EU CLIMATE RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK: WELCOME REQUIREMENTS ON NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS, BUT DELIVERY REMAINS TO BE SECURED FOR COASTAL COMMUNITIES

Press Release 27.10.2026

In reaction to the publication today of the EU Framework for Climate Resilience, comprising a Communication and a proposal for an EU law on climate resilience, Surfrider Europe welcomes the requirement to promote nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches to climate adaptation in future national and EU resilience plans. However, it questions what it will mean in practice, whether sufficient means will be made available as well as whether guidance will be provided to ensure that Member States specifically and appropriately adopt and prioritise nature protection and restoration measures for coastal climate adaptation.

No specific mention of the ocean and coasts but an open door for them to feature more prominently

While the proposal does not explicitly address the marine and coastal environment, it calls for future strategic resilience plans to be assessed for consistency with other relevant plans, including marine spatial plans and marine strategies.
Surfrider Europe calls for oceans and coasts to feature prominently in the implementation of the framework, in line with the urgency highlighted by the latest reports. The EU Climate Risk Assessment (EUCRA) report identifies coastal and marine ecosystems as facing the most severe ecosystem-related climate risks in the current period, with the highest urgency to act.

The urgency is clear indeed. Marine heatwaves, coastal flooding, storms and intensifying erosion are threatening marine and coastal regions across Europe, with increasingly severe impacts on ecosystems, coastal communities and the ecosystem services they provide. With further warming expected — the package itself refers to a 3°C trajectory by the end of the century — climate change is projected to become the dominant pressure on our seas and coasts by 2100.

Overall, more specification needed of what the provisions mean in practice

Surfrider Europe welcomes this consistency provision for the plans but calls for more than a consistency check: an obligation of result is needed to ensure that decisions and activities genuinely strengthen the climate resilience of our seas and coasts. This will require more than an assessment of selected policies or critical topics, as listed in Annex II of the proposed Law on Climate Resilience; it will require a comprehensive assessment of all our policies and activities.
Along the same lines, many of the provisions of the proposed Law leave the door open for progress, but the absence of robust definitions or targets makes them difficult to interpret, with the risk that ambitions will be diluted in practice. For example, some of the proposed criteria — such as loss of life and economic losses — remain too limited and overlook the many other impacts of climate change on seas and coastlines, including health impacts, damage to heritage and cultural assets, and the loss of other ecosystem services.

Yet, a welcome requirement to promote nature-based solutions

The proposal for a regulation rightly requires the EU and Member States to promote nature-based solutions among the 10 or so other elements (eight for the EU and nine for Member States) to be considered or requirements to be fulfilled in their strategic plans. This is a welcome move, given that nature-based solutions are among, if not the most, cost-effective responses to climate change adaptation. Yet, here again, the proposed Law remains vague on what promoting will actually mean and there is no guarantee that they will be prioritised over grey options.
And yet, in the case of coastal adaptation to climate change, nature-based solutions and their potential are well-known and documented. They consist of preserving and restoring coastal ecosystems (dunes, marshes, seagrass beds, mangroves, etc.). These approaches have proven to be cheaper and more effective. They restore the natural mobility and resilience of coastal ecosystems. Unlike hard structures, these solutions bring multiple benefits: they provide reservoirs of biodiversity, store carbon, improve water quality and act as buffers against storms, among other benefits.

Gaëlle Haut, EU affairs coordinator: "*The requirement to promote nature-based solutions sends a welcome political signal. Yet, it remains unclear what this will mean in practice, with no guarantee that nature-based solutions will be prioritised over other options. Wishful thinking on coastal adaptation to climate change is a luxury we can no longer afford, given the severity of the climate crisis. We call on the co-legislators to mandate the systematic uptake of nature-based solutions and strengthen the ambition of the proposed EU law on climate resilience to ensure that coastal communities' resilience is effectively enhanced*."

References:

- European Climate Risk Assessment (EUCRA) report: https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/european-climate-risk-assessment
- COPERNICUS 10th Ocean State report, COPERNICUS: https://marine.copernicus.eu/access-data/ocean-state-report/ocean-state-report-10
- Surfrider Foundation Europe's article on coastal risks https://surfrider.eu/news/coastal-risks-what-are-we-talking-about/
- Joint open letter "Make nature-based solutions the first line of defence against climate disasters": https://www.wwf.eu/wwf_news/media_centre/?21444341/After-a-deadly-summer-30-organisations-tell-the-EU-make-nature-our-first-line-of-defence

We remain at the disposal of journalists for any request for information or interviews.

About Surfrider Foundation Europe

The NGO Surfrider Foundation is a collective of positive activists who take concrete action on the ground on a daily basis to pass on a preserved ocean to future generations. Our mission: To carry the voice of the Ocean loud and clear! Our weapons? Raising awareness and mobilizing citizens, children and adults alike (in particular through 48 volunteer branches throughout Europe), using our scientific expertise to carry out lobbying actions and transform companies. Discover the association on https://surfrider.eu/ or via this video.

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