



## *How are European regions adapting to climate change and embracing resilience?*

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The launch of the Sharm-El-Sheikh Adaptation Agenda at COP27 is a clear sign of how progress towards adapting to the unavoidable impacts of climate change and enhancing resilience is crucially needed.

At the European level, the EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change and Societal Transformation will contribute to putting the EU Adaptation Strategy into practice by enabling local actors to take evidence-based decisions, bringing research and its solutions closer to the citizens.

Regions have an essential role in driving this transition, experimenting with innovative approaches to address regional and local needs, which may vary across Europe, depending on the intensity of climate change impacts, as well as the capacity to adapt and address cross-sectoral challenges. This may lead to the deepening of existing imbalances and hinder territorial cohesion, with a risk of leaving certain low-capacity regions behind.

## **How do regions understand and address climate resilience?**

When looking into regions' agendas and policies, a broad diversity emerges across European regions, in how each of them, depending on the context, integrates resilience from a different angle. The heterogeneity through which multilateral development organisations and consultancy agencies promote and guide adaptation, addressing gaps in knowledge, data and information, also highlights the challenges of aligning actions for a common understanding of how to build resilience at the regional level. The adaptation agenda is broad, while implementation at the local and regional levels is always specific.

Understanding the contextual nature of governance structures - something that has implications for institutional arrangements, resources, and stakeholders' involvement - and looking at which policies and mechanisms are in place is key to having an overview of the state of the art of regional resilience in Europe.

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This is the reason why the REGILIENCE project conducted a needs assessment across European regions.

The report Resilience planning & development needs of regional authorities and stakeholders present the main results from this study, gathering baseline information from key stakeholders and reflecting on what lessons can be learned from these experiences.

### What are the main implementation challenges regions currently face?

As part of the assessment carried out, relevant actors shared insights on up-to-date policies, hazards and risks, implementation challenges and resilience options, barriers to transformation and opportunities, knowledge gaps and ongoing and planned initiatives in their regions. They also had the opportunity to raise important climate-related implementation challenges that they encounter in their daily work or life, providing unique perspectives on which factors may limit or support them in putting into practice long-term and integrated adaptation solutions.

The main outputs show that most of the *highly vulnerable regions in need of systemic change lack experience, capacity and resources to drive such change.*

From an *institutional perspective*, some of the key challenges include:

- **Lack of coordination at the regional level**, hindered by **lack of interest in climate-related challenges**, a topic that scores a low priority for the regional government, but that would instead require jumping at the top of the political agenda;
- **Institutional fragmentation and difficult cooperation** among different levels of governance, intensified by issues of overlapping competencies among national and regional administrations, that limit holistic approaches and impede to design more integrated policies;
- **Institutional rigidity of existing administrative and political sectors** which creates unfortunate compartmentalization where climate adaptation can be seen as the isolated task of a singular sector that may hinder mainstreaming and horizontal coordination across sectors and departments;

When looking at *financial challenges*, it was widely recognised:

- **Lack of funding and financial capability** to overcome crucial and strategic needs, and to dedicate especially to human resources and necessary equipment (interestingly enough, most regions recognised

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the availability of a great number of resources coming from the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility, but at the same time a lack of personnel to implement the needed measures);

- **Structure of the funding**, often coming in silos, that naturally leads to siloed approaches, when dealing, for example, with flooding, water pollution and drought;
- **Low level of knowledge of how to use existing financial opportunities** and how to put in place financial models that could also incentivize the private sector to step in;

*Technical skills and capacities* were often brought up, also in relation to the challenges above, and the main reflections were referring to:

- General **lack of skills and expertise** on the topic, connected to the call for more training for technicians in the different regional departments;
- **Confusing (over)abundance of general strategies, online tools, solutions, guidelines, etc.** on adaptation and building resilience, but rarely specific and practical (action-oriented and enabling) information tailored to the specific needs of the individual regions.

Overall, it can be recognised how challenging it is currently moving from a fragmented approach to a more holistic

one, being able to conciliate trade-offs to combine coherent short-term and long-term strategies, as well as mitigation and adaptation policies, in integrated action plans.

However, in the specific context of the many upcoming opportunities for regions and communities to increase their resilience under the Mission for Adaptation to Climate Change and Societal Transformation, the assessment carried out within REGILIENCE offers a first step toward a coherent action. The overview of key needs to tackle, identifying highly vulnerable and low-capacity European regions willing to take action and receive support, is a key preliminary baseline to kick-start the Mission's activities. In the light of the above-mentioned implementation challenges, a strategic and inclusive approach is needed, involving researchers, companies and international organisations within the implementation of the Mission addressing and providing support along the 3 clusters of implementation challenges identified.

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