

Cohesion policy and climate change

The European Green Deal and the European Union's commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have put climate issues firmly on top of the EU agenda. However, the transition towards climate neutrality will also entail economic and social change. Cohesion policy, which accounts for about one third of the EU budget, can play an important role in tackling this challenge. The European Parliament is due to vote on an own-initiative report on 'cohesion policy and regional environment strategies in the fight against climate change' during its March II plenary session.

Background

The EU has made a strong commitment to fighting climate change through the [European Green Deal](#), the proposed European [Climate Law](#), and the emissions reduction objectives – to reach at least 55 % by 2030 and achieve climate neutrality by 2050. It also subscribed to international efforts, such as the [Paris Agreement](#), the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its [Sustainable Development Goals](#). The transition towards climate neutrality will require profound social and economic changes, while ensuring a socially fair and just transition. Cohesion policy can support this process and help implement concrete actions in EU regions.

Cohesion policy contribution

Cohesion policy accounts for about [one third](#) of the EU budget. In the 2021-2027 programming period, 30 % of EU funding will be earmarked for climate action. According to a 2020 European Parliament [briefing](#) on 'Climate spending in EU cohesion policy', regional funding in the new period places even more emphasis on climate and environment-related issues, while regional policy can play a vital role in delivering on EU climate objectives and pave the way for the green transition.

The [Common Provisions Regulation](#), to be adopted in the coming months, will lay down rules for cohesion policy funds. The current compromise [agreement](#) on the regulation states that 30 % of the [European Regional Development Fund](#) and 37 % of the [Cohesion Fund](#) will be earmarked for climate objectives. One of the five cohesion policy objectives refers to a 'greener Europe', while specific support will cover areas such as energy efficiency measures, climate change adaptation, renewable energy, circular economy, and sustainable urban development. The [Just Transition Fund](#) will also support climate transition in regions with high industrial emissions and coal mining activities.

European Parliament position

On 24 February 2021, Parliament's Committee on Regional Development (REGI) adopted its [own-initiative report](#) on 'Cohesion Policy and regional environment strategies in the fight against climate change'. The report recalls the 2019 European Parliament [resolution](#) declaring a climate emergency, and outlines the necessary steps from a regional perspective. It stresses the key role of local and regional authorities and encourages them to adopt local and regional climate strategies translating EU-level targets into concrete local targets. It calls for a multi-level dialogue among national, regional and local authorities on the planning and implementation of climate measures. It also suggests adopting an effective methodology for monitoring climate spending and its performance, including in EU regions. It stresses the need to ensure greater 'coherence and coordination between the cohesion policy and other EU policies in order to improve the policy integration of climate aspects'.

Own-initiative report: [2020/2074\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: REGI; Rapporteur: Tonino Picula (S&D, Croatia).

