

## MALADAPTATION SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

### The REGILIENCE self-assessment tool to assess the risk of maladaptation when developing adaptation plans or strategies

#### What is an adaptation plan/strategy?

An adaptation plan/strategy is a document created to adapt to certain effects of climate change, which outlines 'what' and 'how' will be done to adapt to climate change. Usually, it is prepared by a regional authority and comprises the overall adaptation strategy, as well as specific measures.

#### What is maladaptation?

Maladaptation refers to the process of an intentional adaptation action leading to negative effects e.g. through increasing vulnerability, diminishing well-being or undermining sustainable development. This can happen in the same or other regions, systems, sectors, or social groups than those targeted by the adaptation action.

Many tools provide support to plan good climate adaptation but neglect the risk of maladaptation checklist explicitly focuses on **identifying potential risk factors for maladaptation** when drafting and adopting an **adaptation strategy or plan** (which are used simultaneously in this checklist). Thereby, it helps to **minimize the risk of maladaptive outcomes**. Its objective is to help the staff of competent regional authorities and other organisations (e.g. consultants, businesses, civil society organisations) to avoid or reduce maladaptation risks in the planning phase of adaptation actions.

With this tool, you are guided through a checklist of 16 questions, each addressing a specific risk factor for maladaptation. By indicating 'yes/no/partially' in response to each question, you can assess the maladaptive potential of the planned adaptation strategy.

#### Quick overview:

- WHAT?** The checklist consists of 16 questions to assess the maladaptive potential of an adaptation strategy/plan by identifying potential risk factors. The results provide insights for initiating measures to minimize the risk of maladaptation, following the guidance of the [Climate-ADAPT Regional Adaptation Support Tool \(RAST\)](#).
- WHY?** To avoid that adaptation actions cause increased vulnerability or harm to livelihoods, ecosystems, and the economy.
- WHO CAN USE IT?** The checklist is designed for anyone involved in the planning and management of a regional adaptation strategy: staff of competent regional and municipal authorities and other organisations (e.g. consultants, businesses, civil society organisations).
- WHEN?** The checklist can be used anytime in the adaptation process, but it is recommended to use it as early as possible, at least before implementing the adaptation strategy.
- HOW?** Answer the checklist questions by ticking 'yes', 'no' or 'partially'. Use the 'partially' box whenever there is still room for improvement, although some actions related to the question have been taken. Use the **comments field** for noting down related thoughts, reminders, keywords or to-dos. You can ask colleagues or other stakeholders to complement your checklist or fill it in individually.
- HOW LONG?** The time required to fill in the checklist will depend on the complexity and scope of the adaptation strategy. A simple and well-known strategy can be assessed within less than one hour, while in other cases further consultation is needed.
- NEXT STEPS?** Are most questions of the checklist marked with 'YES', many steps to minimize the risk of maladaptation have already been taken. However, all aspects marked with 'NO' signal a potential risk of maladaptation, which can be minimized through targeted actions. Checklist questions marked with 'Partially' also leave room for improvement. Indications for improvement are provided in the short text below each question. To interpret the results, the Climate-ADAPT Regional Adaptation Support Tool provides a list of actions and good practices for each step of the adaptation process.



# CHECKLIST: IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL RISKS OF MALADAPTATION

## Section A: Risks and Vulnerabilities

	YES	PARTIALLY	NO	COMMENTS
<p>1 - Was the full range of <b>current and future climate risks</b> of the region considered in the development of the adaptation strategy?</p> <p><i>Regional climate risks can range from floods, heatwaves or droughts to sea-level rise. Climate change can intensify existing risks but also create new risks. As adaptation is a long-term process, it is important to not only consider current but also expected future climate risks.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>2 - Was the assessment of current and future climate risks of the region based on <b>the best available data and projections</b>?</p> <p><i>In light of uncertainties about the future and the long-term character of adaptation, using the best available data and projections is crucial when planning adaptation. However, uncertainties will always remain and require flexibility to react to changing circumstances.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>3 - Were other <b>future trends</b> or developments which could affect climate risks taken into account?</p> <p><i>Climate risks can change or intensify in the future, and thereby also interact with other developments, such as urbanization processes, demographic change or economic development. Climate risks shall not be considered in isolation from other trends and developments.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Section B: Developing the adaptation strategy

<p>4 - Were <b>realistic and feasible objectives</b> defined for the regional adaptation strategy?</p> <p><i>Setting concrete, realistic, and feasible objectives ensures that all efforts are focused on achieving these objectives. This is also important when it comes to the evaluation of the impacts of the adaptation strategy.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>5 - Was the regional adaptation strategy <b>aligned</b> with relevant objectives and initiatives on local, national, and international levels?</p> <p><i>Adaptation and other initiatives relevant to the region shall align their objectives to avoid undermining the adaptation strategy (and vice versa). Coherence (within the same institution/sector, with other institutions/sectors) can unlock synergies and support the successful implementation of the adaptation strategy.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>6 - Were actions taken to raise <b>awareness</b> of the risk of maladaptation among relevant stakeholders?</p> <p><i>Although maladaptation is a growing concern, in practice, knowledge and awareness of it remain limited. Informing stakeholders about the potential negative impacts of adaptation is therefore the basis to be able to identify potential risks of maladaptation.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	YES	PARTIALLY	NO	COMMENTS
<p>7 - Were different adaptation <b>options</b> considered in the development of the regional adaptation strategy?</p> <p><i>In most cases, there are several ways in which the desired goal can be achieved, each corresponding to a different adaptation option. Even though some adaptation options might contribute to the same goal, their advantages and disadvantages can be different. To select the most promising option, it is important to consider different adaptation options.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>8 - Is it <b>transparent</b> how adaptation options for the regional adaptation strategy were selected?</p> <p><i>Different adaptation options might contribute to the same goal but can each have different positive and negative effects. The selection of adaptation options for implementation should therefore be based on the assessment and weighting of the short- and long-term positive and negative effects. Moreover, transparency on the criteria which factor in the decision (e.g., effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, co-benefits, ...) increases the credibility of the adaptation strategy and minimizes the risk of decisions solely based on social pressure or political preferences.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>9 - Does the regional adaptation strategy consider the <b>transformation</b> of existing systems/structures (if required)?</p> <p><i>Minor adjustments of existing systems (so-called "incremental adaptation") may not be sufficient to keep pace with the intensifying impacts of climate change. In some cases, "transformational" adaptation (representing a fundamental change of the system, which may also involve changes in the values and objectives of actors) is needed to ensure long-term resilience.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Section C: Expected impacts

<p>10 - Is it ensured that the regional adaptation strategy does <b>not burden any social groups</b>?</p> <p><i>The distribution of costs and benefits of adaptation can be uneven among different social groups. Marginalised and already vulnerable groups are expected to be over-proportionately affected by climate change impacts, because they have worse conditions, capacities and means to adapt. At the same time, these social groups are often overseen and have less voice in decision-making processes. Therefore, targeted efforts are needed to include the needs and expectations of all groups equally, e.g. through adequate stakeholder participation.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>11 - Does the regional adaptation strategy ensure that adaptation actions do not contradict <b>climate mitigation</b> efforts in the short- and long-term?</p> <p><i>Some adaptation actions (e.g., desalination, air conditioning) involve increasing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions or the degradation of natural GHG sinks to deal with the impacts of climate change. This intensifies climate change impacts instead of contributing to a carbon-neutral future. As a result, adaptation needs might be even higher in the future.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

<p>12 - Does the regional adaptation strategy foster the conservation or restoration of <b>ecosystems</b>?</p> <p><i>Climate change is increasingly threatening the good status of ecosystems. Given their important role in climate change mitigation and adaptation (e.g., nature-based solutions), adaptation strategies should avoid any detrimental effects on ecosystems (e.g. pollution of air, water, and soil, destruction of ecosystems) and contribute to their conservation or restoration.</i></p>				
<p>13 - Does the regional adaptation strategy foster the <b>sustainable use of natural resources</b>?</p> <p><i>Natural resources like freshwater are scarce and often linked to energy-intensive and/or polluting extraction methods. Therefore, it is important to use resources in the most efficient way possible. Adaptation actions which increase the demand for resources or encourage the inefficient use of resources should be reconsidered.</i></p>				
<p>14 - Was the regional adaptation strategy checked to ensure that there are no negative short or long-term effects on <b>other sectors or geographical areas</b>?</p> <p><i>In most cases, the (positive and negative) impacts of adaptation are not restricted to the targeted sector or geographical area. Through the cross-sectoral character of adaptation, other sectors can be affected. For example, desalination to enhance freshwater supply is not only affecting the water sector but also the energy sector due to its high energy demand. Moreover, impacts could also become apparent in other geographical areas or unfold on a higher spatial scale, therefore coordination across different governance levels is needed. It is also important to consider that some impacts of an adaptation action may only be revealed through a long-term perspective.</i></p>				

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**Section D: Monitoring and Evaluating the Adaptation Strategy**

<p>15 - Are there arrangements in place to ensure the continuous <b>monitoring</b> of the implementation process of the regional adaptation strategy and will the results be used for subsequent improvement?</p> <p><i>Through monitoring, implementation shortcomings and potential negative effects can be identified at an early stage and actions can be taken to minimize maladaptive effects. Therefore, monitoring makes it possible to respond to uncertainties and changing circumstances.</i></p>
<p>16 - Is a thorough <b>impact evaluation</b> for the implemented adaptation strategy planned?</p> <p><i>The impacts of the adaptation strategy should be evaluated, covering both the effectiveness of the action (how well it addresses the respective climate change risks/impacts) as well as unexpected positive and negative side effects. A thorough impact evaluation is key to being able to identify and mitigate potential maladaptive effects.</i></p>

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This checklist (Version 2, November 2023) has been developed in the framework of the REGILIENCE Horizon Europe Project. It is still under improvement, and we aim for a better connection with other adaptation tools and inserting case studies to illustrate challenges and solutions. We are grateful for your feedback, especially on the following questions:

- Is the checklist relevant, useful and applicable to your work?
- Is anything missing that would lead to omitting important maladaptation risks?
- Do you agree with the wording used?
- Are the questions and explanatory texts clear and fully understandable?


## Access the online version of the tool



For any questions, collaboration interests, or feedback please contact:

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REGILIENCE, a project funded by the EU Horizon 2020 programme, will support communities, cities, and regions in their efforts toward building climate-resilient pathways. It will facilitate the identification and upscaling of the most promising resilience solutions: supporting their replication in 10 vulnerable and low-capacity regions in Europe; communicating them through various channels and actions; and inspiring policymakers, organisations, and individuals to become part of the change.

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