



CAN EUROPE POSITION ON ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN EUROPE

Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe is Europe's leading NGO coalition fighting dangerous climate change. With over 150 member organisations from 35 European countries, representing over 1.700 NGOs and more than 40 million citizens, CAN Europe promotes sustainable climate, energy and development policies throughout Europe.

1. 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 adaptation 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 preindustrial levels and of pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C above preindustrial 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".¹

The adaptation goal of the Paris Agreement requires Parties to submit information, including on climate change impacts and adaptation at least every two years. The Paris Agreement also calls for countries to develop regular Adaptation Communications which can include priorities, implementation and support needs in relation to national adaptation.

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.²

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.³

¹ http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

² https://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

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

Against this backdrop of international objectives and commitments, CAN Europe welcomes the initiative of the European Commission to review and improve the EU's Adaptation Strategy. 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. Unfortunately, current emissions projections will result in a global temperature increase of more than 3°C, which will lead to irreversible environmental and economic devastation. It is therefore essential that the EU pursues effective and coherent adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts together with its mitigation action.

The opportunity to build the EU's resilience to climate change – particularly in vulnerable sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, infrastructure, biodiversity and development, tourism – 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.

2. Definitional terms

For the purpose of clarification of this position paper, we apply definitions to the most frequently mentioned terms throughout the paper. The definitions applied are those which are commonly understood and agreed upon at intergovernmental and multilateral levels; particularly, through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)⁴ and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)⁵ and UN Environment (UNEP).

2.1 Vulnerability

This is the propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected by climate change. Vulnerability encompasses a number of different concepts, including sensitivity or susceptibility to harm and lack of capacity to cope and adapt.

⁴ http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg2/ar5_wgII_spm_en.pdf

⁵ <https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/the-big-picture/understanding-climate-resilience>

2.2 Risk

Risk is often represented as probability of occurrence of hazardous events or trends multiplied by the impacts if these events or trends occur. In this paper, we refer to risk as a result of the interaction of vulnerability, exposure, and hazard related to climate change.

2.3 Adaptation

Adaptation means adjustments in ecological, social, or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects or impacts. It refers to changes in processes, practices, and structures to moderate potential damages or to benefit from opportunities associated with climate change.

3. Europe's vulnerability

2016 was the hottest year on record globally, followed by records hit in 2015 (2nd) and 2017(3rd).⁶ In Europe, the warmest year was 2014 while the entire decade of 2007 to 2016 was the region's warmest period on record.⁷

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 attention 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.

3.1 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.⁸

⁶ NASA (<https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/global-temperature/>) and Climate Research Unit (<http://www.cru.uea.ac.uk/>)

⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/8461633/KS-04-17-780-FN-N.pdf/f7694981-6190-46fb-99d6-d092ce04083f>

⁸ <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/NewsItem.aspx?nid=8787>

3.2 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 – are 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.⁹

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; the EEA estimates costs up to €120 billion per year under a 2°C scenario, and up to €200 billion per year under 3°C.

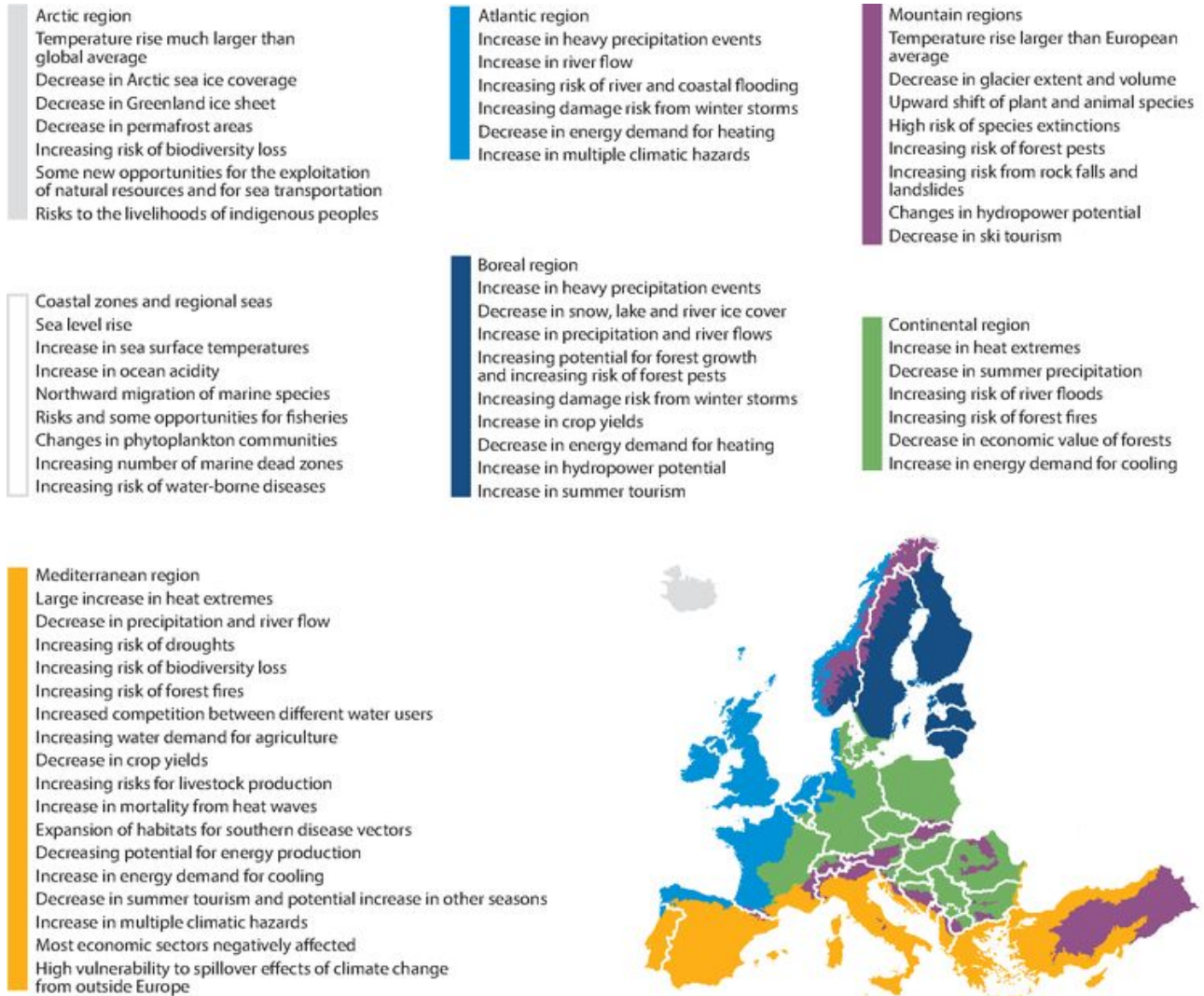
Despite this trend, adaptation as a policy tool is **not treated by many governments, institutions or sectors as an essential element to the preparation and implementation of key EU policies and sectors.**

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.¹⁰

⁹ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/direct-losses-from-weather-disasters-3/assessment>

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/thefunds/doc/interventions_since_2002.pdf

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



Source: European Environmental Agency (EEA)

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 plan to enhance climate change adaptation in Europe. The EU Adaptation Strategy is the leading framework to guarantee EU-wide adaptation. In addition, there are other key frameworks that can complement and improve coherence across national and EU-level

planning; for example, the Energy Union Governance framework, the Multiannual Financial Framework and the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Mainstreaming adaptation across numerous policies and programmes ensures that the EU will be more prepared to address its vulnerability to current and future climate shocks.

4. The future of EU Adaptation: guaranteeing ambitious and effective adaptation plans

As the global average temperature has already increased by 1°C above pre-industrial levels, our world today is already experiencing the impacts of a changing climate. Due to its geography and respective landmass, this temperature change means warming across Europe by nearly 2°C.¹¹

Negative climate impacts are set to get more frequent and more forceful, and it is against this backdrop that the EU will be discussing how it will enhance adaptation to climate change, both in the context of its future Adaptation Strategy, and through other measures such as the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and the EU budget.

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 current and future climate change impacts in Europe. In addition, more efforts will also be needed to deal with extra-territorial impacts, i.e. those impacts that happen outside of Europe but which have direct knock-on effects on the EU economy and society.

Adaptation in the EU – through the EU Adaptation Strategy and related policies and measures – 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.

In this section, we set out a number of provisions that should be addressed or included in the next EU Adaptation Strategy, including synergies with the Energy Union Governance Regulation.

¹¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/8461633/KS-04-17-780-EN-N.pdf/f7694981-6190-46fb-99d6-d092ce04083f>

4.1 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.

4.2 National Adaptation Plans: implementation, updates and progress reports

At present, nearly all EU Member States (25 at the time of writing) have a national adaptation strategy in place. But this is just the first step; only 14 of these Member States have translated their adaptation strategies into concrete action plans and regional measures.¹² While CLIM-Adapt is a useful tool to demonstrate national and regional adaptation efforts, there is no regular and common format through which all efforts are captured and assessed.

Hence, implementation and regular communication and updates on national adaptation efforts are crucial to ensure effectiveness. The future EU Adaptation Strategy should require all EU Member States to pursue:

4.2.1 Implementation

The future EU Adaptation Strategy should require all EU Member States to have in place national adaptation strategies, based on the latest scientific research and evidence on projected impacts related to climate change. Those strategies should then, within a specific timeframe, be converted into action plans or National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) ready for implementation.

NAPs can be developed and implemented as part of other policy instruments pursued by national, regional and local authorities; for example, urban and rural planning. They should also be based on the circumstances – vulnerability and needs – of individual countries. That being said, Member States should be prepared to develop and revise their NAPs based on the requirements of the broader EU Strategy and in accordance with the timeline of the Paris Agreement goal. They should involve relevant actors namely states, cities and local authorities as well as civil society and private sector stakeholders in order to have a Plan that can be implemented at all levels by various actors. Planning and implementation should also ensure the full exploration and use of

¹² <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/countries-regions/countries>

nature based solutions, and guarantee financial support, both through EU and national funding.

4.2.2 Updates and progress reports

NAPs should be regularly – every 3-5 years – **updated, in line with the requirements of the Paris Agreement** and the global goal on adaptation. They should also take into account and reflect scientific information and evidence as it becomes available.

The Plans should specifically identify progress in where and how adaptation measures are being mainstreamed into other policy areas through additional considerations and efforts.

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.

Regular updates should inform on actions to be taken at city and local level and towards regional planning and development.

4.3 Adaptation reporting in Energy Union Governance

The Energy Union Governance Regulation (herein referred to as the Governance Regulation) is being discussed by EU Member States at the European Council.¹³

In the proposal for the Governance Regulation there is a specific provision on reporting adaptation measures through the so-called National Energy & Climate Plans (NECPs). The NECPs will form the template through which EU Member States report their efforts and progress towards meeting both national climate and energy targets and the EU-wide climate and energy framework.

The provision on adaptation reporting rightly acknowledges that the effective implementation of adaptation plans and measures will contribute directly to the achievement of the EU's climate and energy targets.

We therefore support the inclusion of national adaptation reporting through the NECPs. Not only does it make a direct link between mitigation requirements and adaptation needs, it operationalises the concept of adaptation mainstreaming into the relevant sectors covered by the Energy Union. Reporting on adaptation in the Governance Regulation will also improve the level of coherence across the sector and ensure that energy infrastructure and the internal energy market will be resilient to future climate impacts. We assert that policy planning and coordination on adaptation should continue to be led through the EU Adaptation Strategy, which has built up a solid ground of expertise and analysis of Europe's climate vulnerability. The Governance Regulation will complement this effort through facilitating the reporting of adaptation measures

¹³ The Energy Union Governance Regulation sets out to ensure the necessary legislative foundation the achievement of the objectives and targets of the Energy Union through complementary, coherent and ambitious efforts by the Union and its Member States, while promoting the Union's Better Regulation principles.

<https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/energy-strategy-and-energy-union/governance-energy-union>

through NECPs; this should require minimal additional work for government administrations. Rather, it should provide the additional impetus of governments to fully implement national adaptation strategies and plans.

4.4 Complete and publish climate vulnerability assessments at local, regional & national level

Designing adaptation strategies and plans relies on knowledge, data and information on the risks – social, environmental and economic – posed to European economies by climate change. The European Environmental Agency (EEA) recently published the first climate change impact, vulnerability and risk assessment (CCIV) for European countries.¹⁴ The report aims to better capture and highlight the extent of Europe’s vulnerability to climate change, improve the collective understanding of vulnerability, and inform on adaptation planning and implementation in Europe. The report found that there are still knowledge gaps on socio-economic scenarios and projections, as well as the required adaptation measures. Gaps were also identified in knowledge of social vulnerabilities, monitoring and evaluation and the international dimension of climate impacts (pg. 16). In addition, there is limited information on impacts and vulnerability at sub-national (e.g. local) level. In the medium and long-term, it will be essential for actors operating at sub-national level to collect, store and communicate information on adaptation needs. While there cannot be a uniform approach to assessing the vulnerability of European regions and countries, the practice of evaluating and communicating climate vulnerability is essential to improving knowledge and sharing lessons learned from country to country. EU Member States, in cooperation with cities, local authorities and other non-state actors should regularly – at least every five years – perform and publish climate vulnerability assessments. The assessments can be supported by the European Commission through budgetary support, and the EEA through research, technology and expertise. They should also be based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence about the pace and impacts of climate change.

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

Under the auspices of the next EU Adaptation Strategy, the EU can continue to facilitate capacity-building, information exchange, progress reports and lessons learned 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, EU Member States, sub-national and non-state actors to demonstrate challenges, efforts and measures identified in relation to adaptation.

¹⁴ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/national-climate-change-vulnerability-2018>

4.6 Ecosystem-based Adaptation

Any strategies or plans to enhance adaptation across the EU should prioritise the promotion, support and use of ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA). Applying the UNEP's definition of EbA, we point out that EbA uses important biodiversity and ecosystem services as part of a holistic adaptation strategy.¹⁵ To this end, it is important that the EU and its Member States fully recognise the mutually re-enforcing role of these services in strengthening resilience to current and future climate impacts, and contributing to the EU's climate mitigation goals. Some useful areas of support include river management and the restoration of flood plains.

The diversity of natural ecosystems is an insurance policy against climate change that enhances the resilience of ecosystems, remind [IPBES](#) and [the Secretariat for Convention on Biodiversity](#).

For example, restoring forests by enhancing natural features in them would promote their resilience to environmental change, [pests and disease](#).

4.7 Insurance against climate change impacts

A European Commission study from 2017 found that under most climate scenarios, the intensity and frequency of climate related weather events will increase in the future. As a result, the cost of damage caused will grow unless governments put in place more proactive disaster risk management measures.¹⁶ Insurance and the insurance sector is already playing an important role in the overall landscape of adaptation policy, and importantly in the overall risk-management cycle. For example, insurers can provide advice on planning and land management, as well as data on high-risk areas in zoning and building.

However, insurance against climate change impacts cannot be pursued in isolation from other, more comprehensive measures such as risk management and prevention. The use of insurance should provide a stronger incentive for state and non-state actors to pursue more ambitious adaptation plans which should (measurably) reduce the overall vulnerability of countries and regions, and thus the overall cost of potential damage.

As part of their adaptation strategies, EU Member States should still pursue steps to protect people from extensive losses due to climate change. For example, countries should ensure that there are government schemes in place to provide insurance for vulnerable sectors in society (e.g. low-income households, SMEs) as well as for sectors that face adverse economic losses due to climate and weather related events (e.g. agriculture).

¹⁵ <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/climate-change/what-we-do/adaptation-and-resilience/ecosystem-based-adaptation>

¹⁶ <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4f366956-a19e-11e7-b92d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

4.8 Working together to address transboundary risks

There is EU added value through support for identifying and addressing 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, dialogue and policy development will be necessary if the EU is 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.

5. The role of the EU Budget to support effective climate adaptation and mainstreaming across all policy areas¹⁷

The preparation for future adaptation in Europe – including through 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. The current EU budget supports efforts to address climate vulnerability, risk and adaptation through European Structural & Investment Funds, the Life Programme, Horizon2020 (technology and innovation) and the Common Agricultural Policy. The continuation of financial support is important to continue building capacity at national and sub-national level. It will also help to coherently and effectively integrate adaptation into EU priority policies, providing the added value of addressing challenges to some of the EU's key economic goods and services. With that said, much of the EU budget support that is currently earmarked as 'climate action' is very difficult to measure; the extent to which the activities have a positive environmental and additional climate impact is questionable and should be proven more concretely.

In order to ensure that EU financing enhances adaptation in Europe, the next EU budget must focus its support for policies and actions that genuinely contribute to resilient ecosystems and the sustainable management of natural resources and to climate action. This includes the improvement of overall climate mainstreaming in the post-2020 EU budget which should encompass the strategic integration of climate action – mitigation

¹⁷ 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>

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.

5.1 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 programmes, and 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.

5.2 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), 2014-2020.¹⁸

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.¹⁹

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.

¹⁸ <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/climate-change/what-we-do/adaptation-and-resilience/ecosystem-based-adaptation>

¹⁹ 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

The European Commission proposal to **increase the EU budget's climate-specific support from 20% to 25%** is an important signal on the needed support for climate action in the EU. It is essential to build on that proposal and demonstrate the lessons learned from the current funding period to guarantee that the target will bring about genuine additional benefits to European communities, people and sectors. This should be done through **setting a quantitative target with a-priori commitments, quality control and a solid tracking and monitoring methodology.**

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 – mitigation and adaptation – are spelled out.

5.3 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.

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