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BMUV information paper

2024 German Climate Adaptation Strategy

Precautionary action in the climate crisis

Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and severe. Heavy rainfall, floods, storms, droughts and heat waves are no longer once-in-a-lifetime events. They are part of a new reality, and we will have to adapt.

Extreme weather events often cause extensive damage. People lose their homes and possessions and, in extreme cases, their lives. The elderly and children are particularly vulnerable to hot weather in summer. Droughts lead to forest fires and crop failure. Heavy rainfall and high water levels inundate roads, cellars and houses. However, the extent of the damage depends not only on the severity of extreme weather events, but also on how well we prepare for them.

The German government wants to protect people better from the impacts of climate change. So that all of us can continue to prosper and lead healthy and safe lives, everywhere in Germany. That is why we are committed to climate action. However, many of the effects of the climate crisis can no longer be prevented. We have to prepare ourselves better, adapt and take precautions. The German government is now working to systematically tackle these challenges – with the 2024 German Climate Adaptation Strategy.

Practical adaptation to climate change is, for example, when…

- municipalities protect local residents from the heat, for example by planting trees, setting up awnings for shade, providing drinking fountains and enabling access to well-cooled public buildings
- companies reorganise their supply chains so they are stable and not disrupted by extreme weather events

- measures such as more precise forecasting services and adapted transport solutions ensure that rivers like the Rhine can still be navigated even when water levels are frequently low, guaranteeing the supply of goods to industry and consumers
- forests with coniferous monocultures are converted to near-natural mixed forests because they store more water, are more resilient to drought, cool the surroundings and provide space for recreation
- floodplains are restored so they can retain a lot of water and keep it from flooding settlements

By adopting these and many other measures, climate adaptation creates the conditions necessary for us to prosper and lead healthy and safe lives. The strategy is also a large-scale programme designed to achieve greater quality of life and a higher standard of living.

Milestones in climate adaptation policy

Adaptation and precautionary measures involve many areas of society. This is why climate adaptation is not only an undertaking for the entire German government, but also for the federal states (*Länder*), municipalities and companies. The German government is setting a framework to advance adaptation in all areas of life.

The Federal Climate Adaptation Act, drawn up under the lead responsibility of the Federal Environment Ministry, entered into force in July. With this act, the German government established a new, binding foundation for adaptation. It requires the Federal Government, federal states and municipalities to draw up strategies and plans to adapt to global heating based on risk analyses and underpinned with specific programmes of measures.

The Federal Environment Ministry has launched two support programmes to help the federal states and municipalities in their adaptation efforts. These programmes aim in particular to support climate adaptation managers and promote adaptation in social institutions. The Zentrum KlimaAnpassung, a centre dedicated to climate adaptation, which is the first point of contact for municipalities and social institutions, has been tasked with providing support on all issues related to climate adaptation with tailored advisory services, training and networking.

In a next step, the German government now presents its Climate Adaptation Strategy. This strategy sets the course for making our society and economy, nature and infrastructure resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Measurable targets: how the Climate Adaptation Strategy works

The 2024 German Climate Adaptation Strategy is the first of its kind in Germany to establish measurable targets for climate adaptation. It contains 33 targets and 45 sub-targets. Most of the targets have been set for 2030, with some to be reached by 2050. Target-specific indicators will be used to measure progress. However, it is important that this does not create any additional bureaucratic hurdles or reporting requirements for individuals or companies.

The targets are grouped into seven clusters that represent the entire range of adaptation and precautionary measures:

- Infrastructure
- Land and land use
- Human health and care provision
- Urban development, spatial planning and civil protection
- Water
- Economy
- Cross-cluster issues

Targets under the **water** and **land and land use** clusters that fall within the responsibility of the Federal Environment Ministry include

- strengthening the resilience of soil to the impacts of climate change
- strengthening the resilience of water infrastructure
- preserving a sufficient supply of high-quality water resources

One **example** to demonstrate the new system of measurable targets and indicators of the German Climate Adaptation Strategy:

The strategy sets the **target** of strengthening the resilience of the landscape hydrology. Above all, this means restoring the landscape's capacity to retain water. This requires, among other things, as many unsealed surfaces as possible that can absorb water, and healthy, loose soils that can store water for a long period of time. This is a sub-target of the target "Preserve available water resources for the long term".

Indicators will help make progress on this target measurable and transparent: one indicator is the restoration of natural floodplains. Restoring natural floodplains means that bodies of water will have more room and watercourses will be reconnected to floodplains. Two other indicators to make progress measurable are currently being drawn up: the size of rewetted peatlands and the size of drained agricultural and forestry land.

These indicators will help monitor whether and how fast progress is made towards the target.

How the German Climate Adaptation Strategy originated – and the next steps

The German Climate Adaptation Strategy is a joint project of all federal ministries, under the lead responsibility of the Federal Environment Ministry. Federal states, associations including municipal umbrella organisations, the scientific community and the public were closely involved in the process. The strategy is based on the principle that every ministry is responsible for measures in its own remit. Each ministry has contributed targets for its area of responsibility and will be responsible in future for implementation, financing and monitoring progress.

After the federal states and associations gave their input, the results were submitted to the ministries for review and incorporation. The Strategy was then finalised. The German government's new, precautionary climate adaptation strategy was adopted by the cabinet on 11 December 2024.

In future, the goal will be to achieve the strategy's targets so people and infrastructure can be protected. The 4th Adaptation Action Plan (APA IV), which is also part of the strategy, comprises more than 180 measures.

The Federal Climate Adaptation Act (Klimaanpassungsgesetz, KAnG) requires the new adaptation strategy to be updated every four years. To achieve this, the Act stipulates that a monitoring system be used to measure progress towards the targets using indicators. On this basis, targets and measures will be reviewed and, where necessary, updated.

This paves the way for the German government to engage in strategic and dynamic climate adaptation management that is geared towards targets and progress.

Annex 1: Overview of the targets

Cluster	Targets	Code
Infrastructure	Optimise transport and logistics conditions on federal waterways in the event of low water levels by the period 2030 to 2040	I-1
	Reduce the number of incidents and disruptions to road and rail transport caused by weather-related factors such as flooding, heavy rainfall, storms, drought, heat or gravitational mass movements	I-2
	Adapt buildings and properties to protect users, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups	I-3
	Protect buildings and properties, with a particular focus on existing buildings	I-4
	Reduce financial risks associated with buildings	I-5
Land and land use	Minimise the direct and indirect impacts of climate change on biodiversity by 2030	L-1
	Strengthen the resilience of soil to the impacts of climate change	L-2
	Strengthen the resilience of agroecosystems to the impacts of climate change	L-3
	Further adapt farms to climate change and build resilience to climate variability and adverse weather conditions	L-4
	Strengthen the adaptability of forests to climate change and their resilience to climate variability and adverse weather conditions (especially extreme weather events and conditions) so that they have favourable conditions for maintaining their functionalities due to their high biodiversity	L-5
Human health and care provision	Strengthen the public's ability to adapt to heat by 2030	G-1
	Strengthen the public's ability to adapt to ultraviolet exposure by 2030	G-2
	Strengthen the public's ability to deal with pollen allergies by 2030	G-3
	Strengthen the public's ability to prevent and deal with infectious diseases facilitated by climate change, especially vector-borne diseases, by 2030	G-4
Urban development, spatial planning and civil protection	Activate urban green spaces to reduce heat stress	S-1
	Achieve a more near-natural water balance for water-smart urban development	S-2
	Develop and introduce climate adaptation monitoring (ex-post) for spatial development plans at the federal state and regional level at the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development by 2026	S-3
	Improve how future climate change impacts are taken into account when drawing up and updating spatial plans at the federal state and regional level by 2028	S-4

	Expand the reach of warnings to the general public	S-5
	Increase the level of public information and preparedness on the risks associated with climate change, in particular extreme weather events	S-6
	Raise the visibility and attractiveness of volunteering in civil protection	S-7
Water	Preserve available water resources for the long term – water balance and water management	Wa-1
	Strengthen the resilience of the water infrastructure	Wa-2
	Ecology - promote climate-resilient water bodies	Wa-3
Economy	Analysing physical climate risks is an integral part of corporate risk management	Wi-1
	Analysing physical climate risks is an integral part of investment decisions	Wi-2
	Extreme weather events no longer lead to significant losses due to the impacts on company staff and assets in Germany	Wi-3
	German companies can operate successfully on national and international markets with technologies and services in the context of climate adaptation and continuously increase their aggregated added value in line with the trend	Wi-4
Cross-sectoral action areas	By 2030, climate adaptation plans will be available for 80 percent of the municipalities and districts required to do so by the federal states under the Federal Climate Adaptation Act	Ü-1
	Federal expenditure on climate adaptation is surveyed every two years starting in 2026; the Federal Government also collects data on the financial losses due to damage caused by extreme weather events	Ü-2
	Implement climate adaptation research findings faster	Ü-3
	The Federal Government has a national framework with indicators and measures in line with international policy documents and action plans and in accordance with the requirements of the World Heritage Convention so that UNESCO World Heritage sites in Germany can develop climate change mitigation measures and/or climate adaptation strategies or plans (for example as part of their management plans, disaster risk management plans and framework strategies) by 2030	Ü-4
	Adapt federal properties to climate change	Ü-5