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## THE EESC ON WATER AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

**W**ater resilience has become one of the most urgent and crucial challenges facing the European Union, closely linked to adaptation to climate change. To address these challenges, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has called for the adoption of an EU Blue Deal, namely a comprehensive water strategy aimed at integrating water issues into all relevant EU policies. In the Opinion NAT/973, adopted at the March Plenary Session, the EESC highlights how water resilience and climate resilience are mutually reinforcing and how these issues must therefore be addressed simultaneously through a single, coherent strategic framework that takes into account both long-term climate trends and ecosystem limits. Furthermore, persistent shortcomings in terms of governance, data availability, investment levels and the enforcement of regulations continue to undermine Europe's ability to manage water and climate-related risks, making it necessary to overcome fragmentation across sectors and levels of governance. An integrated and cross-sectoral approach is therefore needed, linking aspects such as ecological restoration, infrastructure modernisation, climate risk modelling and social cohesion. The EESC further notes that prevention and preparedness should become the guiding principles of the EU's water and climate policies, and calls for the systematic application of a "water assessment" to be incorporated into European legislative processes, so as to ensure that legislative proposals across all key sectors are also assessed in terms of their impact on water and are

consistent with the objectives of the European Water Resilience Strategy. Finally, the Committee emphasises that water resilience and adaptation to climate change depend on a skilled workforce. According to Councillor Ulgiati «ongoing investment is needed in the education and training sectors to address skills gaps in water resource management, climate change adaptation, digital monitoring and nature-based solutions because – he concluded – without a skilled workforce, even the most advanced strategies risk being implemented too late or ineffectively».



## EIB: INVESTMENT IN PHOTOVOLTAICS IN SICILY

**A** €153 million loan earmarked for the construction of a 137 MW photovoltaic plant in the municipalities of Monreale and Gibellina could give a new boost to the development of renewables in Sicily. The deal was recently signed by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and Société Générale to support the Sand Solar project as part of the REPowerEU initiative, with the aim of contributing to the objectives of the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (PNIEC) for 2030. The EIB will provide up to €70 million, whilst Société Générale will provide up to €83.34 million. Once operational, the plant is expected to generate around 256 GWh of renewable electricity per year, enough to power nearly 100,000 households, avoiding around 85,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year compared to fossil fuel-based generation. The plan forms part of ef-

forts to strengthen European investment in the energy transition, with a particular focus on cohesion Regions such as Sicily, where green infrastructure represents a strategic lever for economic and territorial development. The project will also contribute to the Region's economic and social cohesion, incorporating biodiversity protection zones, ecological corridors, and landscape integration measures agreed with local Authorities. The "greenfield" plant, which will be connected to the grid via a 5 km 30 kV underground cable linked to a new 30/220 kV substation currently under development, will contribute directly to the growth of renewable energy in Sicily, increasing installed capacity and reducing dependence on fossil fuels. Construction work will begin in April 2026, whilst commercial operation is expected to commence by mid-2027.