

Cour des comptes
FRANCE



ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN FRANCE: THE ROLE OF THE COUR DES COMPTES AND REGIONAL CHAMBERS OF ACCOUNTS

Annual public report of 2024

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The annual public report of 2024 and climate change

Since 1832, the French Cour des comptes produces each year an annual public report. Regional chambers of accounts contribute to this report since the 1980s. Its is solemnly given to the Heads of State and of Government, the Parliament, and made public. This publication is expected by the press, and met with the interest of the citizens.

- French SAI and regional chambers also produce numerous other reports, but without the aura of the annual public report.

Since 2022, this annual public report has taken the form of a thematic publication, focused on a single issue at the heart of the news.

- The 2022 report was devoted to the health crisis; the 2023 report assessed forty years of government decentralization
- The 2024 public annual report audits public action in favour of adaptation to climate change: 725 pages of observations and recommendations.

I will present its findings: a) the challenges for public action of adaptation; b) the 16 chapters of the report; c) the four main lessons of this survey; d) the working method for this report



ANNUAL PUBLIC REPORT 2024: THE CHALLENGES TO PUBLIC ACTION

Adaptation to climate change is challenging for public action

Policies to adapt to the effects of climate change are multifaceted.

Expectations and implementation horizons of public adaptation policies are diverse

Adaptation policies are necessarily specific to each territory

Highly transversal and diffuse nature

Absence of an exhaustive and coherent estimate of what it could cost public actors

→ No objective and transverse overview of adaptation to climate change in France until the Cour des comptes's report.



ANNUAL PUBLIC REPORT 2024: THE 16 CHAPTERS

Adaptation to climate change from 16 angles (1/2)

Regarding climate change the annual public report is divided in a general summary, an introduction chapter, and **16 specific chapters** (around 30 pages each) to cover the most part, but not all, of the issue of adaptation to climate change.

Cross-cutting themes (3 chapters)

- Place and role of public research: a modest place for France
- Role of financial and banking institutions: risk of greenwashing
- Contribution to the adaptation of developing countries (French agency AFD)

Adaptation of infrastructures and living environment (7 chapters)

- Adapting housing to risks of flooding, heat, shrink-swell of clay soils
- Adapting cities: the issue of heat islands → **NEXT PRESENTATION**
- Adapting nuclear power plants and hydroelectric works
- Adapting electricity transport and distribution networks
- Adapting the State's real estate: a blind spot
- Adapting national railway tracks: delays likely to increase
- Ministry of Armed forces and climate change: mitigation efforts, adaptation lacking

Adaptation to climate change from 16 angles (2/2)

Adaptation to the effects on nature and people (6 chapters)

- Adapting forests to fire risk
- Adapting overseas territories to natural disaster risk increase
- Adapting the coastline faced with erosion increased by climate change → *NEXT PRESENTATION*
- Adapting agriculture of cereal crops
- Adapting mountain resorts to less winter
- Adapting health system to heat waves affecting vulnerable people: 5,000 deaths from heat in 2023



ANNUAL PUBLIC REPORT 2024: FOUR MAIN LESSONS ON ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE



Four lessons on adaptation to climate change by the Cour des Comptes



1. We need to *better understand* the effects of climate change, the risks to which we must adapt and their scale

- Awareness of the urgency of adaptation is now real but only for certain areas and actors, for some before 2000, others in more recent years, and for the last it has not begun.
- A body of knowledge complex to establish, due to numerous uncertainties inherent to the subject

2. We must *inform* citizens and public decision-makers about adaptation

- Information about the necessary link between mitigation and adaptation
- Improve forecasts and data
- Make everyone, citizens and public decision-makers, actors in these public policies
- Obtain the support of citizens and involve them in adaptation efforts
- Before taking measures to adapt to climate change, convince people of their necessity and benefits



Four lessons on adaptation to climate change by the Cour des Comptes

3. We must *plan*, i. e. develop a coherent and articulated strategy



- Reconcile the objectives of adaptation with those of numerous other policies
- Establish a culture of planning and risk management
- Designate a leader to arbitrate and coordinate the many actors involved, at the appropriate scale
- When the State is competent, it should fully play its role as a strategist, set clear objectives and define a strategy to achieve them

4. We must find the means to *finance* adaptation, and ensure the quality of public spending



- Avoid maladaptive measures
- Begin or complete assessment of the costs of adaptation
- Explore other measures completing public spending (behaviour, financial solidarity)
- Local decision-makers must better take ownership of the data, tools and solutions at their disposal

A first response from the Ministry of Ecological Transition

“Welcomes the quality of the work carried out by the Cour des Comptes which allows, in a transparent manner, to lay the foundations of the public debate that we must have around the preparation of our country for the impacts of climate change...”

“... I hope that this 3rd National Adaptation Plan to Climate Change includes concrete measures, combining pragmatism and ambition, and that we build a model of resilience for our society, while avoiding mal-adaptation. While mitigation remains at the heart of our efforts to counter climate change, it is now just as crucial to adapt.”



ANNUAL PUBLIC REPORT 2024: THE WORKING METHOD

Auditing adaptation to climate change: our practices

Fundamental values for the works of financial courts (international standards of auditing):

- Independence - Fair hearing - Collective responsibility

Use of external background expertise

- In particular UN IPCC, World Meteorological Organization, Ministry of Ecological Transition and its bodies

Involvement of all components of financial courts

- result of the work of the 6 chambers of the Cour des Comptes, 17 regional Chambers of Accounts (mainland and overseas), 5 inter-jurisdictional committees; contributions from nearly 60 rapporteurs
- Necessary to address both the action of national key players (audited by Cour des comptes) and of local authorities and entities (audited by their regional chamber of accounts)

A national level for coordination

- 2nd chamber of the Cour des Comptes has a general competence on environmental policy
- 16 specific surveys do not point to a single direction; office of the rapporteur-general of the Cour des Comptes to draft a general summary putting the issue in a global perspective

Communication: a press conference in March; advanced presentation in February of a specific report on ski resorts, at the start of the winter holidays (Cour des comptes + Regional chamber Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes)