



COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION (EU) 2024/621

of 18 December 2023

on the consistency of Bulgaria's measures with the Union's climate-neutrality objective and with ensuring progress on adaptation

(Only the Bulgarian text is authentic)

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 292 thereof,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ⁽¹⁾, and in particular Article 7(2) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) Pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 (the European Climate Law), the Commission is required to assess the consistency of national measures with the climate-neutrality objective and with ensuring progress on adaptation. The Commission assessed the consistency of Bulgaria's measures with these objectives ⁽²⁾. The below recommendations are based on that assessment. Bulgaria should take due account of the present recommendations and follow up on them in accordance with the European Climate Law.
- (2) While the Union's net greenhouse gas emissions (including from land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) and excluding international transport) show a steady downward trend overall, broadly in line with the linear trajectory achieving the Union's 2030 climate target of -55 % and the Union's 2050 climate-neutrality objective, the pace of emission reduction needs to accelerate and action by Member States is essential. Progress across Member States has been mixed with several sectoral challenges and weaknesses that need to be remedied without further delay. Reliable long-term strategies are the cornerstone for achieving the economic transformation needed to move towards the Union's climate-neutrality objective.
- (3) Updated national energy and climate plans in accordance with Article 14 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽³⁾ are essential for a Member State to take steps to enable the collective achievement of the climate-neutrality objective and ensure continuous progress on adaptation in line with the European Climate Law. However, Bulgaria has not submitted a draft update of its latest notified integrated national energy and climate plan.
- (4) To ensure effectiveness of climate adaptation strategies and plans, it is essential to properly establish what potential climate change hazards may affect a certain area or sector. Effective adaptation requires a clearly mandated governance and coordination structure with high-level political support. Adaptation policies should focus on areas or sectors particularly vulnerable, or whose activities are key to the resilience of other sectors, or which have significant importance to the national economy or public health. Priority response is required on impacts and risks

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 243, 9.7.2021, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ EU Climate Action Progress Report 2023, COM(2023) 653 final, and Commission Staff Working Document – Assessment of progress on climate adaptation in the individual Member States according to the European Climate Law, SWD(2023) 932.

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action, amending Regulations (EC) No 663/2009 and (EC) No 715/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Directives 94/22/EC, 98/70/EC, 2009/31/EC, 2009/73/EC, 2010/31/EU, 2012/27/EU and 2013/30/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Directives 2009/119/EC and (EU) 2015/652 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 525/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (OJ L 328, 21.12.2018, p. 1).

that are expected to affect critical infrastructure or systems with long life span, or are expected to affect systems irreversibly, taking into account interaction with socioeconomic development or other non-climatic drivers. Various EU funding instruments can be mobilised to fund adaptation. Climate resilience considerations should be put in the forefront when Member States design their national plans under the relevant EU funds. None of the spending should do harm to adaptation: that is, increase vulnerabilities either for the beneficiaries or for others.

- (5) The most vulnerable communities are those with elevated likelihood of being impacted by climate change. Unequal exposure and vulnerability to climate impacts of different regions and socioeconomic groups worsens inequalities. Just resilience should reduce the unequal burden of climate risk and ensure equity. The systemic ability to adjust to climate change is a key feature to avoid or moderate potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities, and to cope with the consequences. Progress in adaptive capacity is needed at all levels of the government, and in the public and private sectors. Many climate adaptation interventions start at the local and regional level. Local governments play a key role in fostering public engagement and local action. Even when a climate-related hazard affects only the territory of one Member State, it can trigger a cascade of consequences across borders requiring building just resilience. The preparation and implementation of sub-national adaptation policies is of significant importance,

HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT BULGARIA TAKES ACTION TO:

Consistency of national measures with the climate-neutrality objective

1. Submit the draft update of its latest notified integrated national energy and climate plan as provided for in Article 14 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1999, with a view of an assessment of its consistency with the climate-neutrality objective.
2. Update and increase the ambition and quality on the national long-term strategy, by clarifying Bulgaria's long-term climate-neutrality goal, and by substantiating Bulgaria's emission reductions and enhancement of removals targets in individual sectors with credible policies and measures.

Consistency of national measures with ensuring progress on adaptation

3. Assess relevant vulnerabilities and risks related to heatwaves, floods and droughts. Reinforce and clearly mandate a governance and coordination structure able to support strong planning, deployment of solutions and investment for adaptation across all sectors, population groups and administrative levels. Ensure that the adaptation priorities, strategies, policies, plans, and efforts are commensurate to the predicted future climate vulnerabilities and risks, based on the best available science and the climate prediction and early warning tools available. Put climate resilience considerations more to the forefront in the use of support from EU funding programmes, such as the common agricultural policy, cohesion policy funding and other relevant EU funds. EU funds should be spent in such a way that they increase climate resilience and do not increase vulnerabilities (i.e. do no significant harm to adaptation).
4. Engage stakeholder groups that are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change in adaptation policy design and implementation. Document the process and outcome of such consultations. Improve coordination between different levels of governance (national/regional/local) to align planning tools and to help coordinated interventions aimed at systemic transformation. Raise awareness on existing vulnerabilities and risks and existing options. Learn from the results of monitoring and evaluation, empower governance structures, enable action at the local level, and promote flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances. Involve social partners and private sector stakeholders in policy design, implementation, and investments. Enhance the engagement in transboundary cooperation with neighbouring countries in larger areas (such as river basins). Establish mechanisms to ensure that sub-national policies are prepared, and that they are regularly reviewed and updated.

Done at Brussels, 18 December 2023.

For the Commission
Wopke HOEKSTRA
Member of the Commission
