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The European Environment Agency identifies climate risks that require urgent action

Global consequences of climate change have already been analysed extensively in a variety of reports, including those produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and [hungerexplained.org](https://lafex.org) reported on them in several articles [see our [Climate Facts](#) page].

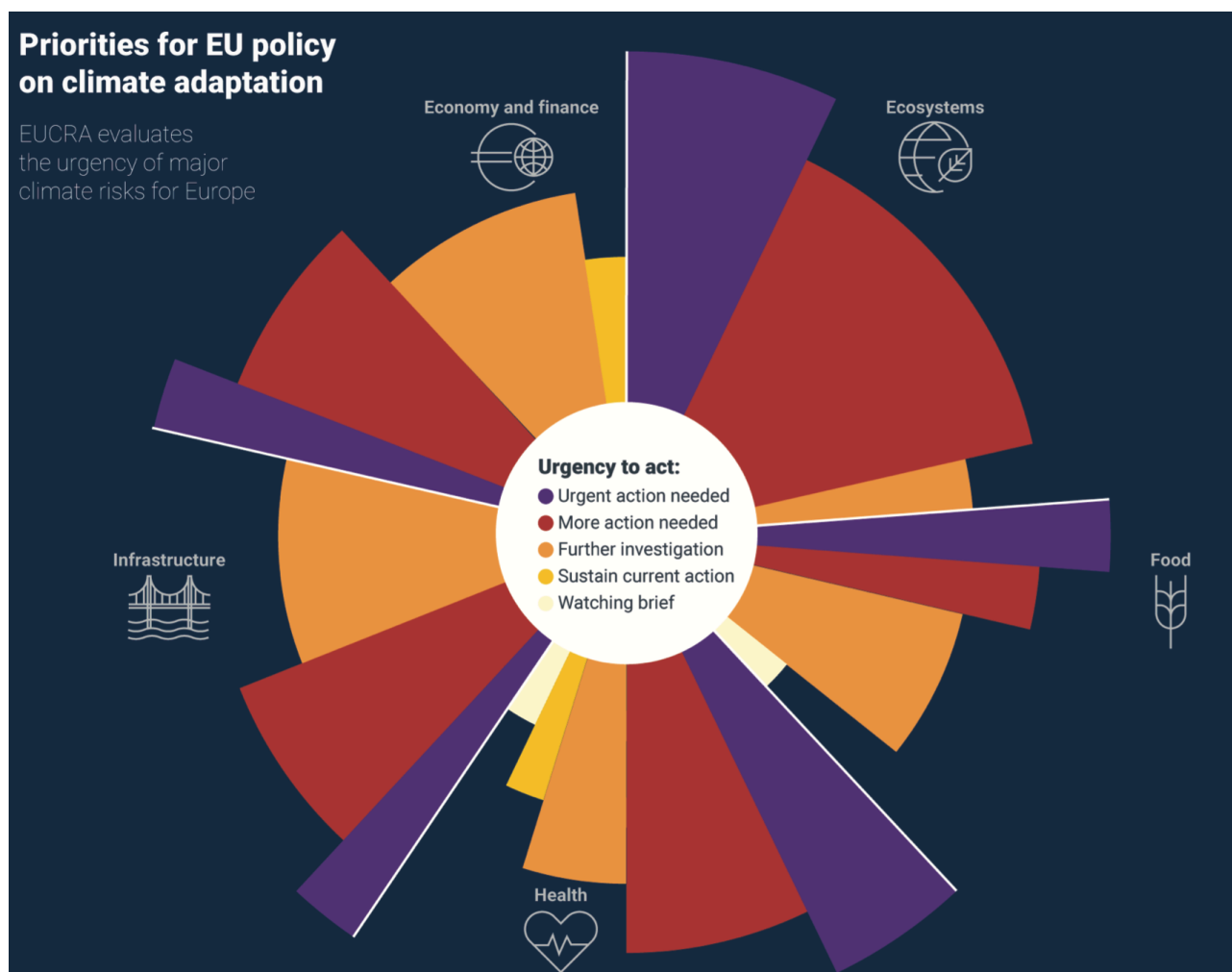
This month, the [European Environment Agency](#) (EEA) published a [Climate Risk Assessment Report](#) that “identifies 36 climate risks with potentially severe consequences across Europe. The risks are evaluated in the contexts of risk severity, policy horizon (lead time and decision horizon), policy readiness and risk ownership.” Special interest is given to Southern Europe which is a hotspot region.



Risks are grouped in 5 clusters: Ecosystems, Food, Health, Infrastructure, Economy and finance (**Figure 1**), but systemic links between these clusters are also being considered [[see EEA Report – Executive summary, p. 9](#)]. Each risk is

assessed to determine five levels of urgency: 1. Urgent action needed – 2. More action needed – 3. Further investigation – 4. Sustain current action – 5. Watching brief.

Figure 1 Major climate risks for Europe and the level of urgency for acting on them



Source: [EEA Report – Executive summary, p. 12](#)

In the field of **food**, crop production is assessed as being particularly seriously at risk with more and urgent action required immediately. For example, the report stresses that crop failure and reduced yields are already being experienced in the Southern Europe hotspot region because drought and heat spells there sometimes affect large areas over prolonged periods.

Other events, such as frost occurring at critical stages of vegetation, heavy rains and new pests and diseases due to climate change, also impact food production.

Moreover, as Europe is relying partly on food imported from other parts of the world, meteorological conditions there also affect food availability in Europe.

These risks can be further exacerbated by what the report calls “risk cascades” when modified climatic conditions increase competition between food production

and other activities. This is particularly true for water, when temporary shortages of food create price surges, or when adaptation to a stressful situation impacts on other domains (e.g. ecosystems and biodiversity or health).

The report makes several recommendations of a general nature and warns about the danger of further developing water-intensive productions or relying more heavily on imported feed for livestock, solutions that are, as of today, highly favoured by many farmers and governments alike. It also mentions inconsistencies in some key EU policies that, as they are now, appear counterproductive.

Finally, it also points at the need for consumers to change their dietary habits, including reducing the quantities of animal-based food that are high water users [\[read\]](#) and very much depended on feed imports.

As for **ecosystems**, the report identifies urgent and catastrophic risks on coastal and marine areas, loss of biodiversity and of capacity of existing carbon sinks linked to fires, drought and pests.

In the domain of **health**, the report emphasizes health risks generated by heat, fires and new or exacerbated dangers from vector- and water-borne diseases, with considerable impact on human mortality.

Regarding **infrastructure**, risks analysed include those related to floods, damages to infrastructure and buildings, energy and transport disruptions.

Finally, for the **economy and finance** cluster, most urgent and severe risks highlighted pertain to solidarity mechanisms, impact on public finance, property and insurance markets, already mentioned earlier on [hungerexplained.org](https://www.hungerexplained.org) [\[read\]](#).

Conclusion

The EEA report does not add much to the long list of well-known risks created by climate change.

Its merit is elsewhere. It is to describe the status of these risks in the particular context of Europe.

In addition, it shows that, even though Europe is one of the richest parts of the world, it will not sail peacefully through the ongoing climate crisis. Rather, it is hit hard and has to take up major programmes and change its policies now, and its population needs to adapt to a new reality.

The report is, therefore, a healthy read for those who would still believe that climate change is something of the future or of faraway places.

No, it is one of the main problems of now and here, and, moreover, it is linked to several other intertwined crises that have to be faced with a high degree of emergency in a coordinated manner.

It should be a top priority!

To know more:

- European Environment Agency, [European climate risk assessment](#), EEA Report 01/2024, 2024.

Selection of past articles on hungerexplained.org related to the topic:

- [Comprehensive climate insurance: benefits and limits](#), 2023.
- [To manage sustainably our water resources, we need to change our food consumption](#), 2019.

as well as articles on our [Climate Facts](#) page.