. Rather, the approach of public and private actors towards addressing climate impacts has been heavily reactive; since 2002, EU Member States have claimed over €5 billion from the European Solidarity Fund to address major natural disasters.<sup>6</sup>

### Map ES.1 Key observed and projected climate change and impacts for the main biogeographical regions in Europe



Source: European Environmental Agency (EEA)

<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/thefunds/doc/interventions\\_since\\_2002.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/thefunds/doc/interventions_since_2002.pdf)

In light of Europe's growing vulnerability to climate change, as well as its commitments to delivering the objectives of the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals, CAN Europe sets out its priorities for a more effective, forward-looking and coherent EU Adaptation Strategy that is fit for purpose to address the EU's vulnerability to current and future climate shocks.

We look at the following avenues in which the current Strategy can be strengthened to ensure that EU Member States protect their economies and local communities against climate impacts:

- **A robust instrument that guarantees implementation of ambitious adaptation plans**
- **The role of the EU Budget to support effective climate adaptation and mainstreaming across all policy areas**

### **The future EU Adaptation Strategy: A robust instrument that guarantees implementation of ambitious and effective adaptation plans**

The current EU Adaptation Strategy is a useful tool to stimulate, facilitate and support action across the EU. But as this paper previously highlighted, more analysis and investment as well as more coordinated action will be needed to address climate change impacts in Europe. In addition, more efforts will also be needed to deal with extra-territorial impacts, ie. those impacts that happen outside of Europe but which have direct knock-on effects on the EU economy and society.

The future EU Adaptation Strategy should build on its existing efforts and measures to ensure that the EU, its Member States and key public and private services and sectors play a more active and responsible role in adaptation to climate change.

Firstly, the next EU Adaptation Strategy should guarantee that all authorities and actors are adequately equipped to limit their vulnerability to climate impacts; for example, through including prevention and preparedness measures within policies and investment plans.

Secondly, the next EU Adaptation Strategy should also ensure that exposed actors have both the support and capacity to implement the appropriate services to deal with any climate related events and impacts that occur; in particular, more vulnerable sectors and communities across EU member states.

#### **Adaptation to climate change should be a legal requirement:**

In order to guarantee that European economies and their citizens are properly protected from climate change impacts, the next Strategy should be a **legally-binding instrument that guarantees greater prioritisation, transparent integration and coherent implementation of adaptation in all EU policies**. Adaptation measures can also encompass prevention and preparedness measures within policies and investments; in particular key policy areas such as agriculture and rural development, biodiversity and conservation, infrastructure, transport, fisheries, and energy.

### Update National Adaptation Plans and complete and publish climate vulnerability assessments at local, regional & national level

The EU Adaptation Strategy should require all EU Member States to regularly – every 3-5 years – **update their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), in line with the requirements of the Paris Agreement** and the global goal on adaptation. This effort should include strengthening the mainstreaming element of adaptation to enshrine key activities.

For example, the 8-action implementation structure which had a strong focus on information and prevention, can be strengthened to mainstream climate adaptation into EU funds, mostly those funding regional and rural development.

In addition, NAPs can ensure full exploration and use of nature based solutions which should receive guaranteed support from EU funding

A more robust instrument will ensure that responsible actors namely states, cities and local authorities **regularly perform and publish climate vulnerability assessments based on the most up-to-date information and data** available and reflecting the latest scientific evidence on the pace and impacts of climate change. The assessments should also directly feed into the development of NAPs, and inform on actions to be taken at city and local level and towards regional planning and development.

### Annual multi-stakeholder dialogues on adaptation, risk and resilience

The next EU Adaptation Strategy can continue to facilitate capacity-building, regular dialogue and information exchange and progress reports on adaptation plans and sectoral measures put in place at national, regional and local level.

Multi-stakeholder dialogues should be used as an opportunity by both the European Commission and EU Member States to demonstrate challenges, efforts and measures identified in relation to adaptation.

### Working together to address transboundary risks

There is EU added value through support provided to both identify and address transboundary risks associated with climate change. The level of exposure faced by various EU Member States, which will range from low-level risk to high-level risk cannot be addressed by any one country or government alone. More coordinated planning and policy development will be necessary if the EU is to mitigate its risk against the severe consequences of climate change outside of its borders.

The future EU Adaptation Strategy provides the ideal support base for countries facing adverse indirect and transboundary climate impacts. A stronger EU-wide Strategy should therefore set up an early-warning system – for inside and outside the EU – making use of already existing structures and mechanisms such as the European Environment Agency. This system can better detect vulnerabilities and provide recommendations to address them; including risks stemming from climate change impacts in areas such as the EU Neighbourhood or global supply chains and the effect they might have on EU citizens.

## The role of the EU Budget to support effective climate adaptation and mainstreaming across all policy areas<sup>7</sup>

The evaluation of the EU Adaptation Strategy comes at a very important moment, when the EU prepares for the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

Essential adaptation measures and services rely heavily on public funding; therefore, it is crucial that the next EU budget delivers on and even strengthens the EU Adaptation Strategy.

This includes the improvement of climate mainstreaming in the post-2020 EU budget which should encompass the strategic integration of climate action – mitigation and adaptation – in national investment planning and delivering on the long-term objectives of the Paris Agreement.

There are a number of key principles we identify in relation to the role of the EU budget in supporting climate action, and adaptation in particular.

### Climate-proof EU financing to strengthen resilience

The Paris Agreement requires all financial flows to be made consistent with zero carbon and clean energy development. This requires the EU to not only meet its climate specific spending target, but also **that the whole EU budget has to be 100 % climate proof**. A transparent and robust climate proofing assessment of project proposals submitted to the European Commission and on national and regional level should be implemented; the assessment should include efforts to meet medium and long-term decarbonisation goals as well as measures to strengthen resilience and adaptation to climate impacts.

### Increase and improve the quality and transparency of climate specific spending

In 2013, the EU adopted a 20% target for climate-related expenditure in the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), 2014-2020.<sup>8</sup>

While the political impetus to integrate climate change into EU financing has been encouraging, further efforts are needed to ensure that EU funding is meeting its full potential to support a decarbonised and climate resilient economy.

Both the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors (ECA) have found that the 20% climate spending target is at high risk of being missed.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, the ECA found that there has been no differentiation in reporting between mitigation and adaptation measures at the level of implementation of EU funded policies and programmes.

This leads to difficulty in assessing how much support is going towards the different actions, and to what extent those actions can be genuinely remarked as climate action.

The weak terminology of “climate-related expenditure” allows for a very loose definition of what project (or element of a project) can be reported as contributing to European and international climate objectives.

For example, more than half of the suggested climate action is accounted for as “climate change adaptation” within the direct payments to farmers and the rural development funding of the Common Agricultural Policy; it could be strongly contested that those actions should not be defined as climate adaptation.

---

<sup>7</sup> To read CAN Europe’s full position on the post-2020 MFF please go to: <http://www.caneurope.org/docman/fossil-fuel-subsidies-1/3184-can-europe-position-on-the-eu-budget-post-2020-september-2017/file>

<sup>8</sup> European Council, February 2013

<sup>9</sup> European Court of Auditors (2016): <http://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=39853>, [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/lib/COM-2016-603/COM-2016-603\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/lib/COM-2016-603/COM-2016-603_en.pdf)



**It is therefore essential that the next MFF increases its climate-specific support from 20% to 40% and strengthens the assessment of the climate performance of the EU budget.**

**The European Commission and EU Member States should act on the ECA's recommendation to differentiate between climate change mitigation and adaptation.**

Further to this, programmes should also take a more stringent approach to reporting climate actions; we assert that even the term 'climate relevant' is stronger than 'climate-related', where more concrete contributions to overall climate action are spelled out.

#### **Vertical coherence between national adaptation plans and EU funding**

Based on the principle of fully climate proofing EU financing and its use at national and local level, **EU support through key structural and development policies should be subject to Member State efforts to fully adapt to climate change.**

For example, recipients of EU funds for infrastructure projects in transport, energy, agriculture and rural development and digitalisation should be required to have both an adaptation strategy and actionable adaptation plans prior to receiving the resources. The strategy and plan should be directly informed on the vulnerabilities of regions, sectors and services in Member States, and the efforts being pursued to address those vulnerabilities. They should also include the use of nature-based solutions to adaptation which can have co-benefits for mitigation measures, biodiversity and eco-system protection.

This approach would allow for a bottom-up process of building Europe's resilience in a democratic and transparent way, while ensuring that EU funds are spent more efficiently in projects that commit to be future-proofed.

ENDS

#### **Contact:**

Maeve McLynn

[maeve@caneurope.org](mailto:maeve@caneurope.org)