

Finland's climate adaptation precedent

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Finland has set the standard for national climate adaptation policy since 2005. Australia should look to Finland as a best-practice example.



Above: A flooded park in the banks of the Kemijoki River in Rovaniemi.¹

Climate policies can fall under mitigation or adaptation. Mitigation policies reduce greenhouse gas emissions while adaptation policies protect communities from climate impacts. The latest IPCC report indicates that even with drastic emissions reduction, significant climate impacts are locked in.² Thus, adaptation policies are increasingly important.

In 2005, Finland became the first country to adopt a **national adaptation strategy**.³ Since then, national strategies 'have largely followed the model established by Finland' which focused on mainstreaming adaptation into existing government activities and regulatory frameworks.⁴

Australia prepared a National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy (NCRAS) in 2015, which it updated before the UN climate summit in Glasgow (COP26). Despite Australia's strategy launching only a few months before the Paris Agreement and a full decade after Finland's, Australia scores substantially worse than Finland on aligning its strategy with the Paris Agreement objectives.⁵ In fact, Australia ranked last of the 54 nations in its strategy's alignment with the Paris Agreement. Additionally, Finland assessed its implementation of the strategy in 2009 and 2013,⁶ while Australia's strategy is yet to be reviewed or implemented.

Today, **national adaptation plans** (NAPs) are global best practice. The Paris Agreement refers to NAPs as an example of an adaptation action that countries should implement,⁷ and the Green Climate Fund supports developing countries to complete NAPs to attract climate finance.⁸ Compared to the high-level nature of some adaptation strategies, NAPs are intended to set out targets and a roadmap for building climate resilience.

Finland adopted a NAP in 2014, to supersede its adaptation strategy.⁹ The plan set out targets and policies to implement

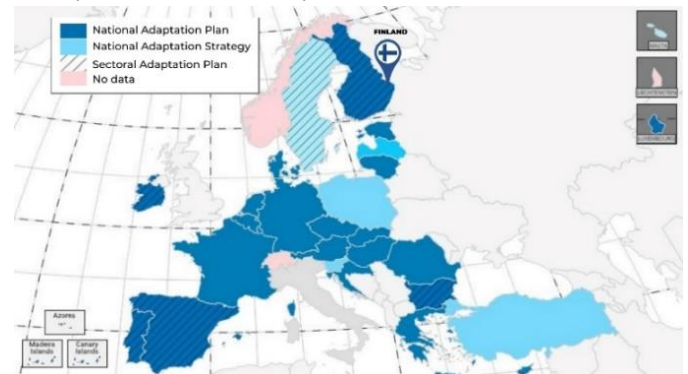
within eight years, by 2022. Further, Finland has carried out sector specific adaptation plans for its various ministries to implement, including Agriculture and Forestry, Defence, Biodiversity, and Transport.¹⁰

Finland's National Monitoring Group consists of more than 20 key stakeholders from ministries, national agencies, research institutes, as well as regional and local actors and tracks adaptation progress.¹¹ The mid-term evaluation of Finland's NAP was completed in 2020.¹²

Finland's adaptation policies are underpinned by a national **climate risk assessment**.¹³ The assessment was carried out in 2017-2018, to assess populations' and sectors' vulnerability and projected exposure to climate hazards. It details the operational model for periodically updating climate risk assessments.

Finally, Finland's national efforts are reinforced by the European Union (EU). Climate action is incorporated into all main EU spending programs, and 30% of the EU budget for 2021-2027.¹⁴ Further, the new EU Adaptation Strategy has pledged increased funding for adaptation efforts in least developed countries.¹⁵

European Climate Adaptation Actions, 2021



Source: Climate-ADAPT¹⁶

In Australia, disasters already cost A\$38 billion per year and are estimated to reach A\$73 billion per year by 2060.¹⁷

Yet, Australia's overarching adaptation strategy lacks clear targets or ways to measure its implementation. This leads to reactive policies. For example, in response to rising insurance premiums in Northern Australia, the federal government announced an A\$10 billion insurance guarantee that risks backing in residents to remain in disaster-prone areas.¹⁸

To date, Australia has never conducted a national climate risk assessment. This leads to confusion at the local government level, particularly around sea level rise – as local and state governments are left to decide their own projections and benchmarks.¹⁹ Learning from Finland's climate adaptation policies and its implementation efforts could protect Australia's front-line regions from floods, fires, and droughts.

¹ Helsinki Times (2020) *In pictures: intense flooding in Lapland reaches its peak*, <https://www.helsinkitimes.fi/finland/news-in-brief/17753-in-pictures-intense-flooding-in-lapland-reaches-its-peak.html>

² IPCC (2021) *AR6 Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/#SPM>

³ Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (2005) *Finland's National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change*, <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/80613>

⁴ Mullan et al (2013) *National Adaptation Planning Lessons from OECD Countries*, p 9, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k483jpfpsq1-en>

⁵ Morgan, Nalau and Mackey (2019) *Assessing the alignment of national-level adaptation plans to the Paris Agreement*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2018.10.012>

⁶ Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (2020) *Implementation of Finland's National Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2022 – A Mid-term Evaluation*, p 11, <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162461>

⁷ UNFCCC (2015) *Paris Agreement*, Article 7.11, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

⁸ Green Climate Fund (2021) *Country Readiness: Adaptation Planning*, <https://www.greenclimate.fund/readiness/naps>

⁹ Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (2014) *Finland's National Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2022*, <https://mmm.fi/en/national-climate-change-adaptation-plan>

¹⁰ Climate-ADAPT (2021) *Country Profiles: Finland*, <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/countries-regions/countries/finland>

¹¹ European Union (2021) *Adaptation Communication of the European Union*, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/20211007_EU_adaptation_comms.pdf

¹² Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (2020) *Implementation of Finland's National Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2022 – A Mid-term Evaluation*, <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162461>

¹³ Prime Minister's Office (2018) *Weather and Climate Risks in Finland – National Assessment*, <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/161015>

¹⁴ European Union (2021) *Adaptation Communication of the European Union*, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/20211007_EU_adaptation_comms.pdf

¹⁵ European Union (2021) *EU Adaptation Strategy*, https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/adaptation-climate-change/eu-adaptation-strategy_en

¹⁶ Climate-ADAPT (2021) *Country Profiles: National Adaptation Policy*, <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/countries-regions/countries>

¹⁷ Deloitte (2021) *Special report: Update to the economic costs of natural disasters in Australia*, <http://australianbusinessroundtable.com.au/our-research>

¹⁸ Prime Minister of Australia (2021) *Media Release: More Affordable Access to Insurance for Northern Australians 04 May 2021*, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/more-affordable-access-insurance-northern-australians>

¹⁹ Adcock (2019) *Rising tide*, <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2019/october/1569374459/bronwyn-adcock/rising-tide#mtr>
