COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 18 June 2013

11151/13

ENV 578
SAN 226
AGRI 395
FORETS 32
ENER 298
TRANS 336
ECOFIN 574

NOTE

from:	General Secretariat
to:	Delegations
No. Cion prop.:	8556/13 ENV 304 SAN 128 AGRI 2245 FORETS 14 ENER 130 TRANS 167 ECOFIN 271 - COM(2013) 216 final
Subject:	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. An EU strategy on adaptation to climate change - Council conclusions

On 18 June 2013, the Council (Environment) adopted the conclusions set out in the Annex to this Note.

An EU strategy on adaptation to climate change

- Council Conclusions -

The Council of the European Union:

1. RECALLS that the EU objective of keeping the global mean surface temperature increase below 2°C compared with pre-industrial levels requires urgent and ambitious mitigation action by the global community; UNDERLINES that adaptation is a necessary and unavoidable complement to mitigation; NOTES that the temperature of the European land area over the last decade (2002-2011) has been on average 1.3°C above preindustrial levels, which is higher than the global average, and the impacts of climate change, such as the higher frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and changes in the hydrological cycle and sea levels, as well as the impacts on society, the economy and nature, are already being felt; RECOGNISES the importance of early, planned adaptation to unavoidable climate change effects, in particular in the most vulnerable regions and groups within societies; UNDERLINES that inaction or delays in taking adequate adaptation action can generate additional costs.

2. TAKES NOTE that the measures set out in the 2009 White Paper "Adapting to climate change: Towards a European Framework for action" for the initial phase up to 2012, laying the foundations for a comprehensive EU Adaptation Strategy, have largely been implemented, including the launch of the web-based European Climate Adaptation Platform (Climate-ADAPT) in March 2012.

3. WELCOMES the Commission Communication "An EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change" which aims to contribute to a more climate-resilient Europe and enhance the preparedness and capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change at local, regional, national and EU levels, including a vision for cross-border challenges and the outermost regions, developing a coherent approach and improving coordination; EMPHASISES that EU adaptation policy should facilitate more climate resilient investment and is expected to contribute to a transition to a green economy and the creation of new job opportunities.

4. WELCOMES the adoption of the Green Paper on the insurance of natural or man-made disasters; UNDERLINES the need to further explore the use of insurance and other financial products to incentivise resilient investment decisions on the part of businesses and private homeowners, in order to complement public intervention on adaptation.

5. TAKES NOTE of the Impact Assessment and the Commission Staff Working Documents accompanying the Communication: on coastal and marine issues, health, infrastructure and migration**,** and guidelines on cohesion policy, rural development and on developing adaptation strategies; RECOGNISES that these documents can provide a useful basis for ongoing and future work on adaptation; RECALLS that adaptation is also an important challenge for our external relations, in particular as regards cooperation and development.

6. EMPHASISES the need for increased action across all levels and by all relevant actors in order to address adaptation to climate change in the most effective way; UNDERLINES that the impacts of climate change such as floods, droughts, heat waves, sea level rise and erosion, can vary considerably between territories and localities across Europe and that therefore most adaptation measures would need to be taken at national, regional and local level, as well as at cross-border level, and should be based on the best available knowledge and practices and the specific circumstances of the Member States; RECOGNISES that global impacts due to climate change may also have repercussions on the EU which should be given more attention in future risk assessments; ACKNOWLEDGES that one of the greatest challenges for cost-effective adaptation measures is to achieve coordination and coherence at the various levels of planning and management and that national adaptation strategies, including risk and vulnerability assessments, are key instruments designed to inform and prioritise action and investment.

7. EMPHASISES the importance of mainstreaming adaptation into all relevant policies at all levels of government (European, national, regional and local, taking into account the principle of subsidiarity); NOTES that adaptation has already been mainstreamed in EU legislation in such sectors as marine waters, forestry and transport and in important policy instruments such as inland water, biodiversity, migration and mobility; STRESSES that EU adaptation strategy supports the European water strategy "Blueprint to safeguard Europe's waters"; WELCOMES initiatives to integrate adaptation in agriculture and forestry, maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management, energy, disaster risk prevention and management, transport, research, health and the environment; WELCOMES the Commission's intention to support adaptation in cities, based on the model of the Covenant of Mayors initiative; CALLS UPON the Commission to continue to take into account climate change adaptation in relevant proposals for EU action and to further facilitate climate proofing EU action as well as long-life investments, in line with best available knowledge and practice, in particular in key policy areas including:

- the Common Agricultural Policy, the Cohesion Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy,
- facilitating more resilient infrastructure and exploring the options for better inclusion of adaptation considerations, including in relevant European standards,
- exploring the need for additional guidance on ecosystem approaches to adaptation, and
- exploring the potential of insurance and other financial products for resilient investment and business decisions.

8. NOTES that progress has already been made by EU Member States in relation to the preparation, adoption and implementation of their national adaptation strategies; CALLS UPON all Member States to continue to develop, implement and review their adaptation policies in the light of guidelines prepared by the European Commission addressing issues such as cross-border aspects and coherence with national disaster risk management plans;

9. Further NOTES that the Commission intends to assess in 2017, based inter alia on the relevant reporting by Member States under the Monitoring Mechanism Regulation, the progress achieved by the Member States, and will consider bringing forward additional proposals, as appropriate, if it concludes inadequate progress has been made; CALLS UPON the Commission to consult with Member States on the approach, including criteria, for carrying out its assessment. In this regard, WELCOMES the commitment by the Commission to develop, in close cooperation with Member States and building on relevant ongoing work in Member States, indicators to help evaluate adaptation efforts and vulnerabilities across the EU.

10. TAKES note that the draft 2014-2020 Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) includes the objective of increasing climate-related expenditure to at least 20 % of the EU budget; WELCOMES the commitment by the Commission to provide EU LIFE funding, as a complement to other financial instruments, to support capacity building and step up adaptation action in Europe in the period 2014-2020 addressing particularly vulnerable areas, taking into account national and regional characteristics, and encouraging in particular the improvement and more extensive use of ecosystem based approaches, which also benefit biodiversity and the provision of other ecosystem services, and promotion of innovative adaptation technologies; UNDERLINES that improved access to funding will be a critical factor in building a climate-resilient Europe.

11. RECOGNISES that adaptation-related knowledge for decision-making is improving but that key knowledge gaps remain; UNDERLINES the need to continually improve knowledge management and data sharing on the likely impact of and vulnerability to climate change, the associated socio-economic aspects and the costs and benefits of different adaptation options, taking into account the specific circumstances, needs and best practices of the Member States; HIGHLIGHTS the importance of education, awareness raising and capacity building in improving the resilience of societies to climate change impacts through promotion of proactive and preventive measures and policies; WELCOMES the intention of the Commission to work with Member States and stakeholders in refining these knowledge gaps and identifying the relevant tools and methodologies to address them and provide for better interfaces between science, policy making and business; WELCOMES the commitment by the Commission and the European Environment Agency to further develop *Climate-ADAPT* as the 'one-stop shop' for adaptation information in Europe and to develop interaction between *Climate-ADAPT* and other relevant platforms, including national and local adaptation portals where developed; UNDERLINES the need to cooperate closely with Copernicus (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security) in order to include all relevant information and data generated through its climate services.

12. UNDERLINES the need for an appropriate policy coordination mechanism at European level engaging Member States, through the relevant existing fora, including the Climate Change Committee, and other formats, as well as consultation and cooperation with stakeholders to ensure proper and timely implementation of the Strategy; RECOGNIZES, also, that awareness and preparedness is different from country to country, and therefore cooperation between Member States and regions, including on knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer, and on assistance to cope with emergency situations, must be promoted; ENCOURAGES Member States to appoint national contact points by the end of 2013 to coordinate communication and to contribute to awareness raising and reporting activities.