



Assessment of climate action

How to assess the mainstreaming
of climate action in

Partnership Agreements

European Structural and
Investment Funds (ESIF)
2014-2020

Introduction

This Fact Sheet outlines the main issues to be considered when assessing the mainstreaming of climate action in the Partnership Agreements for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) in the period 2014-2020.

The five funds concerned are the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

For each of the five funds, separate Fact Sheets outline the potential for mainstreaming of climate action as well as how to assess the mainstreaming of climate action in the programmes.

The Partnership Agreement (PA) covers the programming of all EU support to ESIF in the Member State concerned. The Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)¹ for the ESIF defines the requirements of the content of the PAs.

Guidance issued by the Commission provides details on the structure and content of the PAs.

The assessment of climate mainstreaming in PAs will focus on the:

- Alignment with the Europe 2020 strategy;
- Effective implementation; and the
- Approach to territorial development.

It is essential that the assessment gives due regard to the specific country context and relevant climate mitigation and adaptation aspects in the Member State.

The assessment will not only investigate how climate action needs have been analysed in the Agreement, but also indicate areas where further climate action would be relevant.

Alignment with the Europe 2020 Strategy

The climate assessment of the PA will address the climate action needs of the Member State with reference to the thematic objectives of the CPR and the territorial challenges and its contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Europe 2020 Strategy targets a shift to a low-carbon, resource-efficient and climate resilient economy. The relevant needs are those related to the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the protection of the economy against the expected impacts of climate change.

The assessment will further explore whether the approach to alignment with the Europe 2020 Strategy has taken into account the relevant Country Specific Council Recommendations (CSR) and national and regional climate strategies.

The summary of the ex-ante evaluations of the programmes will be reviewed for the consistency of findings with the proposed strategy for use of the ESIF.

The proposals for the selection of thematic objectives for each fund will be assessed on whether or not climate change actions have been properly mainstreamed across programmes and objectives. The focus of the assessment is further outlined in the table below. The assessment will verify that the foreseen results also include climate-action performance.

A key indicator for climate action at Member State level is the share of ESIF support that will be used for climate change objectives. This relates to the target that climate related expenditure should correspond to at least 20 % of the EU budget in the period 2014-2020.

Finally, the climate assessment will address the principle of sustainable development of CPR Article 8 and how climate change mitigation and adaptation are promoted in the preparation of the PA and OPs, as well as in their implementation.

Priority axes and investment priorities

The climate assessment will focus on the investment priorities which might address challenges relating to the labour force transition towards low-carbon skills, jobs and working methods.

For each of the priority axes, the climate assessment will cover relevant investment priorities, types of actions, and the selection of operations.

The assessment will verify consistency between, on the one hand, the strategic approach and the anticipated contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy, and, on the other hand, the specific objectives, actions envisaged and principles for selection of operations.

Furthermore, the assessment will investigate how the principle of sustainable development has been addressed in the PA.

Effective implementation

The assessment will cover the areas identified for complementary action of the ESIF in the field of climate change. Further, the assessment will explore how the Agreement ensures synergies between climate action with other parts of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and with the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP).

The assessment will verify that the use of other EU and national funding instruments in climate finance has been considered to complement the funding of climate actions. This includes co-financing of operations with the European Investment Bank (EIB).

The summary of ex-ante conditionalities for EU support will be assessed with regard to climate aspects concerning TO4 and TO5.

The climate assessment will address the required reinforcement of the administrative capacity of the authorities in order to implement and monitor climate actions, as relevant.

Approach to territorial development

The strategy for territorial development will be assessed for incorporating relevant climate-related issues and taking advantage of synergies in integrated climate action. This will cover the approach at the regional as well as sub-regional levels, including the use of territorial development tools.

¹ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, published in the Official Journal, OJ 347 20.12.2013

Partnership Agreements – assessment of the climate mainstreaming

Agreement part	Main areas for climate assessment	Reference ²	Template ³
1	Strategic approach and arrangements for alignment with the Europe 2020 strategy and the Fund specific missions	CPR 15.1	Section 1
1.1	<p>Analysis of disparities, development needs and growth potentials with reference to the TOs and the territorial challenges</p> <p>The assessment will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Needs for climate change mitigation with regard to the national Europe 2020 targets - Integration of any needs in the area of climate change deriving from the European Semester and CSR - Alignment with the strategic guiding principles of the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) - Integration of the needs identified in national or regional climate change strategies and action plans - Analysis of potential risks deriving from exposure to climate change whether from gradual changes or more extreme weather events - Consistency of needs analysis for climate change adaptation as against identified risks and their impacts - Whether the needs for cross border climate action have been taken into account - Coherence of funding priorities with the identified needs for climate action - Visibility of support to the EU's commitment that climate action objectives will represent at least 20 % of EU spending in the period 2014-2020 - Requirements across the programmes to ensure the promotion of the sustainable development principle with a view to climate change 	CPR 15.1 (a)(i)	Section 1.1 1), cf. Section 1.4.
1.2	<p>A summary of the ex-ante evaluations of the programmes or key findings of the ex-ante evaluations of the PA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess overall findings for the contribution of programmes to the climate change priorities and the Europe 2020 targets - Assess the findings of ex-ante evaluations regarding the selection of funding priorities and thematic objectives for the ESI Funds with regard to the needs for climate action - Assess summary of coordination of EU and national funding instruments for climate action potential - Assess findings on coherence of financial allocations for supporting the climate objectives of the programmes and relating to the EU's commitment that climate action objectives will represent at least 20 % of EU spending in the period 2014-2020 	CPR 15.1 (a)(ii)	Section 1.2
1.3	<p>Selected thematic objectives and main expected results</p> <p>The assessment will have particular focus on thematic objectives 4 and 5, but will also assess the mainstreaming of climate action into the other thematic objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify inclusion of TO4 across the relevant ESI Funds - Assess inclusion of TO5 across the relevant ESI Funds - Assess overall selection of TOs with regard to the identified climate action needs, the Europe 2020 climate targets and the CSR - Verify that the main results sought by fund and TO include, where relevant, climate action performance - Assess, where relevant, the outlined results for each TO with regard to the climate targets of Europe 2020 and CSR 	CPR 15.1 (a)(iii)	Section 1.3
1.4	<p>Indicative allocation of support by the Union</p> <p>The assessment will have a specific focus on the indicative allocations for climate change objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess indicative allocation of support by TO and by ESI Fund in relation to the climate action needs of the country and each of the funds. - Verify that the support to reach climate objectives is appropriate with regards to the needs of the country and the EU's commitment that climate action objectives will represent at least 20 % of EU spending in the period 2014-2020. Cf. also Table section 1.1. above 	CPR 15.1 (a)(iv) CPR 8	Section 1.4, cf. Section 1.1.

² Reference to the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), where e.g. CPR 8.1 refers to CPR article 8.1

³ Template refers to the "Draft template and guidelines on the content of the Partnership Agreement", published 3 March 2014

Agreement part		Main areas for climate assessment	Reference ²	Template ³
1.5	The application of horizontal principles and policy objectives for the implementation of the ESI Funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify how the principle of sustainable development with regards to climate change mitigation and adaptation has been taken into account in the preparation of programmes - Assess arrangements across programmes to ensure the promotion of the sustainable development principle with regards to climate change in programme implementation - Assess any other horizontal policy measures and objectives foreseen to promote the shift to a low carbon and climate resilient economy 	CPR 15.1 (a)(v) CPR 8	Section 1.5
2	Arrangements for effective implementation		CPR 15.1 (b)	Section 2
2.1	Arrangements in line with the institutional framework of the Member States that ensure coordination between the ESI Funds and other Union and national funding instruments and with the EIB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess any arrangements for ensuring coordination of ESIF with regards to climate action - Verify whether identified areas for complementary financing with other EU and national funding sources, as well as other available funding (such as the EEA Financial Mechanism) include climate action - Assess foreseen involvement of the EIB in co-financing projects involving important climate action - Assess whether the contributions of national instruments are essential for meeting climate objectives 	CPR 15.1 (b)(i)	Section 2.1
2.2	Summary of the assessment of the fulfilment of applicable ex-ante conditionalities	<p>The assessment will cover the climate change relevant ex-ante conditionalities of TO4 and TO5 and will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Screen information provided for the ex-ante conditionalities to be fulfilled with regards to their climate aspects 	CPR 15.1 (b)(iii)	Section 2.3
2.3	Assessment of whether there is a need to reinforce the administrative capacity of the authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify that the assessment covers needs in the area of climate action - Assess any needs analysis across programmes for capacity strengthening in the field of climate action 	CPR 15.1 (b)(v)	Section 2.5
3	Integrated approach to territorial development		CPR 15.2 (a)	Section 3
3.1	Description of the strategy for territorial development covering the use of the ESI Funds at regional and sub-regional levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify that the integrated approach addresses climate related issues with important territorial effects - Assess whether the approach adequately reflects the needs for integrated action and the synergies in such actions 	CPR 15.2 (a)(i)	Section 3
3.2	Arrangements to ensure an integrated approach to using ESIF for the territorial development of specific sub-regional areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify that the integrated approach addresses climate related issues with important territorial effects - Assess whether the approach adequately reflects the needs for integrated action and the synergies in such actions - Assess whether the approach to community-led development has taken into consideration climate-related issues and objectives - Assess whether the selection of types of territories for Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) has considered climate issues - Verify that the principles for selection of areas for sustainable urban development have given adequate attention to climate challenges - If climate action is a priority area for cross-border cooperation then assess proposed approach - If relevant, assess degree of complementary climate related action of ESI Funds in Integrated Territorial Investments, in sustainable urban development and in cross-border cooperation 	CPR 15.2 (a)(i) CPR 15.2 (a)(ii) CPR 32-35	Section 3.1

² Reference to the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), where e.g. CPR 8.1 refers to CPR article 8.1

³ Template refers to the "Draft template and guidelines on the content of the Partnership Agreement", published 3 March 2014

Background information

Why do we need to take climate action?

Tackling climate change is one of the great challenges facing the EU and its global partners.

The need for urgent action is clearly reflected in the Europe 2020 Strategy and the EU 20/20/20 targets for climate change mitigation, i.e. to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20 % (30 % if the conditions are right); to reduce energy consumption by 20 % through increased energy efficiency; and to meet 20 % of energy needs from renewable sources.

Climate change is already happening and its effects will become more severe in coming years. So we need to take action on mitigation, and we also need to act to protect people, buildings, infrastructure, businesses and ecosystems from the impacts. These adaptation measures, which will make us more resilient to the adverse impacts of climate change, will become increasingly important. Adaptation measures can be taken at national, regional and local levels. Adaptation measures include, for example, actions that can stimulate more efficient water use, and the development and implementation of design standards that protect constructions against the impacts of future climate conditions and extreme weather events. Other examples include building flood defences, raising the levels of dykes, and replacing exposed power overhead lines with underground cables. It also includes measures to take advantage of possible opportunities arising from climate change. The aim of the EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change is to help make Europe more climate resilient and enhance its preparedness and capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change.

Building a low-carbon and climate resilient economy will enhance Europe's competitiveness, create new, greener jobs, improve energy security and bring health benefits to Europe's citizens by making the air cleaner.

EU funding over the period 2014-2020

The EU budget has an important role to play in promoting climate action in all sectors of the European economy and in catalysing the investments needed to meet the climate targets and ensure climate resilience. Investment is needed in a wide range of technologies that improve energy efficiency, in renewable energy sources and related infrastructure, and in the adaptation to climate change.

Based on a proposal put forward by the Commission, the European Council concluded on 7-8 February 2013 that 'Climate action objectives will represent at least 20 % of EU spending in the period 2014-2020 and therefore be reflected in the appropriate instruments to ensure that they contribute to strengthen energy security, building a low-carbon, resource efficient and climate resilient economy that will enhance Europe's competitiveness and create more and greener jobs'.

European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)

ESIF include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

The ultimate responsibility for implementing the EU budget lies with the European Commission, but the ESIF are implemented under 'shared management', with individual EU countries actually distributing the funds and managing expenditure. Checks and balances are in place to ensure the funds are managed properly and in accordance with the rules.

Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)

The CPR sets out the means to achieve consistency with the economic policies of the EU and its Member States, coordination mechanisms among the ESI Funds and with other EU policies and instruments, horizontal principles and cross-cutting policy objectives. It lays down arrangements to address territorial challenges, suggests action with high European added value and sets out the principles and the priorities for action.

Each Member State will prepare a Partnership Agreement, in cooperation with its partners and in dialogue with the Commission. In preparing the Partnership Agreement, each Member State translates the elements set out in the CPR into the national context and sets firm commitments to achieve the EU's objectives through the programming of the ESIF.

ESIF will be implemented through programmes in accordance with the Partnership Agreement. Each programme will cover the period 2014 - 2020. It will set out a strategy explaining how the programme will address the national and/or regional needs and contribute to the EU's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, in line with the applicable regulations and the Partnership Agreement.

The CPR defines eleven Thematic Objectives (TOs), which will contribute to the implementation of the EU's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The eleven TOs are:

1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation
2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT (information and communication technologies)
3. Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, of the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and of the fishery and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF)
4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors
5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management
6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency
7. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures
8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility
9. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination
10. Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning
11. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration

The fund-specific regulations define for each TO the corresponding investment priorities.

TO4 and TO5 are dedicated to climate change mitigation and adaptation. In addition, climate action issues can be mainstreamed into other TOs. Hence, ESIF can significantly contribute to the achievement of the climate objectives and the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy.

² Reference to the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), where e.g. CPR 8.1 refers to CPR article 8.1

³ Template refers to the "Draft template and guidelines on the content of the Partnership Agreement", published 3 March 2014

The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) will make a major contribution to the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient Europe.

The five funds concerned are the:

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- European Social Fund (ESF)
- Cohesion Fund (CF)
- European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)
- European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

This Fact Sheet outlines key issues to be considered when assessing the mainstreaming of climate action in Partnership Agreements.

The five funds will contribute to the overall target that climate action objectives will represent at least 20 % of EU spending for the period 2014-2020, while contributing to strengthening energy security, building a low-carbon, resource efficient and climate-resilient economy that will boost Europe's competitiveness and create more and greener jobs.

The Partnership Agreement lays the ground for all support from the ESIF over the next seven years and essentially summarises a Member State's plan for using the ESIF in a way which is consistent with the Europe 2020 Strategy. It also describes the Member State's measures to ensure effective implementation of the ESIF, the proposed integrated approach to territorial development, as well as proposed arrangements to ensure efficient implementation of the Partnership Agreement and Programmes.

There is a substantial potential for mainstreaming climate action into the five funds and the related programmes, which should be adequately reflected in the Partnership Agreement.

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Further information

DG Climate Action:
<http://ec.europa.eu/clima>

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