



European Network of Heads of Nature Conservation Agencies (ENCA).

ENCA is an informal network which fosters exchange of information and collaboration amongst its partners, identifies future challenges and offers information and advice to decision-makers in the field of nature conservation and landscape protection.

ENCA brings together scientific evidence and knowledge of practical application together with experiences in administration and policy advice in the context of biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services. More details can be found at [www.encanetwork.eu](http://www.encanetwork.eu).

## ENCA response to the Adaptation to Climate Change Blueprint for a new, more ambitious EU strategy

*The natural environment is both at risk from climate change but also offers potential solutions to the threat posed by climate change to people. This pivotal role needs to be fully reflected in the new Adaptation Strategy.*

ENCA welcomes and fully supports the need and increased ambition for adaptation set out in the blueprint. The ongoing trajectory of climate change, the increasing evidence of vulnerability and impacts across Europe demonstrates the need for a reinforced ambitious strategy with a focus on tangible outcomes.

Building on the content of the blueprint we would like to highlight several aspects for additional consideration when developing the strategy.

Climate change will lead to **potentially irreversible change to the natural environment**. Forests are highlighted in the blueprint, but across Europe other ecosystems such as montane, wetland and coastal systems have greater vulnerability to both direct and indirect impacts. The risks of maladaptation to the natural environment are touched on in the blueprint, but how this will be avoided in the delivery of the strategy needs further development. The developing and necessary mitigation agenda will provide both opportunities and potential risks for adaptation. The natural environment across many parts of Europe is compromised, fragmented and degraded. Effective adaptation for the natural environment will require land use and land management change at scales that extend far beyond the existing protected area network. Accordingly, we recommend that the Strategy **recognises the need for and promotes mechanisms to enable landscape scale restoration of ecosystems**.

The role that the natural environment can play in supporting adaptation in other sectors through Nature Based Solutions (NbS) cannot be overstated. Building on this and as acknowledged in the blueprint, addressing the challenge of climate change requires the twin approaches of adaptation and mitigation. Nature based approaches can address both adaptation and mitigation through the restoration and creation of ecosystems and habitats. The recent ENCA/EPA policy statement on NbS explored the reasons why NbS despite the overwhelming evidence supporting the benefits of the approach, have not been fully mainstreamed. A key finding being that the concept is well embedded into policy, but this is not reflected in the outcomes. We therefore recommend that **NbS underpin the strategy and that this is translated into defined action with appropriate targets**.

Nature based Solutions provide a framework to deliver adaptation for biodiversity and people. There is however a risk that the focus on ecosystem service provision (e.g. carbon sequestration, natural flood management) can result in little if any gain for biodiversity. To address this risk **biodiversity gain should be**

**enshrined** in the Adaptation Strategy. Moreover, commitments and objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 should be fully integrated into the new Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and synergies between both strategies should be pursued on all levels.

Building on this, to ensure the strategy is adopted **there is an evident need to embed adaptation into sectoral policy and statutory instruments** both within and across member states. Although improving, there is still a risk that adaptation is silo'd. It therefore needs to be fully integrated both vertically and horizontally across policy, and as importantly, delivery. To assist with this, clarity and direction should be provided as to the links with the developing mitigation agenda and CBD targets, and in an international context with the SDGs. Alignment should also be made where possible to other relevant policy such as the Bern Convention. We further note that the Commission has started to develop its new long term vision for rural areas and is currently seeking stakeholder views on the 'Roadmap'. We would expect the ambitions of the Adaptation Strategy to be fully integrated within the Long-term Rural Vision.

As the blueprint sets out, adaptation needs to move from policy to delivery. To ensure this ambition is realised, **clear objectives, milestones and metrics need to be identified**. This will need to be supported by an **increased emphasis on effective monitoring and evaluation**. We suggest that through monitoring and evaluation of the cost benefits; multifunctional benefits and effectiveness of adaptation measures, and particularly NbS, it will be possible for confidence in adaptation measures to be enhanced. This in turn should enable greater uptake and mainstreaming of adaptation action.

The benefits of nature for people's wellbeing during the Covid 19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated the crucial role that the natural environment can play in supporting economic and societal resilience. The strategy should aim to reinforce this through enshrining nature-based approaches to adaptation as a key component of the post-Covid-19 green recovery. The preamble highlights the uneven distribution of climate impacts and the strategy should ensure equitable access to solutions to respond to this challenge.

We hope that these recommendations are helpful. We would be happy to talk through with you, and/or others, any of the points raised and, and would be interested to hear how we could further engage in the development of this important strategy.

*Climate Change Interest Group of the ENCA Network*  
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