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Building a Climate-Resilient Europe: How the EU Mission on Adaptation is Turning Policy into Action

As climate change accelerates, so too must our response—not only to reduce emissions, but to actively **prepare for the unavoidable impacts** already reshaping our environment. While the EU has made significant progress in cutting greenhouse gas emissions (down 37% since 1990), rising temperatures, floods, droughts, and heatwaves are making it clear: mitigation alone is not enough. The **EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change** is the Union's flagship initiative to address this challenge head-on, helping regions, cities, and communities across Europe build resilience and prepare for a climate-altered future.

A Mission with Purpose

Launched in 2021 as part of the EU's **Horizon Europe** research and innovation programme, the Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change now supports over **300 regional and local authorities** across the continent. It aims to bridge the gap between high-level policy and local action, offering regions tools, funding, expertise, and space for experimentation and innovation. Whether tackling rising sea levels in coastal areas or managing drought risk in southern Europe, the Mission focuses on **place-based adaptation** to make communities safer and more resilient.

We can't just focus on cutting emissions. We need to prepare for what's ahead and reduce the risks we're already facing."

— **Elina Bardram**, Mission Manager

Real Action, Real Progress

From **pilot projects and policy testing** to **tailored technical assistance** via the **MIP4Adapt platform**, the Mission is already delivering impact:

- **Mountain Community of Val Chiavenna (Italy)** has used Mission support to protect alpine biodiversity and manage water resources.
- **Valencia (Spain)** and other Mediterranean regions are sharing knowledge on urban heat and drought responses.
- **Northwestern Bulgaria** is receiving dedicated support to ensure even the most vulnerable municipalities aren't left behind.

Voices from the Frontlines of Adaptation

Members of the **Mission Board on Adaptation to Climate Change** bring rich, local experience and strategic insight:

- **Connie Hedegaard**, former European Commissioner for Climate Action, stresses the need to **shortcut to best practices**, share knowledge, and deliver solutions efficiently.
- **Eleni Myrivili**, UN Global Heat Officer, highlights that Europe is warming faster than any other continent and still lacks coordinated governance.

- **Georgios Boustras**, Professor of Risk Assessment, notes that adaptation in hotspots like the Southeastern Mediterranean requires sustained local engagement.
- **Antonella Morgillo**, from Italy's Civil Protection Department, emphasizes the urgent needs of small communities—and how the Mission is meeting them.

From **climate city contracts** in Finland to **cross-border water cooperation** in the Netherlands and Germany, the Mission empowers local innovation and cross-regional collaboration.

The Road Ahead: A European Climate Adaptation Plan

The upcoming **European Climate Adaptation Plan**, announced by President **Ursula von der Leyen**, will build on the Mission's achievements and deepen EU-wide resilience efforts. As the EU refines its climate adaptation framework post-2027, the Mission is expected to remain a **catalyst for local and regional leadership**, ensuring that **adaptation becomes a reality, not just a priority**.

"The Mission is a pioneering public policy, setting a high standard for climate resilience and adaptation."

— **Corina Murafa**, Lecturer and Climate Consultant

No One Left Behind

Key to the Mission's success is its inclusive approach. Tools and strategies are tailored for all regions, not just well-funded urban areas. Whether through **EU Climate Adaptation Hackathons**, **National Hubs**, or direct support to small municipalities, the Mission ensures that **citizens, stakeholders, and local authorities** are empowered to take ownership of their climate futures.

"Citizen engagement and co-ownership of solutions are essential—especially when adaptation decisions impact people's safety and well-being."

— **Barbara Widera**, Wroclaw University of Science and Technology

Aligning Finance, Policy and Action

Board members like **Roberto Ridolfi** and **Karim Selouane** underline the need for **innovative financing mechanisms** to scale adaptation, including blended finance, carbon credits, and better integration into post-2027 EU funding like **ERDF** and **InvestEU**. Meanwhile, **Siret Talve** and **Taina Tukiainen** call for robust national governance systems to support local delivery and protect vulnerable regions from the rising costs of inaction—estimated at **€1 trillion annually**, according to the EEA.

A Call to Action

Climate adaptation is not optional. It is essential for safeguarding Europe's people, economies, and ecosystems. The **EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change** is more than a programme—it's a movement of **shared responsibility, innovation, and solidarity**. As global climate risks escalate, the Mission shows that Europe is not burying its head in the sand—it's looking forward, preparing, and acting. The time to adapt is now.



Source: https://climate.ec.europa.eu/news-your-voice/news/lets-get-our-heads-out-sand-its-time-we-got-serious-about-preparing-climate-crisis-2024-12-12_en