

# Climate resilience by 2050: The catalytic role of European cities in adaptation

**8 October 2024, 13:30-16:45 (Perspective Brussels, Rue de Namur 59)**

Brussels, Belgium

*Organized by: Eurocities and CIDOB's Global Cities Programme, with the support of Barcelona City Council and hosted by Brussels Capital Region*

## Background

With 2023 registered as [the warmest year](#) since records started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the incapacity to cut global greenhouse emissions and stay within the safety threshold of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels is inevitably leading the world to grasp the compelling need for climate adaptation. Yet, within the already wide gap between needs and reality in climate action, mitigation clearly overshadows adaptation as a policy priority.

The [UNEP](#) assesses that the annual finance gap for adaptation sways between USD 194 billion and USD 366 billion. Of the annual average of almost USD 1.3 trillion in 2021/2022 identified in the [Global Landscape of Climate Finance 2023](#), mitigation measures attracted 91% of the tracked financial flows, outlining the urgency of heightening funding for adaptation measures, which heavily rely on public sector's resource mobilization.

With 75% of European citizens living in cities, the lack of access to finance for climate adaptation significantly hampers the capacity of European city governments to protect their local communities and ecosystems. Yet other factors contribute too. From flooding and heat waves to drought and wildfires, city governments further need multilevel governance mechanisms, partnerships with private actors and community organizations, and capacity development to adapt to the growing impacts of climate change at local level. From establishing early warning systems for extreme weather events and designing nature-based solutions to building resilient infrastructure and strengthening healthcare services, adaptation policy measures need to reduce both the exposure to climate risks and the vulnerability of those most adversely affected.

According to the European Climate Risk Assessment, Europe is the [fastest warming continent](#) in the world. With subnational governments currently implementing 70% of EU legislation, the delivery of the EU Adaptation Strategy geared towards reaching climate resilience by 2050 chiefly depends on the catalytic role of cities. One of the main recommendations was a clear need for a more clearly defined adaptation goal, and not just strategies, to drive actions at all levels.

This is fully in line with the results of the [Eurocities Pulse Mayors Survey 2024](#) in which climate action was identified by far as the top priority for European mayors. At local level, many cities have already set ambitious strategies to prepare for and adjust to both the current effects of climate change and the predicted impacts in the future, with 90% of Eurocities members having adopted a climate adaptation strategy to protect their citizens.

In the framework of the ongoing collaboration around the empowerment of cities in the [EU green and digital transitions](#), Eurocities and CIDOB's Global Cities Programme, with the support of Barcelona City Council, are joining forces to organize a seminar on the challenges and opportunities of climate adaptation in European cities. As part of a wider project aimed at producing policy analysis and recommendations on urban climate resilience, the event will take place during the European Week of Regions and Cities. The seminar will bring together policymakers and experts, taking advantage of the presence of city leaders and partners in Brussels. It will pay special attention to the collaborative ties needed to step up climate action by promoting exchanges among government representatives at the local, national, and EU level.

### Programme

- 13:30 – 14:00 **Welcome coffee**
- 14:00 – 14:15 **Introductory remarks**  
**Eugenia Mansutti**, Senior Policy Advisor, Eurocities  
**Ricardo Martinez**, Senior Research Fellow, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)
- 14:15 – 14:35 **Keynote intervention – The state of urban climate adaptation in Europe**  
**Marta Olazabal**, Ikerbasque Research Associate, BC3 Basque Centre for Climate Change
- 14:35 – 16:00 **Roundtable – Challenges and opportunities towards urban climate resilience**  
**Pierre Lemaire**, Project Manager in Territorial Strategy, Brussels Capital Region (rethinking the city)  
**Eduard Carrasco**, Director of the Department of Urban Resilience and Transversal Projects, Barcelona City Council (resilience, water scarcity)  
**Lies Rubingh**, Advisor on Climate Adaptation, City of Enschede (water management)  
**Niina Ruuska**, Senior Specialist, City of Turku (nature, challenges, and adaptation-mitigation linkages)
- Moderator:* **Ricardo Martinez**, Senior Research Fellow, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)
- 16:00 – 16:45 **Networking coffee**