



Western Balkans Six Climate Adaptation Strategy 2026–2030

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This document is prepared within the Contract for the Supply of Consultation Services to support the RCC Secretariat in the development of a strategy that provides deliverables and actions aimed at advancing climate adaptation in the Western Balkans, in line with the GAWB Action Plan.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties (to UNFCCC)
Copernicus	EU Earth Observation Programme
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	European Climate and Health Observatory
ECMWF	European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts
ECP	European Climate Pact
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Environment Agency
EIB	European Investment Bank
EnC	Energy Community
ESABCC	European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
EU	European Union
EU-OSHA	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
EUMETSAT	European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites
EW4All	Early Warnings for All (UN initiative)
EWS	Early Warning System(s)
EWS-TF	Early Warning Systems-Task Force
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GARI	Green Agenda Implementation Report
GAWB	Green Agenda for the Western Balkans
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GFDRR	Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GWP	Global Water Partnership
HORIZON	Horizon Europe (EU research and innovation programme)
IKI	International Climate Initiative
INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships (European Commission)
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature

M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
NDC	Domestic Determined Contribution
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development / Development Assistance Committee
ODIHR	OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCC	Policy Coordination Committee
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RE2CLID	Regional Initiative to Address Climate Displacement
RWG GAWB	Regional Working Group on Green Agenda for Western Balkans
SEE-MHEWS	South-East European Multi-Hazard Early Warning Advisory System
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SWG RRD	Standing Working Group on Regional Rural Development in South-East Europe
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument
TCT	Transport Community
TEN-E/TEN-T	Trans-European Networks-Energy / Transport
UBA	Umweltbundesamt (Environment Agency Austria)
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WBIF	Western Balkans Investment Framework
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

1. Introduction

Over the past three years, global temperatures have been the highest on record, exceeding the 1.5°C threshold above pre-industrial levels referenced in the Paris Agreement. Climate trends indicate an accelerating pace of change, and Europe's average temperature has already risen by more than 2°C. The Western Balkans Six (WB6) is one of the most vulnerable regions to extreme heat and drought, as highlighted in the annual European State of the Climate reports prepared by the Copernicus Climate Change Service and the World Meteorological Organization, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Projections indicate that South East Europe will have one of the highest rates of climate-related mortality under extreme conditions, even under a 1.5°C warming scenario, with substantially greater impacts if global climate neutrality targets are not achieved by the end of the century. The region is already experiencing severe droughts and extreme precipitation events. Vulnerability to wildfires, floods, landslides, and other weather-related disasters is increasing due to the growing frequency and intensity of climate extremes. Human health, safety, property, crop and livestock production, infrastructure resilience, and natural resources are all at significant risk. Furthermore, climate risks in the WB6 do not exist in isolation; they increasingly interact with geopolitical uncertainties and global energy market volatility. Extreme weather events that disrupt domestic energy production can force emergency reliance on imported fuels at times of high market stress. The region requires urgent action to reduce climate risks and secure economic stability, as well as social and environmental resilience. These climate pressures interact with the region's distinctive demographic dynamics, including rural depopulation, and internal migration. By reducing local capacity to manage land and respond to emergencies, these trends exacerbate climate vulnerabilities.

The transboundary nature of climate hazards, the small size of WB6, and the many shared watersheds, ecosystems, and climate risk chains that require coordinated action beyond domestic boundaries, including with neighbouring EU Member States, necessitate a regional approach. Building climate resilience in WB6 requires a coherent, systemic, and operational response. The WB6 are advancing their alignment with the European Union policy framework and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, which requires stronger integration of climate resilience across sectors, governance levels, and investment decisions.

The WB6 Climate Adaptation Strategy is developed as part of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB) and as a regional strategic response to Action 3 of the revised Action Plan for the implementation of the Sofia Declaration on the GAWB 2025–2030. The Strategy builds on the WB6 Climate Adaptation Roadmap¹ as the guiding preparatory framework, providing its operationalisation through measures, actions, implementation arrangements, partners, indicators and timelines. It builds on two consecutive regional consultations, a regional workshop in Belgrade on 26 March 2026, convened in partnership with the OSCE and GIZ, where WB6 representatives discussed a preliminary package of measures, and the United for Climate - Regional Coordination for a Resilient Future conference in Tirana on 5-7 May 2026, where those measures were aligned with WB6 recommendations.

The Strategy is intended to strengthen regional climate resilience through a practical and coordinated framework for action during the period 2026–2030. It does not replace domestic-level adaptation planning – it provides a regional enabling framework that supports the WB6 in addressing common gaps, improving policy coherence, accelerating implementation, and strengthening capacities for adaptation planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

Recognising that climate adaptation is a cross-sectoral development priority rather than a stand-alone environmental task, the Strategy integrates climate resilience across key sectors including infrastructure, water management, agriculture, biodiversity, health, disaster risk management, local and

¹ WB6 Climate Adaptation Roadmap (RCC,2025) preceded the development of this Strategy and should be consulted for a fuller understanding of the evidence base, strategic rationale and pathways underpinning the measures set out herein, <https://www.rcc.int/pubs/213/wb6-climate-adaptation-roadmap>

urban development, finance, and public policy. It recognises climate resilience as a foundation for sustainable, resilient, and just development.

2. Strategic context and purpose

The WB6 Climate Adaptation Strategy is anchored in the GAWB and supports the broader objective of aligning the region with the European Green Deal and related EU climate, environmental, and sectoral frameworks. It reflects the understanding that climate neutrality and climate resilience must advance together, and that adaptation has to be embedded across policy domains, investments, and governance systems.

The WB6 Climate Adaptation Strategy 2026–2030 provides a common regional framework for strengthening climate resilience across the WB6 through coordinated implementation of shared regional priorities. It promotes the design and implementation of joint regional projects and initiatives that support delivery of the Strategy’s actions. The WB6 Climate Adaptation Roadmap serves as a complementary document, providing analytical base and rationale for identification and design of the Strategy’s objectives and measures.

Many climate hazards in the WB6 are transboundary in nature. Shared river basins (Drin, Drina, Sava, Vardar), interconnected ecosystems, and regional weather patterns mean that climate risks in one economy often have direct implications for neighbours. Floods, droughts, and wildfires frequently cross borders/boundaries, requiring coordinated preparedness and response.

The Strategy is designed to:

- strengthen regional cooperation and improve policy coherence for climate resilience,
- support alignment with relevant EU adaptation-related developments,
- address shared adaptation gaps in the WB6 and support domestic-level adaptation planning and implementation,
- strengthen the enabling environment for climate-proofing, Nature-based Solutions (NbS), and climate-resilient investments,
- improve preparedness, monitoring, evaluation, learning, and knowledge transfer.

The Strategy follows the key objectives of the EU Adaptation Strategy: adaptation needs to become smarter, more systemic, and faster. It is a policy document that implements the WB6 Climate Adaptation Roadmap, aligning the WB6 and EU adaptation frameworks by enabling stronger science-policy links, improved monitoring and knowledge systems, stronger early warning and preparedness capacities, improved regulation and planning, stronger integration of climate and disaster risk management, more effective action on water and drought management, operationalisation of NbS across sectors and scales, and more strategic adaptation finance.

The climate risk profile of WB6 and adaptation implementation gaps are addressed through the WB6 Climate Adaptation Roadmap, recognising that identified climate hazards and impacts from compound and cascading risk chains cannot be handled through isolated sectoral responses.

3. Regional priorities and added value for WB6 climate resilience

The regional priorities identified for strengthening climate resilience in the WB6 are derived from the WB6 Climate Adaptation Roadmap and consultations with WB6 stakeholders conducted through Regional Working Group on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (RWG GAWB) meetings. They are translated into a set of targets and corresponding actions that provide the foundation for the implementation of the measures set out in the WB6 Climate Adaptation Strategy.

Core targets – expected highest impact across sectors:

- Implementation of climate-proofing in infrastructure, other projects, and strategic planning, including consideration of environmental climate vulnerability within project and policy impact assessments;
- Introduction of the NbS concept into project planning as a priority approach, where applicable, across different sectors and at different scales.

Secondary targets that require added value and support at the regional level are:

- Increasing preparedness for climate change through integrated climate and disaster risk management, together with improved management of residual risks and building capacities of rescue teams, including fostering a broader understanding of forecasting data among response forces and citizens;
- Strengthening early warning systems (EWS) by improving observing and forecasting capacities and warning provision of climate, meteorology and hydrology related hazards;
- Preserving natural resources and biodiversity, and strengthening social equity under climate change.

Enablers for achieving the core and secondary targets, requiring both regional coordination and domestic-level development, include:

- Scientific support to advise and assist policymakers and decision-makers, ensure policy coherence in climate action implementation, and support the design of NbS as climate solutions;
- Instruments for knowledge accumulation and knowledge sharing, including monitoring systems for climate change, biodiversity, and land degradation; monitoring of loss and damage; monitoring of health impacts; and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of adaptation;
- Development of knowledge repositories, such as domestic-level centralised adaptation portals (containing risk maps, methodologies, guidelines, and good practices) to support climate resilience at the municipal level;
- Financing climate resilient investments through EU Taxonomy implementation, climate-risk screening, and improved regulatory frameworks for adaptation.

Specific cross-sectoral actions for the WB6, derived from the region's climate vulnerability and key adaptation gaps, are:

- Integrated water-drought management, addressing increasing drought risk, growing aridity in southern areas, and rising extreme precipitation and related hazards, in alignment with the European Water Resilience Strategy;
- Empowering individuals and youth to contribute to climate resilience through economic diversification and sustainable jobs, and through communication channels with the EU (for example, through the European Climate Pact platform);
- Improving understanding of climate-health risks and planning measures for their mitigation.

Regional platforms to be established and supported as channels for communication and collaboration are:

- An Early Warning System Task Force (EWS-TF) under the RWG GAWB bringing together forecasting experts from meteorological and hydrological services, civil protection agencies, relevant European agencies and World Meteorological Organization (WMO), utilising existing collaboration mechanisms such as South-East European Multi-Hazard Early Warning Advisory System (SEE-MHEWS-A) to develop options for upgrading monitoring and forecasting skills, as a precondition for timely and reliable hazard alerts;

- A Task Force on Climate Adaptation, to be established under the RWG GAWB to support and monitor the implementation of the Strategy. The Task Force would monitor progress against the indicators set out in the Annex, strengthen coordination between regional activities and domestic-level adaptation plans through designated WB6 focal points, identify opportunities for joint regional climate adaptation projects, and facilitate the development of bankable regional project proposals for appropriate financing instruments. This will ensure that Strategy measures are translated into implementation-ready initiatives aligned with both regional priorities and domestic planning processes.

Looking ahead, consideration may be given to stepping up science-based climate resilience policy across the region through establishment of a WB6 Scientific Advisory Body, where the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change may serve as an example.

The WB6 Climate Adaptation Strategy supports the implementation of a framework for strengthening climate resilience in WB6 by ensuring alignment with the EU adaptation framework, focusing on regionally identified priorities expressed as:

- **Core targets with highest cross-sectoral impact that are in initial stage of implementation in the WB6**, including the integration of climate-proofing and NbS into legislation.
- **Secondary targets - areas** where existing WB6 frameworks need strengthening to support climate resilience, including integrated climate and disaster risk management starting from integrated risk assessment, improved detection, observation, analysis and forecasting of hazards as a key input for Early Warning Systems.
- **Enablers** - monitoring systems for building knowledge, scientific advisory support to ensure coherent cross-sectoral implementation, improved project design, and alignment with EU frameworks, and financing mechanisms for adaptation.
- **Actions** – targeted responses to **address specific climate vulnerabilities and adaptation gaps in the WB6**, including an integrated water–drought management to address flood- and water-scarcity-related hazards, strengthened knowledge on climate–health risks, and enhanced socio-economic resilience by economic diversification and the empowerment of individuals through viable livelihoods that sustain local adaptive capacity.
- **Actions for establishing regional platforms for enabling necessary WB6 expertise communication**, including a Task Force on Climate Adaptation, and a Task Force on Early Warning System(s), to support policy and project development, and to improve regional-level high-quality forecast inputs for EWS, respectively.

The identified priorities are further operationalised through action-oriented measures under the Strategy’s strategic objectives, ensuring their direct contribution to the overall goal of strengthening climate resilience across the WB6 and complementing domestic-level adaptation efforts.

With the regional priorities translated into measures, the WB6 Adaptation Strategy contributes to the WB6 long-term vision by following extended key principles aligned with the EU Adaptation Strategy and the WB6 Climate Adaptation Roadmap:

- **Providing regional added value in building the resilience** - The Strategy focuses on common regional challenges that can be addressed more effectively through cooperation, coordination, common guidance, joint learning, and regional initiatives.
- **Supporting domestic-level climate resilience pathways** - The Strategy does not replace domestic-level action – it provides an enabling and coordinating framework that supports domestic implementation.

- **Supporting science-based (smart) adaptation** - Adaptation planning and implementation should rely on scientific knowledge, robust monitoring, risk-informed decision-making, and improved science-policy communication.
- **Supporting systemic adaptation** - Climate resilience must be integrated into regulations, strategic planning, local development, sectoral policies, project development, and impact assessment procedures.
- **Supporting no-regret and multi-benefit measures** - Priority should be given to measures that deliver multiple co-benefits and remain justified under a range of climate futures, especially integration of climate-proofing concept and NbS.
- **Integrating climate change risk reduction into disaster risk reduction mechanisms** - Adaptation and disaster risk reduction should be linked through improved assessment methodologies, preparedness, prevention, recovery, and management of residual risks, which will also enable the translation of integrated risk reduction to local-level planning.
- **Respecting just and inclusive adaptation** - Adaptation should strengthen the protection of vulnerable groups, improve public preparedness, support equitable access to resilience benefits, and strengthen socio-economic dimensions of risk reduction. Consistent with the principle of just and inclusive adaptation, gender-responsive approaches will be applied throughout the implementation of this Strategy, including the meaningful engagement of women and girls in adaptation planning, decision-making and implementation at all levels.
- **Respecting policy coherence in building resilience for sustainable development** - Adaptation must be aligned through policy and regulation, with efficiency and effectiveness increased by avoiding duplication of work and the maladaptation that may arise from sector-isolated planning and a lack of climate-proofed policies.

4. Long-term vision, main objective and specific objectives

LONG-TERM VISION:

The WB6 is resilient to climate change by mid-century, with functional and robust adaptation mechanisms in place, built on science, policy, and appropriate financing.

MAIN OBJECTIVE:

Strengthen the capacities of WB6 to address challenges in adaptation planning and implementation by increasing the preparedness of people and economic sectors, ensuring sustainability of adaptation measures, and reducing residual risks to a minimum.

Specific objectives:

- **Specific Objective 1:** Strengthen capacities to increase preparedness for climate change through improved access to data, information, and knowledge in the WB6.
- **Specific Objective 2:** Strengthen capacities for systemic adaptation and integrated disaster risk and climate risk reduction in the WB6.
- **Specific Objective 3:** Strengthen scientific and financial support for adaptation implementation in the WB6.

The Strategy organises regional priorities through three specific objectives and their associated measures, and actions under the specific objective to which they most directly contribute.

How to read the measures: Each measure follows a common structure: (1) measure title and description providing rationale and scope; (2) actions for implementation specifying steps; (3) implementation tables (Chapter 4) listing partners, timelines, and relation to regional priorities; (4)

indicators (Annex) for monitoring progress. Detailed background on rationale and gaps addressed by each measure can be found in the WB6 Climate Adaptation Roadmap.

4.1 Strengthen capacities to increase preparedness for climate change through improved access to data, information, and knowledge – Specific Objective 1

Measures under this objective strengthen monitoring systems for climate change impacts, improve understanding of climate risks, upgrade early warning systems through operational support to hydrometeorological services, and enhance knowledge and information sharing to empower and encourage community participation in adaptation. They are bridging the data-collection and data-management gaps in the WB6, providing the basis for risk-informed decision-making.

Effective adaptation requires access to reliable climate data, risk information, and good practice examples. The WB6 benefits from engagement with European knowledge platforms, notably Climate-ADAPT (climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu). The European Climate Adaptation Platform, managed by the European Environment Agency (EEA), provides access to adaptation case studies, tools, and guidance. WB6 participate as EEA cooperating partners, enabling knowledge exchange and contribution of regional experiences to the European knowledge base. Strategy implementation should leverage Climate-ADAPT as a primary source of European good practice and a channel for sharing WB6 adaptation experiences.

Measure SO1.1: Development of integrated monitoring systems for climate change, land degradation and biodiversity

Integration of climate change monitoring with land degradation and biodiversity requires the selection of indicators that are relevant for tracking the vulnerability of land and biodiversity to climate change. Such monitoring would allow a better understanding of slow-onset events resulting from climate change, and/or their interaction with human-induced pressures. They would also strengthen environmental impact assessments, and support climate-proofing of projects and policies as well as the implementation of NbS, adaptive solutions criteria, by providing a better understanding of climate change impacts on the environment. Additionally, tipping points in the natural environment could be detected and monitored to implement timely interventions, thus preventing hazards of greater consequence. The Rio Conventions [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)] support such integrated monitoring and reporting approaches, given the already visible impacts of climate change. Monitoring data can be plugged into the existing monitoring systems related to climate change and impacts at the domestic-level.

An integrated climate change–land degradation–biodiversity monitoring system should be developed in the WB6 taking into account domestic circumstances, while ensuring alignment with EU monitoring/reporting requirements and approaches to enable easy reporting and data/information exchange. Financial and expertise support are required to develop or improve existing land- and biodiversity-related monitoring systems, and establish field monitoring, as well as data collection and sharing. The expected outcomes of this measure are directly applicable, step-by-step, regional instructions/guidelines for the implementation of monitoring (designed according to specificities of the jurisdictions), including a list of indicators, implementation of monitoring (locations and frequency), and other relevant monitoring considerations (responsible institutions, data formats and repositories, data sharing). Also, funds should be ensured to implement the monitoring systems and verify their functionality for a certain period.

Actions for implementation under measure SO1.1 – Development of integrated monitoring systems for climate change, land degradation and biodiversity:

- Develop instructions/guidelines for establishing integrated monitoring systems at the domestic level (well-coordinated at WB6 level), including indicators, technical information on monitoring of sites to be established, and details related to data management;
- Initiate integrated climate change – land – biodiversity monitoring in practice with financial support ensured for the agreed period.

This measure supports the strengthening of knowledge in the WB6, contributing as an enabler for sustainable adaptation, and providing information for secondary target for the WB6 in addressing integrated climate and disaster risk assessment, while building knowledge for NbS implementation and for climate-proofing in environmental impact assessment. The WB6 also requires a regional approach to properly coordinate the monitoring of cross-border/boundary ecosystems and natural resources.

Measure SO1.2: Support the development of monitoring systems for damages and losses caused by climate hazards

This measure considers the development of guidelines or sets of instructions for implementing or improving domestic-level monitoring systems for assessing damages and losses caused by climate hazards, in alignment with EU progress in this area. The implementation of the measure requires collaboration with EU/WB6 climate change experts to help categorise climate hazards relevant to the region while taking into account the specifics of climate change across the region. The outcome should provide information on how to relate climate hazards to damages and losses, determine all possible units of measurements, including unit conversion options, defining data formats and repository options, and providing guidance for establishing functional monitoring systems for climate related damages and losses tailored to the circumstances of each WB6 (responsible institutions and dataflow, engaging with data providers like government institutions and citizens, etc.). Data should be collected and systematised, quality controlled, and shared transparently. This would enable data sharing on international platforms (Risk Data Hub) and with the scientific community, decision- and policy-makers, and other stakeholders. Monitoring of damages and losses, combined with evaluation and learning, would enable better adaptation planning and quality cost-benefit analysis of the adaptation in strategic planning and projects. It would also contribute to better understanding of the benefits of NbS, climate-proofing, etc. Improved monitoring of damages and losses will enable better integrated climate and disaster risk assessment for integrated climate and disaster risk management. Damage and loss monitoring systems should be anchored within existing domestic institutions responsible for disaster risk management.

The WB6 should seek to provide data to the Risk Data Hub to improve the visibility of damages and losses and facilitate data sharing with the wider community, enabling its inclusion into regional and global studies. Improved data availability would strengthen the knowledge base, including justification of financial support. The inclusion of the WB6 data in the Risk Data Hub requires alignment with relevant EU requirement and reporting standards. The data submission protocol is available on the Hub's website. Within the EU, data are primarily submitted by competent authorities and regulatory agencies in individual EU Member States (ministries, inspection agencies, environmental agencies, food safety agencies, health agencies, security agencies, etc.). Data are also submitted by commercial and research institutions that have the capacity and approval from the competent authorities to report data.

Actions for implementation under measure SO1.2 – Support development of monitoring systems for damages and losses caused by climate hazards:

- Develop methodology and guidelines for aligning domestic-level monitoring systems for damages and losses caused by climate hazards with EU approaches, including a common methodological basis, clarifying categorisation of climate hazards (including economic and non-economic losses), and related damage and loss metrics, and improving data quality, transparency, and accessibility.
- WB6 provision of data to the Risk Data Hub.

This measure strengthens the knowledge base in the WB6 and contributes to climate-related loss and damage monitoring in Europe, supporting improved reporting on climate related losses and damages. It is recognised as an enabler of sustainable adaptation by providing information to support integrated climate and disaster risk assessment, residual risk management, cost-benefit analysis, and enabling monitoring of transboundary hazards and their impacts thereby improving the understanding of transboundary climate risks and risk transfer.

Measure SO1.3: Support the development of monitoring of climate-related health impacts and risk assessment

The measure includes the development of guidance for establishing domestic-level systems for monitoring the health impacts of climate change, tailored to specific circumstances of each WB6. The measure will provide technical support for the implementation of such a system in the WB6, helping to reduce the burden on domestic administrative capacities. Implementation of the measure will require close collaboration between climate change and public health experts from the WB6 and the EU to develop an appropriate set of indicators and define implementation arrangements, including institutional responsibilities, data collection, management, storage, and sharing. Monitoring of climate-related health impacts will rely on existing domestic data collection and information management systems wherever possible. The established monitoring system will provide evidence on the impacts of climate change on human health, support informed planning and decision-making in the health sector, and contribute to more efficient prevention and adaptation actions. Projections of future vulnerabilities affecting the health of citizens are important as timely interventions can reduce risks, strengthen the preparedness of health systems, alleviate pressure on healthcare systems, and save lives. Particular attention should be given to population groups facing heightened climate-related health risks, including pregnant women, mothers, newborns and children, in order to ensure that monitoring and risk assessment systems support targeted prevention, preparedness and response measures.

In the EU, there are many useful examples of established heat health monitoring practices. For example, Italy's Heat Action Plan² represents one of Europe's most comprehensive approaches to protecting public health from extreme heat events. The plan is specifically designed to mitigate health risks associated with heatwaves, with particular focus on vulnerable populations including the elderly, individuals with chronic health conditions, socially isolated persons, and those living in urban areas with high heat exposure. The plan includes heat-health warning system, protocols for health and social care providers, targeted outreach programmes for vulnerable groups, etc. Portugal's ÍCARO³ system is widely recognised across Europe as a model for integrated heat-health surveillance and warning. It provides a comprehensive framework that combines forecasting, real-time monitoring, and post-event evaluation into a single coordinated system.

² <https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/caldo/homeCaldo.jsp>

³ <https://www.insa.min-saude.pt/category/areas-de-atuacao/epidemiologia/icaro/>

Implementation of this measure should be informed by data available at the European Climate and Health Observatory, which includes a number of data profiles for the WB6.

Actions for implementation under measure SO1.3 – Support development of monitoring of climate-related health impacts and risk assessment:

- Develop instructions/guidelines for the WB6 on climate-health monitoring, aligned with EU approaches and adapted to domestic circumstances, covering indicators, implementation procedures, institutional responsibilities, and data collection, storage and sharing, complemented by guidelines for climate-related health risk assessment methodology, including specific consideration of climate-related risks to pregnant women, mothers, newborns and children;
- Transfer knowledge and build capacity for climate-health monitoring and risk assessment.

This measure strengthens WB6 knowledge base for climate-health monitoring in Europe and enables closure of data gaps, improving the climate resilience of citizens. This group of actions addresses specific climate change vulnerabilities and adaptation gaps in the WB6.

Measure SO1.4: Strengthen WB6 capacities for upgrading Early Warning Systems

Capacities for multi-hazard Early Warning Systems (EWS) in WB6 remain largely insufficient in the face of increased climate related extreme events. This gap can be addressed through regional coordinated efforts and strengthened collaboration with European institutions, WMO and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). Common gaps exist across the four pillars of the UN's Early Warnings for All (EW4All) initiative, including in monitoring of hazards (including weather radar and upper-air observations, and maintenance, calibration and quality control of observing stations), hazard specific forecasting, nowcasting and warning provision as well as legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms regarding provision of early warning services. Engaging experts from hydrometeorological services in operational hazard monitoring and forecasting, and training them in new technologies and products, is essential to improve EWS and enable timely interventions.

The establishment of a Task Force on EWS (TF-EWS) including representatives of hydrometeorological services, civil protection authorities, the scientific community and stakeholders (such as representatives from the health, agriculture, transport, energy, tourism and other relevant sectors that may benefit from the improvement of EWS) is an initial step. The TF-EWS, in collaboration with the WMO, UNDRR and other partners (e.g., European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts – ECMWF, European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites – EUMETSAT, Copernicus), should assess the current state of EWS at domestic-level and needs for their improvement, informed by EW4All (global initiative of United Nations). It should develop a roadmap for improving the capacities of WB6 EWS, building on activities implemented under the EW4All Initiative, and focusing on seamless provision of timely and quality forecasts and warnings for priority hazards, supporting harmonisation of forecast products and warning protocols, coordinating regional data exchange, and strengthening WB6 EWS collaboration with various regional and domestic-level stakeholders. The implementation should be coordinated with WMO under the SEE-MHEWS-A, the regional WMO-supported advisory early warning system for South East Europe, which was instituted to strengthen operational forecasting and warnings through shared data, models, and cooperation, and with UNDRR for risk knowledge and preparedness-to-respond⁴. The TF-EWS complements the SEE-MHEWS-A. In practical terms, whereby SEE-MHEWS-A produces the shared forecast and advisory inputs, the TF-EWS, under the RWG GAWB institutional mechanism, would coordinate how WB6 use

⁴ EWS design and communication should ensure inclusive reach to hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups, including tourists, migrants, persons with disabilities, and elderly populations.

those inputs, where the gaps are, and how the full EW4All warning chain is closed domestically and across borders/boundaries.

The TF-EWS may also consider developing a joint project for the improvement of early warning services, including through collaboration with key partners.

Actions for implementation under measure SO1.4 – Strengthen WB6 capacities for upgrading Early Warning Systems:

- Establish the WB6 TF-EWS under the RWG GAWB institutional mechanism, whereas RCC provides the Secretariat and ensures coordination with other international partners and stakeholders including relevant EU bodies, WMO UNDRR, and others;
- Align WB6 operational forecasting and nowcasting needs with SEE-MHEWS-A activities, including strengthening the collaboration with ECMWF, COPERNICUS, and EUMETSAT to improve data access and use, and the preparation of a report on the planned activities and their expected effects;
- Support the operationalisation of the upgraded EWS services aligned with the activities planned under TF-EWS, WMO and UNDRR collaboration;
- Identify WB6 needs for improvement of other EWS components under the disaster risk reduction framework, taking domestic-level circumstances into account.

This measure establishes a regional platform for expertise communication in monitoring, forecasting and warning provision to jointly upgrade capacities and provide inputs for domestic-level EWS. It contributes to a secondary target of this Strategy by improving key input for EWS and consequently contributes to increasing preparedness for climate hazards. It also improves other components of EWS at the domestic level.

Measure SO1.5. Engage in activities to empower individuals, including children, on the topic of resilient development

Inclusion of the WB6 in the European Climate Pact (ECP) would be an opportunity to empower individuals, as engagement of a wider community in addressing climate risk reduction is essential for achievement of results. This platform is currently out of reach for the WB6 due to the precondition that participants' residency must be in EU Member States. Inclusion in the ECP should be further pursued to enable a communication channel between WB6 residents and the EU on the topic of adaptation.

Stronger public involvement, particularly of young people, who will be most affected by climate hazards, is necessary in the WB6.⁵ Citizens should be actively involved in planning disaster response and emergency measures to ensure these measures are known and complied with during disaster events. The Aarhus Convention gives citizens (including minors represented by parents/guardians) the legal footing to demand climate risk data or contest weak adaptation plans. Improved empowerment of individuals could be ensured through coordinated planning of the Convention's implementation, stronger involvement of civil society organisations⁶ in designing and implementing climate adaptation, domestic-level adaptation and child rights policies. Other opportunities should also be explored by aligning with EU initiatives on public participation in climate action.

The WB6, in collaboration with the EU, should assess current circumstances regarding opportunities to increase knowledge and involve individuals and organisations in climate change adaptation. They should develop a framework empowering individuals in the WB6 through policy, access to knowledge, and opening channels of communication with the EU through existing platforms. These aims can be achieved through joint WB6 project and consultation with scientific community.

⁵ The transnational Alpine region can offer experiences on engaging with young people through mechanisms such as the Youth Parliament (Alpine Convention) and the EUSALP Youth Forum.

⁶ OSCE supported network of Aarhus Centres operates in WB6, <https://aarhus.osce.org>

Actions for implementation under measure SO1.5 – Engage in activities to empower individuals, including children, on the topic of resilient development:

- Assess opportunities for empowering individuals (particularly elderly, persons with disabilities, migrants, and temporary residents) and youth to address climate-related issues in the WB6, according to the domestic-level circumstances, and develop a framework for improving the empowerment of individuals relating to climate change adaptation by developing mechanisms for their inclusion in an effective way;
- Support the implementation of a framework for empowering individuals regarding climate-related issues, including engaging youth and providing them with knowledge and opportunities to contribute to climate resilience.

This measure addresses the identified gap in adaptation in WB6 related to socio-economic resilience and enables empowering individuals to contribute to climate resilience. It represents the inclusion of societal aspects in understanding climate risks and implementing solutions, in alignment with the just adaptation approach.

4.2 Strengthen capacities for systemic adaptation and integrated disaster risk and climate risk reduction – Specific Objective 2

Measures under this objective focus on regulatory and policy interventions that enable systemic and just adaptation, as well as downscaling to the local level. These include the establishment of frameworks for climate-proofing and NbS implementation, strengthening of adaptation capacity in agriculture through alignment with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and providing support for integrated water-drought management planning in line with EU efforts to address water resilience and climate risk-informed water management.

Measure SO2.1. Improvement of integrated climate risk and disaster risk assessment and management, including rescue team capacities and the availability of funds for post-disaster emergency response, recovery and risk-sharing instruments⁷

Integrated climate risk and disaster risk assessment is the essential precondition for the systemic inclusion of climate resilience and the reduction of increasing climate hazards. Therefore, domestic-level methodologies for disaster risk assessment in the WB6 should be upgraded to include climate change. This could reshape the knowledge about risks and enable further disaster risk management actions to be climate risk-informed. Domestic-level methodologies for integrated climate and disaster risk assessments should be aligned with EU approaches, and global guidance for comprehensive risk management. To better manage residual risks, policymakers should be advised on how to close the climate-protection gap.

To that end, recommendations for implementation of integrated climate and disaster risk management should be developed through coordinated work of EU experts in climate and disaster risk assessment and WB6 experts experienced in climate change risk assessment. Aiming to reduce residual risks and minimise losses caused by damages from climate hazards to the extent possible, it is necessary to find options for closing the climate protection gap by using recovery funds and insurance as climate risk-transfer mechanism, drawing on UNDRR's/other international organisations risk-financing work. Closing climate protection gap in WB6 needs to be addressed urgently, due to the increasing climate change impacts and the low adaptive capacity of the region. Furthermore, effective disaster risk reduction has measurable co-benefits beyond immediate hazard loss reduction: it prevents climate-induced displacement, reduces irregular migration pressure, and contributes to confidence-building and

⁷ This measure encompasses three interconnected components aligned with the disaster risk management cycle.

social cohesion in cross-border/boundary contexts where shared basins and shared hazard exposure create interdependencies among WB6.

This measure should also strengthen emergency preparedness, enable timely and effective responses to climate-related hazards and disasters, and improve the operational capacities and regional cooperation of rescue teams, drawing on UNDRR's Preparedness Framework, EU Civil Protection Mechanism and the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network.

Actions for implementation under measure SO2.1 – Improvement of integrated climate risk and disaster risk assessment and management, including rescue team capacities and the availability of funds for post-disaster emergency response, recovery and risk-sharing instruments:

- Assess WB6 domestic-level circumstances related to integrated climate and disaster risk management, including methodologies for disaster risk assessment, and develop a set of instructions/recommendations for the alignment of domestic-level methodologies with the EU integrated methodology for integrated climate and disaster risk assessment;
- Support closing the climate protection gap in WB6 by designing the actionable options using insurance as a climate risk-transfer mechanism, according to domestic-level circumstances;
- Review the emergency response capacities, including the operational capacities of rescue teams, and develop an EU-aligned improvement plan, supported by international funding.

This measure implements actions that contribute to identified secondary targets and improve existing disaster risk reduction frameworks in the WB6 by integrating climate change risk reduction into disaster risk reduction mechanisms. Regional alignment and alignment with EU approaches also contribute to cross-border/boundary risk reduction.

Measure SO2.2. Support establishment of a regulatory and strategic framework to integrate climate-proofing into project design, strategic planning, and strategic and project-impact assessments, ensuring that resilience is considered in both project implementation and broader policy development

Climate-proofing of projects and policies in the policy and regulatory frameworks of WB6 is recognised as a core target under this Strategy. Climate-proofing is essential for critical infrastructure, but also for other projects related to building and renovation, urban planning, etc. It needs to be implemented at the project-design, strategic-planning, and environmental-impact-assessment phases. Inclusion of climate-proofing through the climate change laws of the WB6 is an option that would advance alignment with the EU climate legislation framework. Climate-proofing frameworks should incorporate criteria to ensure good adaptation practice, solutions that are sustainable, deliver wide social co-benefits, take a long-term perspective, prioritise NbS where appropriate, are adjustable to changing conditions, address systemic risks, mainstreaming climate risks in policy documents in all sectors at all levels, and are proactive rather than reactive. Equally important is the avoidance of maladaptation. Effective implementation depends on developing a common language across administrative sectors and governance levels. Energy Community and Transport Community are already working with the WB6 on Trans-European Networks (TEN) resilience through implementation of adaptation under the updated TEN-T (TEN for Transport) and TEN-E (TEN for Energy) regulations. To extend the reach of the climate-proofing concept and the expected outcomes, they should be presented to domestic-level administrations. Technical support for climate proofing can be provided through the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) mechanism or a joint WB6 project to strengthen climate proofing in the region.

Strategic approach to the effective implementation of the climate-proofing concept should be modelled on the EU approach, taking care of policy coherence. WB6 should also consider introducing climate resilience checks for domestic regulatory proposals, whereby performing an *ex-ante* assessment of how proposed laws, regulations, and policies may affect climate risk exposure and adaptive capacities.

Additionally, a set of indicators must be developed to track the implementation and effectiveness of climate proofing in the WB6 and identify potential improvements, as climate proofing is a core target for the WB6 in building resilience.

Measure SO2.3. Build a regulatory and strategic framework for NbS integration across sectors and scales with multi-benefits

NbS implementation across sectors and across scales has been recognised as a core target of this Strategy. Strengthening NbS in WB6⁸ requires a legislative framework to ensure their appropriate implementation in project and strategic planning frameworks.

The WB6 need support to integrate NbS into domestic-level regulatory frameworks, including the NbS definition and verification standards. Aligning with EU climate change legislation and implementing NbS through climate change laws is an option. Guidelines suitable to the circumstances in the WB6 should provide instructions for creating legal frameworks for NbS implementation in WB6 and support the implementation process (NbS verification standards and related implementation monitoring).

NbS concept is embedded as a core cross-cutting instrument for climate adaptation, taking into account that its implementation reduces climate risks (floods, droughts, heatwaves, erosion), enhances carbon sinks and biodiversity, provides cost-effective alternatives to grey infrastructure and supports the EU Taxonomy for sustainable financing-compliant investments (adaptation + biodiversity objectives). NbS in the WB6 are not a complementary measure, but a central pillar of adaptation, across all sectors and governance levels. They should be used to address identified critical risks and should be supported by EU-aligned financing, knowledge platforms, and governance tools.

In the WB6, priority areas for climate adaptation through NbS include protection of ecosystems and biodiversity, water-flood management, building resilience of agricultural and soil systems, urban areas and public health, and infrastructure contributing to climate-proofing. NbS play a crucial role in enhancing resilience and delivering sustainable and cost-effective climate resilience. NbS is also recognised as an important instrument for implementing the WB6 Strategic Biodiversity Plan and the WB6 Forest Landscape Restoration Plan.

As implementation of NbS in the WB6 region is delayed, particularly in the field of nature protection, the process should be accelerated to match the level already present in the wider European region. Until appropriate legislation is introduced and implemented, NbS implementation criteria should be strengthened through design and implementation of projects in the WB6.

To prepare WB6 projects implementing the NbS concept, harmonised and clear criteria are needed. This would help ensure that NbS are applied consistently, correctly and effectively across regional projects, while supporting the gradual development of domestic regulatory and strategic frameworks.

⁸ Existing regional platforms, including the Biodiversity Task Force for the Western Balkans (BDTF WB) and the Community of Practice on Nature-based Solutions, can serve as complementary channels for collaboration on climate-biodiversity interlinkages and NbS implementation, in support of relevant Strategy measures.

Actions for implementation under measure SO2.3 – Build a regulatory and strategic framework for NbS integration across sectors and scales with multi-benefits:

- Assess the WB6 circumstances related to NbS implementation focusing on domestic-level legislation and strategic frameworks and develop a set of instructions/guidelines to establish or improve regulatory frameworks for upscaling the NbS implementation across scales and across sectors in the WB6, including a set of indicators to monitor NbS implementation in regulations and in practice, aligning with EU progress on this matter;
- Identify the capacities that must be built to implement NbS in a systemic way and implement trainings and workshops to support the WB6 in creating an enabling administrative environment for NbS implementation across scales and sectors;
- Develop and standardise criteria and guidelines for NbS implementation through WB6 regional projects.

This measure supports the core-target of this Strategy by implementing actions aimed at integrating NbS concepts into legislation. It supports the operationalisation of multi-benefit and cross-sectoral adaptation, with expected deep integration of NbS as sustainable options for climate-change risk mitigation. NbS implementation contributes to the objectives of the WB6 Strategic Biodiversity Plan and the WB6 Forest Landscape Restoration Plan.

Measure SO2.4. Support strategic planning for integrated water-drought management under climate change

Due to climate change, there is a high risk of water scarcity in the WB6. Significant improvements in water-drought management are required, as increasing frequency of intensive precipitation events and severe droughts, and increasing level of aridity in the region are challenging water management strategies. Water management in an era of climate change involves multisector water-related challenges.

The Strategy supports alignment with evolving EU directions on water resilience, including alignment with the European Water Resilience Strategy, promoting integrated water-drought management, as a strategic regional priority.

The WB6 should implement a comprehensive assessment of water and drought management and develop recommendations for sustainable, climate-resilient water-drought management⁹. Availability of data related to drought risk and flood risk is limited. This can be improved through engagement to extend the assessments provided in the European Drought Atlas and development of the Copernicus Water Thematic Hub. Integrated water-drought management must also explicitly address the vulnerabilities of the energy sector. The WB6 rely heavily on hydropower (e.g. Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia) and river-cooled thermal power plants. Prolonged droughts and low river levels severely constrain electricity generation, posing acute security of supply risks and driving up regional market prices. Strategic planning must align water resource allocation with energy system resilience.

⁹ Good practice examples from the Alpine region, such as the Sora catchment pilot action plan, demonstrate how regions can develop integrated responses to flood-drought risks.

Recommendations, aligned with EU actions on this matter, should serve to build climate change resilience of WB6 (strategic planning for water management under climate change impacts) in terms of freshwater security and resilience to droughts under future climate change. Wastewater management, as highlighted in the EU Adaptation Strategy, is of high importance with multiple co-benefits (water security, environmental protection, resilience to climate change). Therefore, the WB6 should: (1) implement comprehensive assessment of water and drought management in the WB6 and develop recommendations for sustainable and resilient water management under climate change, accounting also integrated water-drought management; (2) support climate-proofing of wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure in the WB6, in alignment with Urban Waste Water Treatment (UWWT) Directive requirements, strengthen WB6 capacities for sustainable wastewater management, and implement capacity-building training for sustainable wastewater management according to guidelines.

Actions for implementation under measure SO2.4 – Support strategic planning for integrated water-drought management under climate change:

- Comprehensively assess water- and drought-related data and information availability, water-drought management under climate change in the WB6, as well as domestic-level strategic frameworks, and develop recommendations to align with relevant EU processes, including measures to strengthen capacities and establish an enabling implementation environment;
- Support the climate-proofing of wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure through capacity building for sustainable wastewater management;
- Facilitate the implementation of developed recommendations into practice for the WB6 integrated water-drought management, aligned with the EU water resilience framework and drought risk management.

This measure implements the actions related to the identified specific climate change vulnerabilities and adaptation gaps in the WB6. It supports the multi-benefit policy interventions and the nexus approach in risk reduction related to floods, droughts and water scarcity, while adjusting the water management to changing water cycle under climate change.

Measure SO2.5. Aligning the protection of workers with EU progress in adjusting regulations in response to increasing climate hazards

Improved protection of workers exposed to increasing climate hazards has been identified as one of the WB6-specific priorities under this Strategy. Support is expected to enable the integration of identified climate-related hazards into the domestic-level worker's health and safety policies. Development of recommendations to strengthen workers climate resilience would be need along with coordinated advisory of EU subject matter experts and WB6 experts for climate change impact assessments.

The EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021–2027 requires occupational safety and health systems to consider risk mitigation relating to the green transition and emerging environmental hazards, including hazards driven by climate change. It provides the policy basis for addressing workers' climate-related risks through prevention, preparedness, and improved occupational risk management. EU-OSHA (the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work) delivers knowledge, evidence, tools, and policy support to improve occupational safety and health across EU Member States. The WB6 progress in building workers' climate resilience through a regulatory framework for safety and health at work should be aligned with the work of EU-OSHA.

Actions for implementation under measure SO2.5 – Aligning the protection of workers with EU progress in adjusting regulations in response to increasing climate hazards:

- Assess the exposure of workers, particularly outside workers, to increasing climate hazards and WB6 domestic-level circumstances and capacities for including the climate resilience of workers into the legislative frameworks; develop recommendations and guidance to strengthen the climate resilience of workers through WB6 domestic-level regulatory frameworks (identifying the legislation and regulatory frameworks that need to be amended), aligned with adjustments related to EU accession process;
- Implement trainings/workshops to raise awareness of the workers' rights and how they relate to reducing risks from climate impacts.

This measure implements the actions related to the identified specific climate change vulnerabilities and gaps in adaptation in the WB6. It supports the just adaptation approach by contributing to climate resilience of one of the most vulnerable groups to climate change, incorporating mechanisms for their protection, and building their knowledge and preparedness according to the area-specific climate hazards.

Measure SO2.6. Development of enablers to increase the capacities for adaptation implementation at the local level

Adaptation planning at the local level requires access to climate data, methodology for the vulnerability and risk assessments, and adaptation implementation through local adaptation plans or directly through the existing plans (local development plans, disaster risk reduction plans, etc.). After assessing EU approaches to local level adaptation planning, platforms with easily accessible data, and the capacities of local self-governments, solutions should be provided to achieve a fully functional local level adaptation process.

Municipalities should also consider their specific vulnerabilities to climate change and projected risks. To facilitate this assessment, they should be provided with access to data (existing platforms with climate data and projections) and guidelines for moving towards the final step of planning and adaptation implementation. Local-level adaptation could benefit from the development of domestic-level centralised adaptation portals to disseminate knowledge, data, and good practices.

Building local-level capacities for adaptation is the responsibility of domestic-level governance. The regional level can provide support in developing methodologies, accessing data, identifying gaps, and offer advice and guidelines for closing the gaps. Domestic-level scientific advisory bodies should be engaged in building adaptation capacities at the local level. However, an integrated approach to

Actions for implementation under measure SO2.6 – Development of enablers to increase the capacities for adaptation implementation at the local level:

- Assess gaps in local-level climate adaptation and integrated climate and disaster risk management, including climate proofing-concept and implementation of NbS in the WB6; provide guidelines for the WB6 aligned with EU approaches for strengthening downscaling of climate resilience actions to local level, including differentiation according to local typologies, varying institutional capacities, demographic trends, necessary actions for provision of data, tools, instructions and expertise to local self-governments, including the instructions for developing indicators for monitoring and reporting;
- Implement trainings/workshops for strengthening local-level adaptation and reporting in the WB6, according to the developed guidelines.

This measure will support the WB6 with best practices for addressing local-level adaptation implementation more effectively. It provides added value for the WB6 in building resilience and transferring EU mechanisms and approaches to the WB6.

mitigation and adaptation is recommended, including strengthening climate proofing and NbS at the local level. These efforts should result in a mechanism which supports local-level administration having full capacities to enhance climate resilience in their municipalities. Local level implementation is essential for successful adaptation.

Measure SO2.7. Development of enablers for adaptation implementation through alignment with the Common Agricultural Policy

The CAP provides support for farmers and protects farmlands, enables the introduction of new technologies and sustainable agricultural development including transformation of agricultural production into climate-resilient. Climate-resilient farming is implemented by educating producers, enabling access to land, and providing subsidies for practices that include sustainable land management and climate-resilient production. When introducing new technologies or new approaches in production and climate-resilient production, regular and efficient transfer of new knowledge from science to practice poses a challenge. Furthermore, additional regulatory interventions are needed to ensure that land leasing provisions and subsidies to finance climate-resilient and sustainable production support climate adaptation in agriculture. Land management is also the responsibility of local-self-governments that regulate the land ownership. Support provided to governments to create adaptation frameworks in agriculture is partially implemented through alignment with the CAP, but challenges remain in overcoming specific adaptation requirements (related to the type of production and climate risks). Successful agricultural adaptation in the WB6 depends not only on policy alignment and technical measures but also on the availability of a skilled agricultural workforce. Implementation of this measure should therefore consider actions that promote climate-resilient rural livelihoods capable of attracting or retaining younger residents.

The following options should be considered: strengthening the involvement of universities in the ongoing education of producers, engaging hydrometeorological services to deliver forecasts and warnings relevant to agricultural production, implementing economic diversification to increase the share of educated agricultural land managers and ease access to land, providing subsidies to agricultural engineers, identifying opportunities to support climate-resilient rural livelihoods and workforce development, developing guidelines on climate-resilient production for ministries and producers (suggesting, for example, zoning by the type of production, climate-risk assessments, sustainable practices, etc.), and creating a regulatory framework for contracts for leasing public land, including objectives related to climate-resilient production that can be conditioned through laws related to agricultural land. The WB6 have reached different levels of progress in these domains, and comprehensive WB6-specific analysis is required, along with collaboration with scientific advisory bodies.

Common gaps identified in the WB6 (e.g. the availability of risk maps for different types of production, water availability and soil degradation risks under climate change, tools for easy and timely access to information) can be addressed through a joint WB6 project to inform ministries and producers about climate vulnerabilities and approaches to resilient production, including georeferenced information adjusted for application by various stakeholders. Centralised adaptation portals at the domestic level, recognised as enablers for building climate resilience, can serve as platforms for sharing information and knowledge to support adaptation implementation in agriculture.

The WB6 benefit from ongoing regional work on climate adaptation in agriculture, notably through the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South East Europe (SWG RRD) and its dedicated taskforce on climate adaptation. Its dedicated project helps governments and institutions develop evidence-based strategies and action plans for adapting agriculture to climate change, bringing together policymakers, experts, and local stakeholders to build shared solutions. The indicator for monitoring the implementation of this measure also includes the monitoring of alignment with CAP.

Actions for implementation under measure SO2.7 – Development of enablers to increase the capacities for adaptation implementation at the local level:

- Support inclusion of the climate resilience dimension in the process of alignment with the CAP by providing a framework for data, information and knowledge sharing mechanisms for administrations and producers across agricultural sectors,
- Support climate-resilient rural livelihoods and workforce development, providing recommendations for regulatory interventions, including georeferenced information for local level application, to contribute to strengthening climate resilience in alignment with the CAP and incorporating principle of just adaptation in the agricultural sector – building stronger links between science, extension services, hydrometeorological services, ministries, and producers;
- Coordinate with SWG RRD taskforce on climate adaptation to ensure alignment with ongoing regional initiatives, existing assessments and stakeholder networks.

This measure supports the adaptation implementation in agriculture through the process of EU accession and alignment with the CAP. It contributes to the sustainability of natural resources, improvement of communication of data and information providers and stakeholders in terms of climate resilience, and to socio-economic aspects of climate resilience while building adaptive capacities of the producers.

Measure SO2.8. Support strengthening of socio-economic aspects in adaptation planning and implementation of economic diversification

Socio-economic circumstances, as pre-existing vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities of the individuals or communities, can impact climate vulnerabilities and related risk assessment. Therefore, the inclusion of socio-economic circumstances and trends can contribute to better prioritisation of actions, finding the best way to implement just adaptation approaches. Reducing pre-existing vulnerabilities by improving education of people, reducing poverty, improving access to healthcare, and improving access to information and warnings could significantly improve adaptive capacities and reduce risks. Local initiatives should be supported because they build resilience by providing practical, community-driven solutions that advance sustainable development and ensure that no one is left behind. To help the WB6 to elevate their adaptation process to just adaptation, support is required in the form of guidelines and training.

The first step is to assess the current socio-economic situation and develop guidelines for improved implementation of the socio-economic aspects of adaptation planning in the WB6 and the implementation of economic diversification. Economic diversification in building climate resilience is considered under reporting requirements, as it is essential to reorienting socio-economic pathways towards a climate-resilient and sustainable future.

Assessments and development of guidelines should be performed in collaboration with external experts from the EU, experienced in socio-economic aspects of vulnerability to climate change and impacts on adaptive capacity, and WB6 experts for climate change impact assessments, and coordinated with scientific advisory bodies. Capacity building to implement just adaptation according to the results and recommendations provided under the first action can be implemented through TAIEX or some other technical support mechanism.

Implementation should include structured dialogue with finance sector stakeholders, including commercial banks, insurance companies, the World Bank, European Investment Bank (EIB), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), to explore economic diversification potentials and adaptation financing opportunities.

Actions for implementation under measure SO2.8 – Support strengthening of socio-economic aspects in adaptation planning and implementation of economic diversification:

- Develop guidelines to improve the socio-economic aspects of adaptation planning and the use of economic diversification to contribute to climate resilience in the WB6, designed for effective implementation at the domestic level;
- Build capacity to integrate socio-economic dimension and economic diversification for climate resilience into policy.

This measure implements actions related to the identified adaptation gaps in the WB6 regarding socio-economic resilience and economic diversification. It contributes to just adaptation implementation and supports no-regret and multi-benefit approaches in adaptation.

4.3 Strengthen scientific and financial support for adaptation implementation – Specific Objective 3

Measures under this objective focus on strengthening communication between science and policy- and decision-makers, mainstreaming the latest knowledge into adaptation planning, and implementing climate-resilient and climate risk-informed financing in both the public and private sectors.

Measure SO3.1. Strengthening scientific advisory for climate action in WB6 to enable smart adaptation and sustainable climate resilience finance

The WB6 consultation process strongly confirmed the need for scientific advisory support to climate action in the WB6. Scientific advisory bodies are needed to improve policy coherence, introduce the latest knowledge into strategic planning, support regulatory development and administration, advise on priorities and projects, strengthen smarter adaptation, and avoid maladaptation.

According to the European Climate Law, EU Member States are called on to establish domestic scientific advisory bodies to support policy- and decision-makers. The Law also regulates the independent European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change (ESABCC)¹⁰, as a point of reference for the EU on scientific knowledge related to climate change.

Scientific advisory bodies on climate change have multiple purposes. They are designed to support strategic planning for the horizontal and vertical implementation of climate mitigation and implementation, help administrations to follow up on new knowledge and integrate the best solutions into policies, help develop regulatory frameworks to implement climate change mitigation and adaptation, support other actions related to project design, assess impacts of projects and strategies on environment impacted by climate change, develop mechanisms for empowering citizens and organisations to contribute to resilient development, etc.

Supporting scientific advisory capacity in WB6 represents a missing component in establishing robust climate governance. A basis for joint projects design and implementation should be accomplished through collaboration of science representatives and policy- and decision-makers from the WB6 to ensure smarter adaptation and progress on regional challenges including contribution to climate resilience. This can be achieved through the Task Force on Climate Adaptation, to be established under the RWG GAWB, to operationalise the Strategy's governance framework. Its role will be to monitor progress against the indicators set out in the Annex, coordinate vertical links between regional activities and domestic-level adaptation plans through the designated WB6 focal points, and to develop bankable regional project proposals for appropriate financing instruments. This will ensure that Strategy

¹⁰ More information about ESABCC, its mandate and activities, can be found here: <https://climate-advisory-board.europa.eu/>

measures are translated into implementation-ready initiatives aligned with both regional priorities and domestic planning cycles.

Scientific advisory support has a role in implementation of the measures of this Strategy to ensure their effectiveness by providing knowledge on the regional specifics and circumstances.

Actions for implementation under measure SO3.1 – Strengthening scientific advisory for climate action in WB6 to enable smart adaptation and sustainable climate resilience finance:

- Develop a framework for organising independent scientific advisory support on climate action at the regional level, drawing on the experience of the European Scientific Advisory Body on Climate Action, where appropriate;
- Establish a Task Force on Climate Adaptation to monitor progress against the indicators set out in the Annex, coordinate vertical links between regional activities and domestic-level adaptation plans through the designated WB6 focal points, and develop bankable regional project proposals for appropriate financing instruments.

Measure SO3.2. Increase financing of adaptation through the public and private sectors

The Strategy supports a shift towards climate-resilient and climate risk-informed financing, including a stronger understanding and application of the EU Taxonomy for sustainable financing and climate risk screening.

The use of EU Taxonomy would ensure that adaptation implementation is integrated into project planning and budgetary funding through strategic planning. The WB6 are expected to implement the EU Taxonomy as part of their EU accession process. In the meantime, its contribution to financing adaptation should be better understood by policymakers to ensure that public funding will contribute to resilient development. Implementation of climate-proofing is closely related to achieving the EU Taxonomy criteria. To improve adaptation financing, a better understanding of the EU Taxonomy for climate adaptation is required in the WB6. Relevant ministries across WB6 should receive training in implementing the EU Taxonomy in budgetary planning. The training can be extended to other stakeholders if advised by the EC and can be implemented through TAIEX support. Climate risk screening for bank investments contributes to preventing financing of projects that are vulnerable to climate change and lack the risk reduction interventions. The extent to which banks in the WB6 implement climate risk screening in their decision-making process should be evaluated. On that basis, WB6 should be advised, if appropriate and needed, on how to improve decision-making for more resilient investments with minimal residual risks. Investing in resilience reduces damages and losses from climate change in the future and contributes to improvements in integrated disaster risk and climate risk management.

Actions for implementation under measure SO3.2 – Increase financing of adaptation through public and private sector:

- Implement trainings for finance sector and other stakeholders in the WB6 to strengthen climate change and NbS literacy, build capacities for financing climate resilient projects through public, private and blended finance, and for EU Taxonomy, to ensure sustainable financing contribution to climate adaptation;
- Assess the implementation of climate risk screening in WB6 banks in their decision-making and develop recommendations for improvements;
- Facilitate structured dialogue with finance sector stakeholders, including commercial banks, insurance companies, the World Bank, EIB, EBRD, and private investors, to explore adaptation financing opportunities and economic diversification support.

This measure implements actions for creating an enabling environment that strengthens finance sector involvement in building climate resilience, use of the EU Taxonomy, and other relevant EU-alignments for climate resilient investments, contributing to the accession process.

5. Strategy implementation and source of finance

The Strategy supports the development and establishment of mechanisms contributing to transferring the adaptation costs across sectors and levels of governance, through systemic adaptation implementation. However, dedicated finance is required to achieve the core and secondary targets of the Strategy and implement the identified WB6 priority and enabling actions through short-term expertise provision or long-term project interventions.

At the regional level, implementation of the Strategy is coordinated in collaboration with the EU, UN, regional and funding organisations. Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) serves as the coordinating institution for all measures. Other listed partners are identified based on their expertise and mandate; specific roles (lead, supporting, advisory) will be defined during project development under each measure. Tables 1-2 list measures, partners and potential partners for their implementation, and implementation timeframes.

Table 1. Implementation information for measures under Specific Objective 1.

Specific Objective 1				
Measure		Potential partners for implementation	Period of implementation	Relation to regional priorities
SO1.1	Develop integrated monitoring systems for climate change, land degradation and biodiversity	RCC, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), WB6, International funds, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNCCD, CBD	2027-2030	Enabler: Needs to be supported at the regional level and requires additional engagement at the domestic level
SO1.2	Support the development of monitoring systems for damages and losses caused by climate hazards	RCC, WB6, EEA, UNDRR, International funds	2027-2029	Enabler: Needs to be supported at the regional level and requires additional

				engagement at the domestic level
SO1.3	Support the development of monitoring of climate-related health impacts and risk assessment	RCC, EEA, European Climate and Health Observatory (ECHO), WHO, WB6,	2027-2030	Enabler: Needs to be supported at the regional level and requires additional engagement at the domestic level
SO1.4	Strengthen WB6 capacities for upgrading Early Warning Systems	WMO, WB6, International funds	2026-2030	WB6 specific priority: Derived from WB6 climate vulnerabilities and key adaptation gaps
SO1.5	Engage in activities to empower individuals, including children, on the topic of resilient development	RCC, EEA, WB6, IUCN, OSCE, International funds	2028-2030	Secondary target: Needs to be supported at the regional level

Table 2. Implementation information for the measures under Specific Objective 2.

Specific objective 2				
Measure		Potential partners for implementation	Period of implementation	Relation to regional priorities
SO2.1	Improve integrated climate risk and disaster risk assessment and management, including rescue team capacities and the availability of funds for post-disaster emergency response, recovery and risk-sharing instruments	RCC, WB6, EC, UNDRR, OSCE	2026-2028	WB6 specific priority: Derived from WB6 climate vulnerabilities and key adaptation gaps
SO2.2	Support establishment of regulatory and strategic framework to integrate climate proofing into project design, strategic planning, and strategic and project-impact assessments, ensuring that resilience is considered in both project implementation and broader policy development	RCC, WB6, EC, Energy Community, Transport Community, IUCN	2026-2028	Core target: Cross-cutting contributions with the highest impact
SO2.3	Build a regulatory and strategic framework for NbS integration across sectors and scales with multi-benefits	RCC, WB6, IUCN, EEA	2026-2028	Core target: Cross-cutting contributions with the highest impact
SO2.4	Support strategic planning for integrated water-drought management under climate change ¹¹	RCC, WB6, EC, EEA, IUCN, International funds	2026-2030	WB6 specific priority: Derived from WB6 climate vulnerabilities and key adaptation gaps
SO2.5	Align the protection of workers with EU progress in adjusting	WHO, RCC, WB6, EC	2026-2028	WB6 specific priority: Derived

¹¹ SO2.4 also contributes to the sustainability and natural resources cluster, given the interlinkages between water-drought management, ecosystem health, and biodiversity. Implementation should ensure coordination across both thematic areas.

	regulations in response to increasing climate hazards			from WB6 climate vulnerabilities and key adaptation gaps
SO2.6	Develop enablers to increase adaptation capacities at the local level	RCC, EC, EEA, WB6, International funds	2027-2030	Enabler: Needs to be supported at the regional level and requires additional engagement at the domestic level
SO2.7	Develop enablers for adaptation implementation through alignment with the Common Agricultural Policy	RCC, WB6, EC, [(FAO, UNCCD, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)], SWG RRD	2027-2030	Enabler: Needs to be supported at the regional level and requires additional engagement at the domestic level
SO2.8	Support the strengthening of socio-economic aspects in adaptation planning and implementation of economic diversification	RCC, EC, WB6, OSCE, International funds	2028-2030	Secondary target: Needs to be supported at the regional level

Table 3. Implementation information for the measures under Specific Objective 3.

Specific objective 3				
Measure		Potential partners for implementation	Period of implementation	Relation to regional priorities
SO3.1	Strengthen scientific advisory for climate action in WB6 to enable smart adaptation and sustainable climate resilience finance	RCC, EC, EEA, Energy Community, IUCN, other partners	2026-2027	Enabler: Needs to be supported at the regional level
SO3.2	Increase financing of adaptation through the public and private sectors	RCC, EC, EIB, IUCN, WB6	2026-2030	Enabler: Needs to be supported at the regional level and requires additional engagement at the domestic level

By considering primary sectoral responsibilities and required expertise, the Strategy measures can be clustered into the following main topics:

- **Strengthening climate and disaster risk management in the WB6**, including the implementation of measures SO1.2, SO2.1, SO2.6;
- **Climate, health and society in the WB6**, including the implementation of SO1.3, SO1.5, SO2.5 and SO2.8;
- **Sustainability and natural resources under climate change in the WB6**, including the implementation of SO1.1, SO2.3, SO2.7;
- **Climate-proofing for sustainable projects, policies and water resilience**, including the implementation of SO2.2, SO2.4, SO3.2.

Nevertheless, potential sources of funding targeting achievements aligned with the measures of this Strategy are listed below.

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is the world's largest multilateral climate finance mechanism supporting developing partners in responding to climate change. Established under the UNFCCC, it plays a central role in achieving the Paris Agreement's climate goals and about 50% is dedicated to contribution to adaptation to climate change - priority for least developed partners, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and African States. It emphasises domestic ownership, supporting partners in aligning funding with their domestic Determined Contributions (NDCs), domestic Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and long-term climate strategies. The Fund channels resources through a global network of over 200 accredited entities – domestic, regional, and international organisations – that design and implement approved projects.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the world's largest multilateral trust fund dedicated to addressing environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Established in 1991 ahead of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, it serves as a key financial mechanism for major international environmental conventions and drives global sustainability investments. It channels support through six environmental conventions, including the UNFCCC. The World Bank acts as its trustee, administering donor contributions to the GEF Trust Fund. Decisions are reached by consensus to ensure equitable participation between developed and developing member states.

The Facility partners with UN agencies, multilateral development banks, governments, NGOs, and private sector actors. Its Small Grants Programme funds community-level projects. It also manages complementary funds such as the **Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)**.

The Adaptation Fund (Adaptation Fund Board under the UNFCCC) is an international financing mechanism for projects that help vulnerable communities adapt to the impacts of climate change. It supports practical, jurisdiction-driven adaptation particularly susceptible to climate risks. The Fund now relies largely on voluntary contributions from governments and other donors. Funded initiatives address sectors such as agriculture, coastal protection, water management, and ecosystem resilience. Since inception, the Adaptation Fund has approved hundreds of projects globally, enhancing adaptive capacity and supporting climate-resilient livelihoods in vulnerable communities.

The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) is a global partnership that helps low- and middle-income jurisdictions better understand and reduce their vulnerability to natural hazards and climate change. Specifically, the GFDRR provides financial support for technical assistance and expertise and invests in new analytics, innovative solutions, and tools to generate and share the best available global knowledge that can create outcomes and impact to help improve disaster risk management and climate change adaptation operations and policies. It provides grant financing to the most vulnerable communities where there is a higher likelihood that it will have a positive impact and draw in larger disaster and climate resilience investments.

The World Bank is an international financial institution that provides loans and grants to the governments of low- and middle-income jurisdictions for development projects. It aims to reduce poverty, promote sustainable economic growth, and foster shared prosperity through financing, research, and policy advice. Recent priorities include supporting green transitions and improving resilience to climate-related disasters. The Bank collaborates with other multilateral institutions and private partners to expand its development reach and effectiveness.

Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), established under the UNFCCC at COP28, provides a new multilateral mechanism to support jurisdictions particularly vulnerable to climate impacts in addressing loss and damage. Subject to the Fund's evolving operational modalities and eligibility criteria, the FRLD may represent an additional financing pathway for WB6 measures related to damage and loss monitoring and climate risk management.

There are also **EU financial mechanisms**. For the WB6 region, the most applicable is the **Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)** that supports candidates and potential candidates in preparing for EU membership.

The **Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF)** is a financial platform that coordinates investments for socio-economic development in the region. The WBIF provides funding for projects and programmes across various sectors, including energy, environment and climate, transport, digital infrastructure, human capital, and the private sector. By blending EU contributions (IPA) with those from bilateral donors, loans from international financial institutions and contributions from the Western Balkans beneficiaries, the WBIF supports strategic public and private sector investments in the region. Funding opportunities are available through annual or biannual calls for proposals.

HORIZON Europe is the key EU funding programme for research and innovation. It tackles climate change, assists in the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and boosts the competitiveness and growth in Europe. Horizon Europe (2028-2034) will build on the achievements of its predecessors by scaling what works, simplifying when is possible, and focusing on investment where Europe needs it most. It will be tightly connected to the European Competitiveness Fund.

European international development agencies, led by the European Commission's **DG INTPA** (Directorate-General for International Partnerships) and the **European Investment Bank (EIB)**, form the world's largest official development assistance (ODA) bloc. They focus on sustainable development, poverty reduction, and global partnerships through the Global Gateway strategy.

Key bilateral agencies include, among others, **AFD (France)**, **GIZ (Germany)**, **Sida (Sweden)**, **ADA (Austria)**, **SDC (Switzerland)**.

Significant financing for adaptation to climate change in the WB6 region is necessary. None of the aforementioned options can be considered the most suitable across the board; and financing decisions should be made based on project documentation and eligibility rules of each instrument. Private climate finance, including Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) funds, impact investors and carbon markets, represents an increasingly important complement to public sources.

Two issues may arise in approaching the funders listed above. First, the meaning of the term 'developing jurisdictions' under the funding priorities should be verified to determine the WB6 eligibility (especially as 'developing jurisdictions' are sometimes combined with 'low/middle-income jurisdiction', which would exclude some WB6). Second, most instruments usually connect support with domestic-level funding, and options for WB6 funding at the regional level will need to be underpinned by matched commitments at the domestic level.

Recognising that effective implementation of the Strategy requires well-prepared project proposals aligned with the eligibility criteria and programming cycles of relevant financing instruments, RCC will explore opportunities to provide technical assistance for the preparation of joint regional projects. The RCC, in coordination with WB6 domestic focal points, will serve as the primary institution responsible for identifying financing opportunities, supporting the preparation of joint project proposals, and facilitating access to funding sources listed in this Strategy. The RCC will work with designated domestic-level institutions to ensure that financing applications align with both regional priorities and domestic planning cycles.

This support may include facilitating project concept development, coordinating stakeholder consultations across WB6, supporting the preparation of funding applications for instruments such as WBIF, IPA III, and other accessible mechanisms. By strengthening project preparation capacities at the regional level, the RCC aims to accelerate the translation of Strategy measures into bankable, implementation-ready initiatives that reflect the shared priorities of all WB6 and ensure equitable participation in climate adaptation investments.

Finally, while the Strategy's measures are designed to leverage international and regional funding to address capacity gaps, domestic financing remains essential for sustainable implementation and long-term mainstreaming of climate adaptation. WB6 are encouraged to progressively increase domestic budget allocations for adaptation, including through integration of climate resilience into sectoral budgets and domestic investment programmes.

Importantly, adaptation financing should be understood not as a cost but as a strategic investment with measurable returns. Evidence consistently demonstrates that the costs of climate inaction far exceed the costs of proactive adaptation¹².

6. Governance, coordination, monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting

The implementation of this Strategy is coordinated through the RCC Secretariat under the established governance framework of the GAWB, with the RWG GAWB serving as the principal regional inter-governmental coordination and implementation platform. In line with its mandate, the RWG GAWB provides strategic guidance, facilitates regional coordination, monitors the implementation of agreed regional priorities under GAWB, and supports alignment with relevant EU policies and accession processes.

The RWG GAWB brings together representatives of the competent ministries and institutions of the WB6 responsible for climate change and environmental policy. The RCC provides the Secretariat to RWG GAWB while the European Commission participates in the RWG GAWB meetings, and designated Regional Coordinators under GAWB Action Plan (AP) (Energy Community-EnC, Transport Community-TCT, IUCN, Standing Working Group on Regional and Rural Development in South-East Europe-SWG RRD) lead and support the implementation of specific pillars under GAWB AP. The RCC Secretariat acts as the coordinating body for the implementation of the Strategy, facilitating regional cooperation, and monitoring progress, reporting, and engagement with partners.

To ensure effective vertical coordination, each WB6 designates a focal point to TF on Climate Adaptation responsible for coordinating domestic inputs to regional activities and facilitating coherence between the Strategy's regional measures and domestic adaptation policies and planning processes. Progress in implementation is monitored through the established Green Agenda monitoring and reporting mechanisms, with domestic-level information feeding into regional progress reporting coordinated by the RCC Secretariat.

Key elements for the Green Agenda governance include regional working groups (RWG GAWB), coordination with EU institutions and regional organisations, annual reporting through the Green Agenda Implementation Report (GARI), and monitoring via a regional GAWB observatory platform. The Strategy ensures alignment with EU monitoring systems, transparency and comparability across the WB6, and avoids duplication with domestic reporting.

The Strategy's monitoring measures follow a combined data governance model that includes regional coherence and domestic ownership. In practice, domestic institutions are responsible for data collection, storage, quality assurance, system maintenance and reporting, while regional coordination focuses on methodological harmonisation, data exchange protocols, etc.

The European Commission has emphasised the importance of timely and consistent submission of adaptation reports under the adapted and adopted Governance Regulation¹³ under the Energy Community Treaty. For the WB6 to be fully featured, they must comply with reporting obligations under the adapted and adopted Governance Regulation by submitting data through Reportnet. These legal obligations form the backbone of adaptation reporting and monitoring of progress. Moreover, it is crucial that adaptation is mainstreamed across sectoral policies, so that adaptation considerations are systematically integrated in domestic policies, rather than treated as a stand-alone process.

¹² For more analysis, please consult the World Bank's Climate and Development Report for the Western Balkans (2024) at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/ab6bfceb-9501-4587-a67a-b783dfa1ca6b>

¹³ Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of 11 December 2018 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action, as adopted and adapted by Ministerial Council Decisions 2021/14/MC-EnC and 2022/02/MC-EnC.

The Strategy should be implemented through a combination of regional coordination, domestic-level action, knowledge exchange, technical guidance, and project-based support. It should remain a practical document focused on implementation, while also supporting stronger long-term WB6 alignment with the EU climate resilience approaches.

If implemented effectively, the Strategy will help the WB6 move from fragmented adaptation efforts towards a more coherent regional adaptation framework built on science, policy coherence, preparedness, and sustained investment in climate resilience.

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework for the Strategy should track progress under each specific objective and measure, use outcomes of agreed actions as indicators, strengthen transparency and learning, and allow revision of measures based on implementation progress and emerging needs. The Strategy's monitoring framework encompasses monitoring, evaluation and learning to ensure that the Strategy remains adaptive and evidence-based. The Strategy's M&E will also draw on data reported through the Reportnet platform, while fulfilment of the relevant reporting obligations will serve as a general indicator of progress in implementing the WB6 climate resilience framework under this Strategy.

Priority indicators should reflect the establishment and operationalisation of monitoring systems, the adoption of climate-proofing and NbS frameworks, progress on integrated climate and disaster risk assessment, establishment of the TF-EWS and scientific advisory bodies, progress on local adaptation support, water resilience and wastewater-related guidance, adaptation finance and climate risk screening related developments.

The **Annex** provides a list of recommended indicators tracking the implementation of WB6 Climate Adaptation Strategy measures.

7. Future directions

The European Commission is preparing a new integrated framework for European climate resilience and risk management, expected to be adopted in the second half of 2026. As part of this process, the Commission invited citizens, businesses, regional authorities and other stakeholders to participate in a public consultation on climate resilience until February 2026, thereby opening the process to broader contributions on how to strengthen resilience across Europe.

Through this initiative, the EU is taking the 2021 EU Adaptation Strategy to the next level by developing a more ambitious, comprehensive and coherent approach to climate resilience and preparedness. The emerging integrated framework is not presented only as a strategy document, but as a broader policy package that may include both non-legislative and legislative measures. It is expected to strengthen risk ownership across key sectors, promote climate resilience as an integral part of policies, institutions, investments, projects and sectoral planning, support preparedness for climate-related crises, and rely more strongly on tools, data and decision-support systems.

The WB6 Climate Adaptation Strategy sets the stage for faster alignment of the WB6 with the emerging European climate resilience pathway. The Strategy already establishes the main enabling mechanisms for systemic adaptation, including improved monitoring, climate and disaster risk management, climate-proofing, NbS, water-drought management, protection of workers, scientific advisory support and adaptation finance. However, as the EU climate resilience framework continues to evolve, additional areas may require further consideration in the WB6 beyond the current Strategy period or within future updates of the implementation framework.

Future areas for consideration may include, but should not be limited to:

- **Further strengthening of the economy and financial sector**, including climate risk disclosure and transparency, improved government aid and insurance systems for high-risk areas and properties, consideration of pre-existing vulnerabilities, diversification of imports and strategic

reserves to ensure sustainable supplies, and trade-related measures to reduce climate risks in supply chains.

- **Food system resilience**, including diversification of food production and consumption, improved monitoring of pests and diseases affecting food production, vaccination programmes for livestock in relation to emerging diseases, and expanded risk insurance mechanisms for effective residual risk management in vulnerable agricultural production systems.
- **Urban resilience**, with a stronger focus on cities, including the integration of urban green and hybrid solutions, as well as targeted grey infrastructure options where urgent action is needed to reduce urban heat island effects.
- **Health and worker protection**, including further development of options for outdoor work restrictions, occupational safety regulations related to climate hazards, adjusted work schedules, standards for heat-protective clothing, monitoring of heat indices at specific work locations, and the training of health professionals in disaster management.
- **Emergency preparedness and response**, including further improvement of emergency plans, development of bypass routes, strengthening of emergency response and rescue team capacities, and education of individuals and communities for emergency situations.
- **Integration of mobility-related dynamics in the monitoring framework** and in cross-sectoral policy coherence between climate, rural development, labour, and social policies at both regional and domestic levels.
- **Energy system resilience**, to ensure that interventions are aligned not only with the TEN-E Regulation, but also with broader EU approaches for securing sustainable and climate-resilient energy supply, aligned with changes in energy consumption.
- **Climate-resilient supply chains**, including assessment of vulnerabilities in regional food and resource supply systems.
- **Freshwater ecosystem conservation and restoration**, under integrated water–drought management, to support the restoration and protection of freshwater systems in line with the long-term needs of the region.

Progress in the European region in building climate resilience and establishing enabling mechanisms should be regularly monitored and reflected in the WB6 implementation process. This will allow the region to respond to emerging climate risks in a timely and effective manner, strengthen alignment with EU developments, and progressively upgrade the regional adaptation framework as new priorities, tools and policy requirements emerge.

Annex – List of recommended indicators for monitoring Strategy implementation

General indicator: Reporting frequency of the WB6 under the Article 19(1) of the EU Governance Regulation (Regulation 2018/1999) on adaptation through Reportnet platform (expected every two years)

Specific Objective 1 – measure code – indicator (expected value)

SO1.1a – Guidelines for establishing monitoring systems for climate-land-biodiversity (YES by 2027)

SO1.1b – Number of WB6 with implemented operational integrated climate-related monitoring systems for land and biodiversity (6 by 2030)

SO2.1a – Guidelines for aligning domestic-level monitoring systems for damages and losses caused by climate hazards with EU approaches (YES by 2027)

SO1.2b – Number of WB6 with implemented operational monitoring of climate-related damages and losses and information sharing (6 by 2030)

SO1.3a – Developed instructions/guidelines for implementation of monitoring and risk assessment of climate impacts on health (YES 2027)

SO1.3b – Number of WB6 with operational climate-health monitoring and risk assessment (6 by 2030)

SO1.4a – TF-EWS established and operational (YES by 2027)

SO1.4b – Number of WB6 with improved EWS-related forecasting/nowcasting capacities (6 by 2030)

SO1.6 – Regional framework for empowering individuals/youth on climate resilience developed (YES by 2028)

Specific Objective 2 – measure code – indicator (expected value)

SO2.1a – Developed instructions/guidelines for implementation of integrated climate and disaster risk assessment methodologies (YES by 2028)

SO2.1b – Developed report on actionable options, including project draft for closing climate protection gap (YES by 2029)

SO2.2a – Developed instructions/guidelines for integration of climate-proofing into legislation and strategic frameworks at domestic level (YES by 2027)

SO2.2b – Number of WB6 with implemented climate-proofing in legislation/frameworks (6 by 2030)

SO2.3a – Developed instructions/guidelines for building regulatory/strategic frameworks for NbS implementation across sectors and scales (YES by 2027)

SO2.3b – Number of WB6 with implemented NbS regulatory/strategic frameworks (6 by 2030)

SO2.4a – Developed recommendations for catching up and chaining the WB6 with EU progress in integrated water-drought management and alignment with European Water Resilience Strategy (YES 2027)

SO2.4b – Number of WB6 with implemented integrated water-drought management into the strategic planning under climate change (6 by 2030)

SO2.5a – Developed recommendations and guidance for strengthening the climate resilience of workers through WB6 domestic-level frameworks, taking into account domestic level circumstances, and identifying the legislation and regulatory frameworks that need to be amended (YES by 2027)

SO2.5b – Number of WB6 with implemented improved protection of workers from increasing climate hazards under climate change into regulation (6 by 2030)

SO2.5c – Number of trainings/workshops implemented on worker rights and climate hazard risk reduction (3 by 2030)

SO2.6a – Developed guidelines for WB6 aligned with EU approaches for strengthening downscaling of climate resilience actions to local level (YES by 2027)

SO2.6b – Number of WB6 with over 50% of municipalities with implemented local-level adaptation in their strategic and disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans (6 by 2030)

SO2.7 – Number of WB6 aligned with the CAP, including advancing climate adaptation (6 by 2030)

SO2.8a – Developed guidelines for integrating socio-economic dimensions in climate risk assessments and strengthening economic diversification for building climate resilience (YES by 2028)

SO2.8 – Number of WB6 integrating socio-economic dimension into their climate risk assessments and adaptation planning, including contributions through economic diversification (6 by 2030)

Specific Objective 3 – measure code – indicator (expected value)

SO3.1a – Task Force on Climate Adaptation established and operational (YES by 2027)

SO3.2a – Number of regional projects supported by scientific advisory mechanisms under WB6 Climate Adaptation Strategy implementation (minimum 3 by 2030)

SO3.2b – Number of finance-sector/public-sector actors trained on adaptation finance and EU Taxonomy (10 per each WB6 by 2030)

SO3.2bc – Developed guidelines for improving climate risk screening in finance/investment decisions in WB6 (YES by 2028)

Appendix: Overview of Objectives, Measures and Actions of the WB6 Climate Adaptation Strategy

Specific Objectives	Measures	Actions
Specific Objective 1: Strengthen capacities to increase preparedness for climate change through improved access to data, information, and knowledge in the WB6.	Measure 1.1: Develop integrated monitoring systems for climate change, land degradation and biodiversity	Action 1.1. Develop instructions/guidelines for establishing integrated monitoring systems at the domestic level (well-coordinated at WB6 level), including indicators, technical information on monitoring of sites to be established, and details related to data management; Action 1.1.2. Initiate integrated climate change–land–biodiversity monitoring in practice with financial support ensured for the agreed period.
	Measure 1.2. Support the development of monitoring systems for damages and losses caused by climate hazards	Action 1.2.1 Develop methodology and guidelines for aligning domestic-level monitoring systems for damages and losses caused by climate hazards with EU approaches, including a common methodological basis, clarifying categorisation of climate hazards (including economic and non-economic losses), and related damage and loss metrics, and improving data quality, transparency, and accessibility;

	Measure 1.3. Support the development of monitoring of climate-related health impacts and risk assessment	Action 1.2.2 WB6 provision of data to the Risk Data Hub. Action 1.3.1 Develop instructions/guidelines for the WB6 on climate-health monitoring, aligned with EU approaches and adapted to domestic circumstances, covering indicators, implementation procedures, institutional responsibilities, and data collection, storage and sharing, complemented by guidelines for climate-related health risk assessment methodology, including specific consideration of climate-related risks to pregnant women, mothers, newborns and children; Action 1.3.2. Transfer knowledge and build capacity for climate-health monitoring and risk assessment.
	Measure 1.4. Strengthen WB6 capacities for upgrading Early Warning Systems	Action 1.4.1. Establish the WB6 TF-EWS under the RWG GAWB institutional mechanism, whereas RCC provides the Secretariat and ensures coordination with other international partners and stakeholders including relevant EU bodies, WMO, UNDRR, and others;

		Action 1.4.2. Align WB6 operational forecasting and nowcasting needs with SEE-MHEWS-A activities, including strengthening the collaboration with ECMWF, COPERNICUS, and EUMETSAT to improve data access and use, and the preparation of a report on the planned activities and their expected effects; Action 1.4.3. Support the operationalisation of the upgraded EWS services aligned with the activities planned under TF-EWS, WMO and UNDRR collaboration; Action 1.4.4. Identify WB6 needs for improvement of other EWS components under the disaster risk reduction framework, taking domestic-level circumstances into account.
	Measure 1.5. Engage in activities to empower individuals, including children, on the topic of resilient development	Action 1.5.1. Assess opportunities for empowering individuals (particularly elderly, persons with disabilities, migrants, and temporary residents) and youth to address climate-related issues in the WB6, according to the domestic-level circumstances, and develop a framework for improving the empowerment of individuals relating to climate change adaptation by developing

		mechanisms for their inclusion in an effective way; Action 1.5.2. Support the implementation of a framework for empowering individuals regarding climate-related issues, including engaging youth and providing them with knowledge and opportunities to contribute to climate resilience.
Specific Objective 2: Strengthen capacities for systemic adaptation and integrated disaster risk and climate risk reduction in the WB6.	Measure 2.1. Improve integrated climate risk and disaster risk assessment and management, including rescue team capacities and the availability of funds for post-disaster emergency response, recovery and risk-sharing instruments	Action 2.1.1. Assess WB6 domestic-level circumstances related to integrated climate and disaster risk management, including methodologies for disaster risk assessment, and develop a set of instructions/recommendations for the alignment of domestic-level methodologies with the EU integrated methodology for integrated climate and disaster risk assessment; Action 2.1.2 Support closing the climate protection gap in WB6 by designing the actionable options using insurance as a climate risk-transfer mechanism, according to domestic-level circumstances; Action 2.1.3 Review the emergency response capacities, including the operational capacities

		of rescue teams, and develop an EU-aligned improvement plan, supported by international funding. Action 2.2.1 Assess WB6 domestic-level circumstances on the progress in climate-proofing of projects, strategic planning and environmental risk assessment; develop a set of instructions/guidelines for incorporating climate-proofing effectively through climate change legislation and financing implementation across sectors, including the private sector, ensuring EU alignment; provide a set of indicators to monitor progress in climate-proofing inclusion rate into WB6 legislative frameworks; Action 2.2.2. Identify capacities that need to be built for climate-proofing implementation; implement trainings and workshops to support WB6 in creating an enabling environment for climate-proofing implementation in coordination with the EU bodies and institutions. Action 2.3.1. Assess the WB6 circumstances related to NbS implementation focusing on domestic-level legislation and strategic frameworks and develop a set of instructions/guidelines to establish or improve
	Measure 2.2. Support establishment of a regulatory and strategic framework for climate-proofing in project design, strategic planning, and strategic and project-impact assessments Measure 2.3. Build a regulatory and strategic framework for NbS integration across sectors and scales with multi-benefits	

	Measure 2.4. Support strategic planning for integrated water-drought management under climate change	regulatory frameworks for upscaling the NbS implementation across scales and across sectors in the WB6, including a set of indicators to monitor NbS implementation in regulations and in practice, aligning with EU progress on this matter; Action 2.3.2 Identify the capacities that must be built to implement NbS in a systemic way and implement trainings and workshops to support the WB6 in creating an enabling administrative environment for NbS implementation across scales and sectors; Action 2.3.3. Develop and standardise criteria and guidelines for NbS implementation through WB6 regional projects. Action 2.4.1. Comprehensively assess water- and drought-related data and information availability, water-drought management under climate change in the WB6, as well as domestic-level strategic frameworks, and develop recommendations to align with relevant EU processes, including measures to strengthen capacities and establish an enabling implementation environment;
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	Measure 2.5. Align the protection of workers with EU progress in adjusting regulations in response to increasing climate hazards	Measure 2.4.2. Support the climate-proofing of wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure through capacity building for sustainable wastewater management; Action 2.4.3. Facilitate the implementation of developed recommendations into practice for the WB6 integrated water-drought management aligned with the EU water resilience framework and drought risk management. Action 2.5.1. Assess the exposure of workers, particularly outside workers, to increasing climate hazards and WB6 domestic-level circumstances and capacities for including the climate resilience of workers into the legislative frameworks; develop recommendations and guidance to strengthen the climate resilience of workers through WB6 domestic-level regulatory frameworks (identifying the legislation and regulatory frameworks that need to be amended), aligned with adjustments related to EU accession process; Action 2.5.2. Implement trainings/workshops to raise awareness of the workers' rights and how they relate to reducing risks from climate impacts.
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	Measure 2.8. Support strengthening of socio-economic aspects in adaptation planning and implementation of economic diversification	Action 2.7.2. Support climate-resilient rural livelihoods and workforce development, providing recommendations for regulation interventions, including georeferenced information for local level application, to contribute to strengthening climate resilience in alignment with the CAP and incorporating principle of just adaptation in the agricultural sector – building stronger links between science, extension services, hydrometeorological services, ministries, and producers; Action 2.7.3. Coordinate with SWG RRD taskforce on climate adaptation to ensure alignment with ongoing regional initiatives, existing assessments and stakeholder networks. Action 2.8.1. Develop guidelines to improve the socio-economic aspects of adaptation planning and the use of economic diversification to contribute to climate resilience in the WB6, designed for effective implementation at the domestic level; Action 2.8.2. Build capacity to integrate socio-economic dimension and economic
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		diversification for climate resilience into policy.
Specific Objective 3: Strengthen scientific and financial support for adaptation implementation in the WB6.	Measure 3.1. Strengthen scientific advisory for climate action in WB6 to enable smart adaptation and sustainable climate resilience finance	Action 3.1.1. Develop a framework for organising independent scientific advisory support on climate action at the regional and domestic levels, drawing on the experience of the European Scientific Advisory Body on Climate Action, where appropriate; Action 3.1.2. Establish a Task Force on Climate Adaptation to monitor progress against the indicators set out in the Annex, coordinate vertical links between regional activities and domestic-level adaptation plans through the designated WB6 focal points, and to develop bankable regional project proposals for appropriate financing instruments.
	Measure 3.2. Increase financing of adaptation through the public and private sectors	Action 3.2.1. Implement trainings for finance sector and other stakeholders in the WB6 to strengthen climate change and NbS literacy, build capacities for financing climate resilient projects through public, private and blended finance, and for EU Taxonomy, to ensure sustainable financing contribution to climate adaptation; Action 3.2.2. Assess the implementation of climate risk screening in WB6 banks in their

		decision-making and develop recommendations for improvements; Action 3.2.3. Facilitate structured dialogue with finance sector stakeholders, including commercial banks, insurance companies, the World Bank, EIB, EBRD, and private investors, to explore adaptation financing opportunities and economic diversification support.
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