

A short outline of the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change

Introduction

The EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change has been an important reference for adaptation in the European Union since its publication in 2013.

The strategy focuses on adaptation actions at the EU level including support for adaptation at other levels of governance, i.e. the EU Member States, regions, and cities.

Engaging with the research community, bridging the knowledge gaps, and disseminating knowledge on adaptation are integral parts of the strategy.

Priorities and actions

The strategy is structured along three priorities and eight actions:



Figure 1. Priorities and Actions of the EU Adaptation Strategy

The strategy's three priorities serve to:

- ▶ promote adaptation action at sub-EU level and support and facilitate exchange and coordination, including through cross-border measures;
- ▶ further the understanding of adaptation, improve and widen the knowledge base where knowledge gaps have been identified, and enhance dissemination of adaptation-related information;

- ▶ develop initiatives to consistently and comprehensively integrate climate change adaptation considerations into sectors at EU level through EU policies and funds.

Promoting action by EU Member States

National Adaptation Strategies

The European Commission has developed guidance for national adaptation strategies in consultation with the EU Member States. By early 2018, 25 of the 28 Member States had adopted national adaptation strategies; the remaining are currently in development.

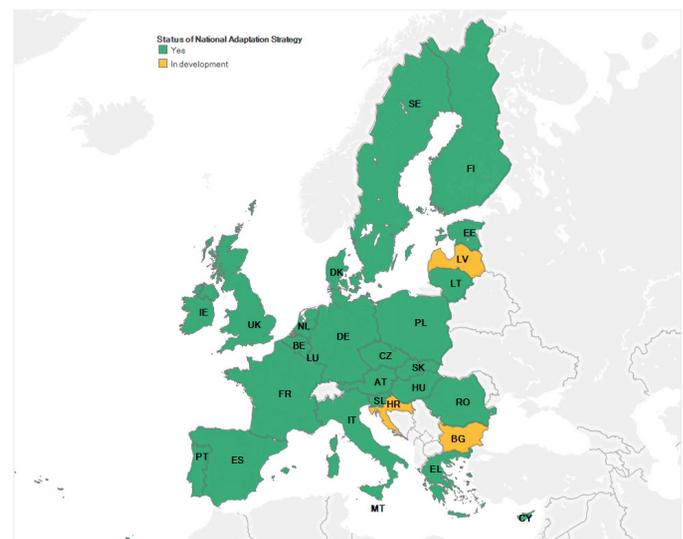


Figure 2. EU Member States with National Adaptation Strategies

LIFE funding for adaptation

The LIFE Programme for the Environment and Climate Change 2014-2020 consists of two sub-programmes, namely the environment and climate action.

LIFE Climate Action supports projects in the development of innovative ways to respond to the challenges of climate change in Europe.

Funding is available through project action grants, operational

support to NGOs, and financial instruments that leverage private finance through loans and guarantees.

For example, the LIFE Integrated Project *Coast to Coast Climate Challenge* in Denmark brings together 30 partners to create a climate-resilient region and implement local climate adaptation plans. The integrated approach to flood risk management involves identifying and enhancing the resources and capabilities of citizens, municipalities, utilities and companies in the water industry. The project includes cross-cutting, capacity-building actions focusing on marine waters, rivers, groundwater, governance, tools and innovation. It will also complete six sub-projects in the countryside, six in urban areas, and five innovative interdisciplinary projects to raise public awareness, develop new technologies, develop eco-tourism infrastructure and showcase the cultural and natural history of the project area. In total, the project will mobilise about € 200 million in complementary funding, in addition to its budget of € 13.4 million.

Covenant of Mayors

EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy

In March 2014, the European Commission launched the *Mayors Adapt* initiative on urban adaptation. It merged in 2015 with the *Covenant of Mayors*, combining urban adaptation and mitigation into an integrated approach.

Today, the **EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy** brings together thousands of local governments voluntarily committed to implementing EU climate and energy objectives.



Figure 3. Climate change may lead to more frequent and intense floods. © Hawedi - creative commons

With funding from the European Commission, the EU Covenant office informs, mobilises and supports local authorities.

Signatories to the EU Covenant voluntarily commit to developing climate vulnerability and risk assessments and action plans for targeted adaptation options, including reporting every two years. These should be completed within two years of signing up to the initiative.

By 30 April 2018, more than 9 000 cities in the EU have committed to climate action within the framework of the Covenant of Mayors. Of these, about 1 000 signatories from 25 Member States - covering about 60 million inhabitants - had

committed to conduct vulnerability and risk assessments, as well as develop, implement and report on adaptation plans.

Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy

In 2017, the *Compact of Mayors and the Covenant of Mayors* merged to create the **Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy**.

Through the Global Covenant of Mayors, cities and local governments around the world are voluntarily committing to tackle climate change, mirroring and exceeding the commitments set by their national governments through the *Nationally Determined Contributions* process under the Paris Agreement.

The Global Covenant of Mayors is the largest of its kind, comprising thousands of cities and towns across 6 continents and more than 120 countries. It represents nearly 10 % of the world's population.

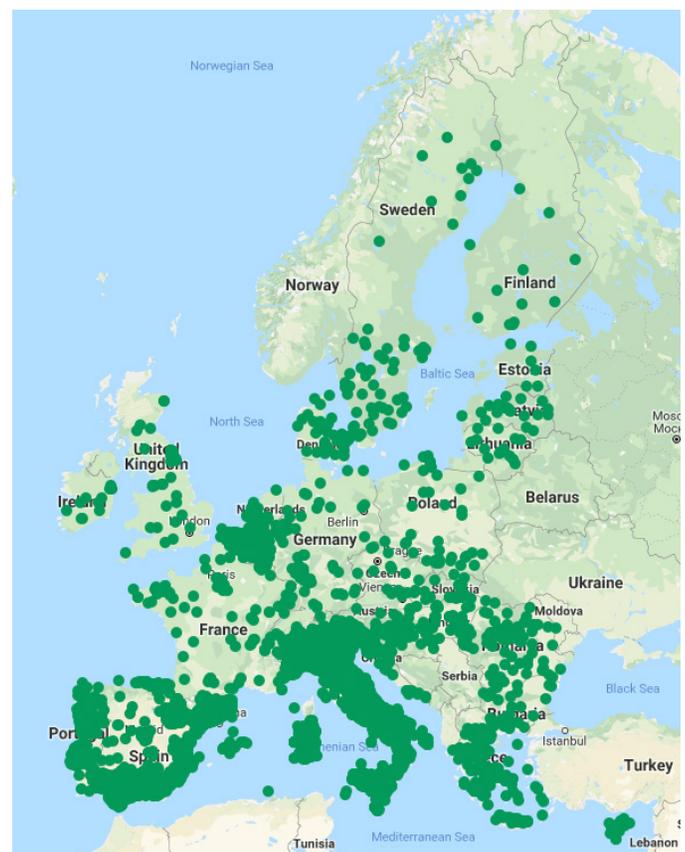


Figure 4. EU cities that are signatories of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy

Better-informed decision-making

Knowledge gaps

There has been a substantial increase in the knowledge base since the publication of the EU Adaptation Strategy in 2013. However, none of the main knowledge gaps have been fully closed and new gaps have emerged in sectors such as ecosystem-based adaptation, relationship to sustainable development goals, global transboundary (spill-over) effects,

infrastructure resilience, mountainous areas, long-term lack of water resources, high-end climate change, health, coastal areas, and biodiversity.

A substantial number of research projects cover adaptation, including those with EU funding under the FP7 and Horizon2020 programmes. Water, nature, and agriculture are among the most frequently addressed topics.

Climate-ADAPT

In March 2012, the European Commission and the European Environment Agency launched the European Climate Adaptation Platform, or **Climate-ADAPT**.

The objectives underlying Climate-ADAPT are to provide an updated and consistent knowledge base that will:

- ▶ facilitate the collection, sharing and use of information on climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation in the EU;
- ▶ assist the effective uptake of relevant knowledge by decision-makers; and
- ▶ contribute to a greater level of coordination among sectors and institutional levels.

Climate-ADAPT aims to support Europe's adaption to climate change and helps users access and share data and information on topics such as projected climate change in Europe; current and future vulnerability of regions and sectors; EU-level, national and transnational adaptation strategies and actions; adaptation case studies and potential adaptation options; and tools that support adaptation planning.

Climate-ADAPT had more than 400 000 visitors between 1 March 2013 and 31 March 2018, with the most visited pages being the database, the adaptation support tools, the case studies, EU policy pages and the country pages. The number of registered users (i.e. recipients of the newsletter) amounted to about 5 000 in April 2018. The core of Climate-ADAPT lies in its knowledge database and web pages, which currently comprise more than 2 400 items in total.

Key vulnerable sectors

Climate proofing policies and funds

By the time of the launch of the EU Adaptation Strategy in 2013, adaptation had already been mainstreamed into a broad range of sectors at EU level, with legislation and policy documents having been adopted or Commission proposals tabled by 2013.

However, adaptation had yet to be mainstreamed into social and education policies, tourism, fisheries, insurance and trade. Further work was also required for energy, transport, the EU's outermost regions, disaster risk reduction, health, and in particular, funding programmes under the EU budget i.e. the so-called 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

For the current budget period 2014-2020, the European Commission has proposed that at least 20 % of the budget (MFF) should contribute to climate change objectives, helping to ensure substantial support for adaptation and mitigation action in the Member States.

Under the EU Regional Policy, the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund address climate change adaptation, for example in relation to flooding

and coastal erosion, urban adaptation, climate-resilient infrastructure, and ecosystem-based approaches.

Under the EU Agricultural Policy, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development notably targets climate change adaptation through the themes of biodiversity, water, soils, and genetic resources.

In the next budget period, 2021-2027, the European Commission has proposed to increase the target for climate related expenditure from 20 % to 25 % of the EU budget.

Climate resilient infrastructure

The support for making infrastructure resilient to current and future climate conditions involves two main approaches.

First, integrating climate resilience in infrastructure investments starting with the major projects funded by the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund in the period 2014-2020. There are about 550 major projects currently foreseen for EU funding in this period, with a cost of about € 90-95 billion of which the EU contribution will be in the range of about € 60-65 billion. The climate resilience is pursued through a climate vulnerability and risk assessment followed by the identification, assessment and implementation of relevant adaptation options.



Figure 5. Climate resilience is an integral part of infrastructure investments. © iStock/Moorefam

Second, on a mandate from the European Commission, the European Standardisation Organisations (CEN/CENELEC) undertook an analysis resulting in an initial list of 12 industry standards to be revised and one standard to be written in order to ensure that new major infrastructure projects are climate resilient – this additional work has started. They also adopted a 'Guide for addressing climate change adaptation in standards'.

Insurance and finance

Insurance

While significant effort is undertaken at the national and European levels to prevent damage caused by weather and climate related disasters, for example through adaptation strategies, climate proofing of investments, national risk assessments and other disaster and climate risk policies, not all risks can be averted.

The residual risk may affect all areas of society. Methods of addressing this include self-insurance, public aid, voluntary insurance schemes or mandatory insurance required by law.

Insurance policies raise awareness of climate risks and may provide the right incentive to invest in preventative action. The European Commission is encouraging insurers and others to enhance cooperation and increase the availability and use of loss data to improve adaptation measures at local level, for example in the urban context.

Sustainable finance

Sustainable finance is the contribution of private investments to environmental, social and governance considerations.

In May 2018, the European Commission adopted a package of measures implementing several key actions announced in its action plan on financing sustainable growth.

The European Commission is currently setting up a technical expert group on sustainable finance. Its mandate includes the preparation of a taxonomy for investments in climate change mitigation and adaptation and other environmental activities. It aims to conclude the taxonomy for climate change adaptation and mitigation in 2019.

Evaluation of the EU Adaptation Strategy

As the basis for possible further development, the implementation of the EU strategy on adaptation to climate

change is currently undergoing an evaluation. The evaluation covers the period 2013 to early 2018. The European Commission will publish the outcome of the evaluation in autumn 2018.



Figure 6. Word cloud summarising the evaluation of the EU Adaptation Strategy

Selected references:

- ▶ Official site of the European Union: https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en
- ▶ European Commission: https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-commission_en
- ▶ Directorate-General for Climate Action, European Commission: <https://ec.europa.eu/clima/>
- ▶ EU Adaptation: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/adaptation_en
- ▶ Adaptation FAQ: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/adaptation_en#tab-0-2
- ▶ EU Adaptation Strategy (2013): https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/adaptation/what_en#tab-0-1
- ▶ and the evaluation: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/consultations/evaluation-eus-strategy-adaptation-climate-change_en
- ▶ Climate resilience of infrastructure: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/docs/major_projects_en.pdf
- ▶ LIFE Programme 2014-2020: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/budget/life_en
- ▶ Climate-ADAPT – European Climate Adaptation Platform: <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/>
- ▶ EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy: <https://www.covenantofmayors.eu/>
- ▶ Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy: <https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/>
- ▶ Sustainable finance: https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/banking-and-finance/sustainable-finance_en

Useful resources: European Commission Climate Action website and social media

