Resolution on the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change

2020/2532(RSP) - 17/12/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 550 votes to 80, with 59 abstentions, a resolution on the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change.

According to estimates by the European Environment Agency (EEA), extreme weather and climate events accounted for EUR 426 billion in monetary terms in the EU-28 over the period 1980-2017. Damage costs from climate change are expected to be high, even if the Paris Agreement is implemented. Only an ambitious global mitigation policy can significantly reduce climate change and its consequences.

Helping the EU adapt to climate change

The resolution called for a improved focus and increased attention to adaptation in its new strategy. The strategy should be an integral part of the European Green Deal and an opportunity for the EU to take the global lead in building global resilience to climate change.

Parliament called for climate change adaptation to be taken into account when building and renovating existing infrastructure, in all sectors and in land-use planning to ensure that EU funds are spent effectively on sustainable and climate-friendly projects.

According to Members, the new strategy should include (i) binding and quantifiable goals, both at EU and Member State level, (ii) the definition of priority areas and investment needs, (iii) more frequent review procedures with clear goals, and (iv) assessment and indicators based on the latest scientific data to measure progress in implementation.

Parliament considered it essential that the new strategy continues to promote climate change adaptation in regions and cities, paying particular attention to strengthening the preparedness and adaptive capacity of the most vulnerable areas, such as coastal zones and island and outermost regions. They also recommend improving cross-border cooperation and coordination on adaptation and rapid response to natural disasters.

The new strategy should be comprehensive and cover the full range of climate change impacts, including trade, migration and security.

Nature-based solutions and green infrastructure

Recalling that climate change is currently the third main and direct cause of biodiversity loss worldwide, Parliament called for better coherence between the implementation of adaptation measures and biodiversity conservation measures under the EU 2030 biodiversity strategy. It encouraged the development of a truly coherent and resilient trans-European nature network.

The resolution also stressed the importance, *inter alia*, of:

- using nature-based sustainable adaptation solutions and measures for the conservation and restoration of marine and terrestrial ecosystems that can contribute both to climate change mitigation, biodiversity protection and pollution control;

- to make better use of the opportunities offered by forests, trees and green infrastructure for climate change adaptation and the provision of ecosystem services;

- work towards healthy and resilient seas and oceans;

- developing green infrastructure in coastal cities to preserve coastal biodiversity and ecosystems and to enhance the sustainable development of the coastal economy, tourism and landscapes.

Adaptation measures and consistency

The resolution stressed the need to mainstream climate change into all relevant EU policies and to ensure that initiatives under the European Green Deal are consistent with climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

The strategy should also respect global policies and agreements such as the Paris agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Commission is called on to thoroughly assess the climate and environmental impact of all relevant legislative and budgetary proposals and to ensure their full alignment with the goal of limiting global warming to below 1.5°C. The goal should also include a detailed assessment of the environmental and climate impact of all relevant policies, including those that have a significant impact on the environment.

Funding

Members called for increased funding at all governance levels and for the mobilisation of public and private investments in adaptation. In this respect, they recalled Parliament’s position calling for a climate-related

spending target of 30 % and a biodiversity-related spending target of 10 % in the next MFF 2021-2027 and Next Generation EU.

Parliament called on the European Investment Bank, as the EU's climate bank, to raise its level of ambition on adaptation. It also encouraged better use of the EU Solidarity Fund as a ‘build back better’ funding mechanism that also provides incentives for adaptation and forward-looking planning.

Awareness-raising, early warning and early response

The resolution stressed the importance of raising awareness of the effects of climate change, such as extreme weather events, including on health and the environment, and of the need for adaptation, not only among decision-makers, but also through educational activities.

Parliament called for the new strategy to place greater emphasis on crisis prevention and disaster preparedness, management and response, including in the event of pandemics, exploring all synergies through a strengthened EU civil protection mechanism.

Member States are invited to develop adequate plans for prevention and rapid response to climate-related disasters such as heat waves, floods and droughts, taking into account the specificities of regions such as their border or coastal character and including cross-border action mechanisms ensuring shared responsibility and solidarity between Member States and with third countries.