



Resolution 2679 (2026)¹

Europe, the fastest-warming continent: accelerating climate action with young people

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has established that human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG), have unequivocally caused global warming. Since its first assessment report in 1990, the IPCC's conclusions on this causal link have become increasingly confident. By adopting the Paris Agreement in 2015, States committed themselves to keeping the increase in the global average temperature below 2°C and to pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. In 2023, the IPCC established that this threshold was expected to be reached as early as the beginning of the 2030s, even under scenarios involving substantial reductions in emissions, and that warming could reach 3.2°C by 2100 if the current trajectory were maintained. Yet in the face of this clear prognosis, GHG emissions continue to rise.. On 2 September 2026, the United Nations Environment Programme announced that warming would not be halted before reaching 1.5°C and that the overshoot of 1.5°C would henceforth have to be managed.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly asserts that this overshoot must not be treated as insignificant: 3°C is not simply a worsening of the climate, but a shift towards a world marked by extreme heatwaves, massive pressures on water, food, insurance, infrastructure, etc. Nor can it be interpreted as rendering obsolete the commitments made under the Paris Agreement. On the contrary, it requires the right economic, social and democratic questions to be asked, and emissions to be reduced immediately in order to limit the scale and duration of the overshoot. Present action must not be deferred by relying on the uncertain promise that the carbon emitted today could be removed from the atmosphere tomorrow. A possible return below the 1.5°C threshold can neither erase the damage caused while that threshold was exceeded nor serve as a climate policy.

3. The summer of 2026 confirmed it: Europe is experiencing the effects of global warming more intensely than other continents. The World Meteorological Organization and the European Union's Earth observation programme – Copernicus – report that over the past thirty years, the continent has warmed by around 0.56°C per decade, more than twice as fast as the global average, and its temperature is already around 2.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The summer of 2026 was the third hottest ever recorded in Europe and the hottest on record in Western Europe, with an average temperature 2.54°C above the 1991–2020 average, compared with 1.34°C higher in 2022 and 1.54°C higher in 2024. By the end of July 2026, half of the European Union and United Kingdom was affected by drought; Europe's four major rivers – the Loire, Po, Rhine and Danube – had reached exceptionally low levels, and more than 500 000 hectares of land had been burnt in wildfires by August 2026.

4. The Assembly joins its voice to that of the scientific community in warning member States: the climate change is destroying the conditions in which all forms of life, including humans, can thrive, and thus poses a direct threat to the planet's habitability. The Assembly calls for the concept of habitability to be placed front and centre in European climate action, as a non-negotiable value on which all others must rest. For the

1. *Assembly debate* on 1 October 2026 (34th sitting) (see [Doc. 16493](#), report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Ms Aurora Florida). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 1 October 2026 (34th sitting).

See also [Recommendation 2316 \(2026\)](#).

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habitability of the planet is the primary condition for life and thus the starting point and the heart of all other human rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and the European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163). Without a liveable climate, accessible water, clean air, and working ecosystems, human rights and the freedoms and dignity they rely on are merely abstract concepts.

5. Climate change kills. It undermines livelihoods and exacerbates vulnerabilities and inequalities. The 2026 Lancet Countdown report puts the number of heat-related deaths in Europe in 2024 at 62 000 and notes an increase in such deaths in 99.6% of the regions monitored. Between 2015 and 2024, heatwave exposure among infants and elderly persons increased by 121% and 266% respectively compared with the period 1991–2000. This is compounded by the fact that, in all member States, the adverse effects on health and living conditions caused by climate change are concentrated among those least able to protect themselves.

6. The negative economic impacts attributable to climate change in the member States are now visible and quantifiable. In the European Union, extreme weather events have caused losses totalling 822 billion euros since 1980, including €208 billion over the period 2021–2024 alone. These figures do not include productivity losses, healthcare expenditure and other indirect costs. According to the European Climate Risk Assessment, annual losses could reach 2.2% of GDP by the year 2070 and a quarter of EU regions could experience GDP losses greater than 5%, even if global warming is limited to +1.5°C. Warming of around 4°C could reduce global GDP by 10–23% by 2100, compared with a scenario in which no further warming occurs.

7. Young people are uniquely vulnerable here: they have contributed little to cumulated emissions yet will suffer the consequences throughout their lives. Among them, girls and young women may be particularly vulnerable when climate change deepens existing inequalities: it can undermine their access to education, resources and healthcare, including sexual and reproductive healthcare, and increase their exposure to violence. This injustice also extends across generations. A child born in 2020 will be 80 years old in 2100: for them, the end of the century is not an abstract horizon, but an entire lifetime. According to the IPCC, they will experience a near five-fold increase in extreme weather events under a 3°C global warming scenario. This vulnerability is not only a future concern: in Europe, approximately 43% of schools are located in urban heat islands, where the average temperature is at least 2°C higher than in the surrounding areas. Young people will have to cope with the impacts on their health, livelihoods and personal development, while also funding adaptation measures and attempting to repair the damage that delayed action will have exacerbated.

8. Yet Europe does have a genuine capacity for action. Recent studies estimate that, even if other regions of the world were not to step up their efforts, reducing European emissions would cost less than the damage to our continent that inaction would entail. Insufficient global action is therefore no justification for a European wait-and-see approach. The decisions taken today will have a very tangible impact on the quality of life on the continent for the remainder of the lives of young people today and the generations to come. Intergenerational equity demands that those who currently hold the power to decide and act in our European countries do not pass on the burden of risks, damage and reparations to their children.

9. The Assembly is convinced that young people's creativity, dynamism, social engagement and skills must be mobilised to address climate change. This does not mean tokenistic consultations without any genuine follow-up. Young people should participate in setting priorities and making trade-offs, including choices concerning the economic, tax and financial frameworks that shape incentives and investment decisions. In particular, they should be involved in defining the criteria governing public support, so that such support ceases to favour activities harmful to the climate and ecosystems and instead encourages low-emission and resource-efficient models, the circular economy, biodiversity protection and sustainable entrepreneurial initiatives led by young people.

10. In its Resolution 2553 (2024) "Strengthening the youth perspective in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly" reaffirmed in Resolution 2639 (2026) "Strengthening democracies with young people: from participation to shared responsibility" the Assembly committed to integrate a youth perspective into the follow-up to its work. Youth involvement in its work on the environment and climate crisis is essential.

11. The Assembly underlines moreover the importance of the Maastricht Principles on the Human Rights of Future Generations, which provide a useful framework for addressing the long-term effects of public decisions, the representation of future generations and intergenerational equity in climate action.

12. The Assembly welcomes the adoption of Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people and climate action, the first international instrument specifically dedicated to this issue. It invites member States to implement it fully and without delay. In order to make it an effective lever for accelerating climate action, it calls on them in particular to:

12.1. enshrine in their laws and climate plans ambitious overall and intermediate targets that are compatible with human rights and accompanied by deadlines, monitoring, corrective measures and an assessment of their effects on young people and future generations, in order to ensure an equitable distribution of efforts between generations;

12.2. establish permanent mechanisms enabling young people in all their diversity, while ensuring in particular the effective participation of girls and young women, to contribute to the formulation, arbitration and monitoring of climate policies, including their economic, tax and financial dimensions, with a clear mandate, sufficient resources and an obligation for the authorities to respond publicly to their proposals;

12.3. include youth delegates, with appropriate status, training and resources, in national delegations participating in European and international climate negotiations, and to report publicly on their contribution;

12.4. establish, at national, regional and local levels, participatory budgets and multi-annual funds enabling young people and youth organisations to design, select and implement projects for mitigation, adaptation and nature restoration, while ensuring that small organisations and informal groups have access to this funding;

12.5. equip all young people with the knowledge and skills they need to understand climate choices, counter misinformation and greenwashing, and take part in collective action, through schooling, vocational training, higher education, non-formal learning and youth work, as well as through equitable access to reliable and accessible information, while ensuring that curricula, textbooks, teaching resources and information materials provide scientifically accurate, up-to-date information tailored to young people's ages and needs;

12.6. develop paid pathways to quality jobs in sectors essential for reducing GHG emissions and for society's adaptation to the effects of climate change, and to ensure that climate policies do not exacerbate precarity among young people, particularly in terms of access to housing, energy, food and mobility;

12.7. prevent and address the effects of climate change on young people's physical and mental health, particularly eco-anxiety, through accessible and tailored services, while strengthening their capacity to take collective action;

12.8. prevent the discrimination that young people face related to climate change, to pay special attention to young people who are vulnerable or marginalised, especially those exposed to multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination, and to ensure that climate policies are based on the principles of climate justice, fairness, and intergenerational solidarity;

12.9. ensure protection of young environmental defenders against threats, excessive surveillance, strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), disproportionate use of force and any undue restriction of their freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association;

12.10. provide local and regional authorities with the necessary powers and resources to work with young people to develop local mitigation and adaptation policies, and to make schools, universities, youth centres and other essential services resilient to climate risks.

13. The Assembly calls on national parliaments to carry out an annual review of the implementation of climate commitments. This review should take the form of a public debate involving young people in all their diversity, during which the government would report on the gap between the targets set and the results achieved, the public and private funding mobilised and the corrective action proposed.

14. Lastly, the Assembly calls on those member States which have not yet done so to recognise at national level the right to a healthy environment and to support, within the Council of Europe, the drafting of a legally binding instrument guaranteeing this right as a standalone one, with particular regard to the rights of young people and future generations.