**EU needs to prioritise climate diplomacy in its external action policy**

**The EU should promote climate diplomacy as a flagship policy in its external action, stressed the European Economic and Social Committee in its** [**opinion**](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/eu-climate-diplomacy) **adopted in the December plenary. A robust and credible strategic plan is needed to adjust its climate diplomacy to the current geopolitical landscape and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.**

The current climate crisis is of an existential nature and therefore requires immediate, real and bold action. Employers, trade unions, civil society organisations and NGOs stress that there is no more room left for complacency. The EESC believes that the way forward is by upgrading climate diplomacy to the status of flagship action of the EU's foreign relations.

EESC member and rapporteur for the opinion, **Stefano Mallia**, underlined: "There is no time to waste if we want to avoid irreparable damage. Climate diplomacy is preventive diplomacy. This is why there is an urgent need to upgrade climate diplomacy, making it the flagship action of the EU's external affairs and foreign policy."

The EESC encourages the EU to adopt a comprehensive climate diplomacy strategy with short- and long-term priorities that would integrate climate actions into all fields of external relations, including security and defence, trade, investments, transport, migration, development cooperation, financial and technical assistance, culture and health.

The opinion also argues that climate diplomacy should not just be part of state-to-state diplomacy; it should count on the involvement of other actors such as civil society, regions, cities, businesses, trade unions, academia and scientific experts who influence the status of climate change on the political agenda.

They all can be agents of change for a genuine climate transition. The power of collaborating across different disciplines and sectors, the EESC believes, will bring better results and push the conversation towards implementing solutions. The creation of a Civil Society Diplomacy Network could be a starting point, together with strengthening the Domestic Advisory Groups (DAGs).

**EU Climate Diplomacy and Green Deal: intertwined policies**

The effective implementation of the European Green Deal internally gives the EU credibility to influence and inspire others to take a similar turn towards sustainability. That is why the EESC urges Member States and institutions to ensure better coordination among the EU actors in order to align their respective policies with the climate objectives and accelerate domestic action to implement the Green Deal.

As not all countries have the same financial and technological capacities to follow the same "green" path, the EU should spearhead and develop infrastructure, finance and governance pathways by mobilising public and private financial sources to assist partner and neighbouring countries to manage the impacts of the European Green Deal.

As the rapporteur for the opinion Stefano Mallia put it: "We need to look internally to assess whether we are able to achieve the targets we have set within the Green Deal. Once we have our house in order, we should then be engaging with neighbouring countries, foster their economic diversification, shape just transition plans and support adaptation and risk management projects to prevent and reduce fragility risks".