

Deliverable report

D3.2: HORIZON EUROPE CLUSTER 6 POLICY DATABASE

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CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
2. INTRODUCTION	5
3. CONTENT SECTION	6
3.1 The Database.....	6
3.2 Introduction to Horizon Europe Policies.....	8
Explanation of the purpose of a policy, regulations, directives and action plans	9
3.3 United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.....	11
3.4 The European Commission priorities for 2019-2024.....	12
The benefits of the European Green Deal	12
European Commission priorities for 2019-2024 listed.....	13
3.5 The Horizon Europe Legal Base.....	15
3.6 The Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2021-2024.....	16
3.7 Horizon Europe Cluster 6: Food, Bioeconomy Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment.....	18
3.8 Cluster 6 Destinations	18



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This deliverable D3.2 is found in Task 3.3 in Work Package 3 “Facilitating synergies with network stakeholders”.

“An updated online database of policies/directives relevant to Cluster 6 will be developed until M12 and updated annually (D3.2). This database will be uploaded in the project’s website where all NCPs can have access.”

The database and supporting document provides an overview of the policy and strategy that underpins the focus of Cluster 6: Food, Bioeconomy Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment.

This Cluster with its emphasis on sustainable development takes in a wide range of supporting policies. Many of the supporting policies appear across one or more of the Cluster’s seven Destinations.

This database will be updated regularly (M24, 26 and 48) throughout the project and will be hosted in the repository area on the CARE4BIO website.



2. INTRODUCTION

CARE4BIO is a vibrant network that was created in response to the Co-ordination and Support Action (CSA) - the Network of National Contact Points for Cluster 6. CARE4BIO supports activities and participants in Cluster 6: Food, Bioeconomy Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment in Horizon Europe.

CARE4BIO has brought together a group of enthusiastic and committed National Contact Points from 26 countries, representing both Member States and Associated Countries. This CARE4BIO network builds on the previous NCP network projects, BioHorizon and NCPs CaRE that previously supported Societal Challenges 2 and 5 in Horizon 2020.

CARE4BIO is working together to deliver the overall objectives of the project which are to:

- empower National Contact Points (NCPs)
- provide improved, harmonised and more qualified support services,
- share good practice,
- lower barriers for participation for applicants from widening countries or countries with low success rates
- ensure that overall quality of submitted proposals will be increased
- promote knowledge exchange
- support new and less experienced NCPs in their role.

This will be done by using many different delivery mechanisms. This will include briefing packs, information libraries, virtual online events to provide training on specific topics. Information events complemented by brokerage sessions to promote and inform the widest possible audience.

Task 3.3 in the CARE4BIO agreement states

“an updated online database of policies/directives relevant to Cluster 6 will be developed until M12 and updated annually (D3.2). This database will be uploaded in the project’s website where all NCPs can have access.”

This document outlines how this Task has been addressed.

Destination 1: Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

It will support R&I activities benefitting ecosystems in good ecological condition and a clean and healthy environment for the EU, including water, soil, air, health, climate adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, sustainable circular bioeconomy and blue economy policies. The R&I activities will also reflect the strong interconnections between the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 and the farm to fork strategy, among others also the pollinators initiative. Connections are expected to be made with the future Commission proposal on legally binding nature restoration targets.

Policies and Strategies	Link	Link
New EU Forestry Strategy for 2030	https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAGI/2022/698936/EPRS_ATAGI(2022)698936_EN.pdf https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=COM%3A2021%3A57	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:0d918e07-e610-11eb-a1a5-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/D0C_1&format=PDE
2030 Soil Strategy	https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/soil-strategy-2030_en	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0699
Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future	Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2021:240:FIN https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52020DC0380
Biodiversity Strategy for 2030		
EU Action Plan: Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:a1c34a56-b314-11eb-8aca-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/D0C_1&format=PDE https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:a1c34a56-b314-11eb-8aca-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/D0C_1&format=PDE	
Circular Economy Action Plan	https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/new_circular_economy_action_plan.pdf	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0098
Forging a climate-resilient Europe - the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2021%3A82%3AFIN	https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/teu-adaptation-policy/strategy/index_html

3.2 INTRODUCTION TO HORIZON EUROPE POLICIES

This document sets out the context and overview of the policies relevant to Horizon Europe’s Cluster 6. This outlines how there is a coherent and logical approach to R&D priorities and funding. In turn that research goes on to inform and support policy and strategy development.

Information for this document has been gathered from the Cluster 6 Work Programme and from European Commission websites. Hyperlinks have been included for ease of reference, to take the reader to the source documents, legal text and informative web pages.

This overview outlines the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Priorities, with particular reference to the European Green Deal. This is then followed by the legal base for Horizon Europe and the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan. The specific sector strategies and policies in the Cluster 6 Calls for funding will be outlined.



Fig 1. Horizon Europe Cluster 6 Policy Background

This overview highlights the logical approach to the research and innovation that influences evidence-based policy and decision making at the European level and beyond.

An Excel spreadsheet has been uploaded on the [CARE4BIO website repository](#) providing the links to specific policies and supporting documents at a destination level.



EXPLANATION OF THE PURPOSE OF A POLICY, REGULATIONS, DIRECTIVES AND ACTION PLANS

Strategies

A strategy can be described as a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim.

A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0381
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Policies

The European Commission plays an active role in developing the EU's overall strategy and in designing and implementing European Union policies. It evaluates and reports on its policies on a regular basis.

Along with the other main EU institutions, the European Commission develops the overall strategy and political direction of the EU.

Common Fisheries Policy	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52023DC0103
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Action Plans are made up of proposals for Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge. These proposals can be regarded as non-binding contributions to the design of future and the revision of existing EU legislation, instruments and initiatives.

Zero Pollution Action Plan	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:a1c34a56-b314-11eb-8aca-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF
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The main types of EU legislation are regulations, directives, decisions, recommendations and opinions. These also have influence and bearing on the content of the Cluster. More information on



these types of legislation can be found at EUR-Lex <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/collection/eu-law/legislation/recent.html>

A **Regulation** is defined as a binding legislative act. It is immediately applicable in its entirety in all Member States, and it overrules national laws.

EU Climate Law Regulation	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1119&from=EN
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A **Directive** is a legislative act setting objectives that all EU countries must reach and translate into their national legislation within a defined time frame.

Water Framework Directive	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/good-quality-water-in-europe-eu-water-directive.html
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For those interested in a more comprehensive analysis of the legislation, please find the following links to the following broad subject areas covered in Cluster 6 taken from EUR-Lex.

Cluster 6 Broad Subject Areas	Link to Summaries of EU Legislation
 Agriculture	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/03.html
 Environment and climate change	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/20.html
 Food safety	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/30.html
 Oceans and fisheries	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/02.html

3.3 UNITED NATIONS 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, created the **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, which are an urgent call for action by all countries.



Fig 2: The UN's Sustainable Development Goals

European Commission policy action is firmly anchored in latest science and knowledge. It will contribute to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and accelerate the ecological transition required by the European Green Deal.

In particular for Cluster 6, SDGs more relevant are: i) SDG 2 –zero hunger; ii) SDG 3 – good health and well-being; iii) SDG 6 – clean water and sanitation; iv) SDG 8 – decent work and economic growth; v) SDG 9 – industry, innovation, and infrastructure; vi) SDG 11 – sustainable cities and communities; vii) SDG 12 – responsible consumption and production; viii) SDG 13 – climate action, ix) SDG 14 – life below water and x) SDG 15 – life on land".



3.4 THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRIORITIES FOR 2019-2024

With the new Commission in 2025, these priorities may change and be reflected in forthcoming Work programmes.

Of all the European Commission Priorities, the **European Green Deal** is referenced the most often in Cluster 6. There are 126 references in the current 2023- 2024 Work Programme.

Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world. To overcome these challenges, the European Green Deal will transform the EU into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy, ensuring:

- no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050
- economic growth decoupled from resource use
- no person and no place left behind
- The European Green Deal is also our lifeline out of the COVID-19 pandemic. One third of the €1.8 trillion investments from the NextGenerationEU Recovery Plan, and the EU's seven-year budget will finance the European Green Deal.

THE BENEFITS OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

The European Green Deal will improve the well-being and health of citizens and future generations by providing:

- fresh air, clean water, healthy soil and biodiversity
- renovated, energy efficient buildings
- healthy and affordable food
- more public transport
- cleaner energy and cutting-edge clean technological innovation
- longer lasting products that can be repaired, recycled and re-used
- future-proof jobs and skills training for the transition
- globally competitive and resilient industry

EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRIORITIES FOR 2019-2024 LISTED



[A European Green Deal](#)

The European Green Deal is working towards making Europe the first climate neutral continent in the world.

The European Commission has adopted a set of proposals to make the EU's climate, energy, transport and taxation **policies fit for reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030**, compared to 1990 levels.

[A Europe fit for the Digital Age](#)

The EU's digital strategy aims to make this transformation work for people and businesses, while helping to achieve its target of a climate-neutral Europe by 2050.

The Commission is determined to make this Europe's "Digital Decade". Europe must now strengthen its digital sovereignty and set standards, rather than following those of others – with a clear focus on data, technology, and infrastructure.



[An Economy that Works for People.](#)

Individuals and businesses in the EU can only thrive if the economy works for them.

The EU's unique social market economy allows economies to grow and to reduce poverty and inequality. Small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of the EU's economy. It is essential to strengthen them, complete the Capital Markets Union and deepen the Economic and Monetary Union.

[A Stronger Europe in the World.](#)

The European Commission champions multilateralism and a rules-based global order through a more active role and stronger voice for the EU in the world.

A strong, fair and open trade agenda makes Europe an attractive place for business. This is key to strengthening the EU's role as a global leader while ensuring the highest standards of climate, environmental and labour protections.





Promoting a European Way of Life.

Europe that protects must also stand up for justice and for the EU's core values.

A Push for European Democracy

Europe's strength lies in its unity, and this unity is based on our shared democratic values: our commitment to fundamental human rights; the protection of a free and independent press; upholding the rule of law; and equality between women and men, rural and urban, young and old.



🔗 The 6 European Commission priorities for 2019-24



3.5 THE HORIZON EUROPE LEGAL BASE

The Legal base for Horizon Europe is found in [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/695](#) “Establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination”.

From the preamble to the Regulation the objectives for Horizon Europe are as follows

- (1) It is an objective of the Union to strengthen its scientific and technological bases by strengthening the European research area (ERA) in which researchers, scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely and encouraging it to become more competitive, including in its industry, while promoting all research and innovation (R&I) activities to deliver on the Union's strategic priorities and commitments, which ultimately aim to promote peace, the Union's values and the well-being of its peoples.
- (2) To deliver scientific, technological, economic, environmental and societal impact in pursuit of this general objective and to maximise the added value of the Union's R&I investments, the Union should invest in R&I through Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2021-2027 (the 'Programme').

The Programme should support the creation, better diffusion and transfer of high-quality and excellent knowledge and high-quality technologies in the Union, attract talent at all levels and contribute to full engagement of the Union's talent pool, facilitate collaborative links and strengthen the impact of R&I in developing, supporting and implementing Union policies, support and strengthen the uptake and deployment of innovative and sustainable solutions in the Union's economy, in particular in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and in society, address global challenges, including climate change and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), create jobs, boost economic growth, promote industrial competitiveness and boost the attractiveness of the Union in the field of R&I.

The Programme should foster all forms of innovation, including breakthrough innovation, foster market deployment of innovative solutions, and optimise the delivery of such investment for increased impact within a strengthened ERA.

3.6 THE HORIZON EUROPE STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2024

This Horizon Europe Strategic Plan key strategic orientations for the first four years of defines the Horizon Europe priorities. It sets out the research and innovation priorities to support a sustainable recovery and further accelerating the twin green and digital transitions. The aim is to be a climate-neutral and green Europe, fit for the digital age, where the economy works for the people.

In response to the political priorities and recovery plan of the Union, the following [four key strategic orientations for EU research and innovation have been defined for the period 2021-2024:](#)

It should be noted that new Strategic Plan will be published for 2025-2027 and as a result there maybe changes reflected in the remaining Horizon Europe Work Programmes.



Fig 3: Four Key Strategic Orientations for EU R&I 2021-2024

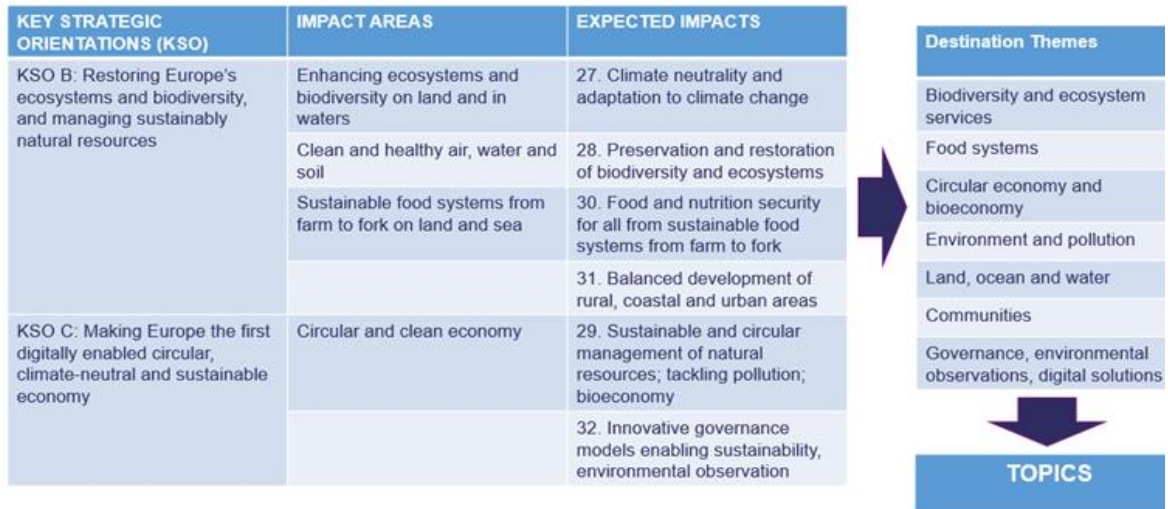


Fig. 4 Relationship between KSO and Destination Themes

Link between policy priorities and project results

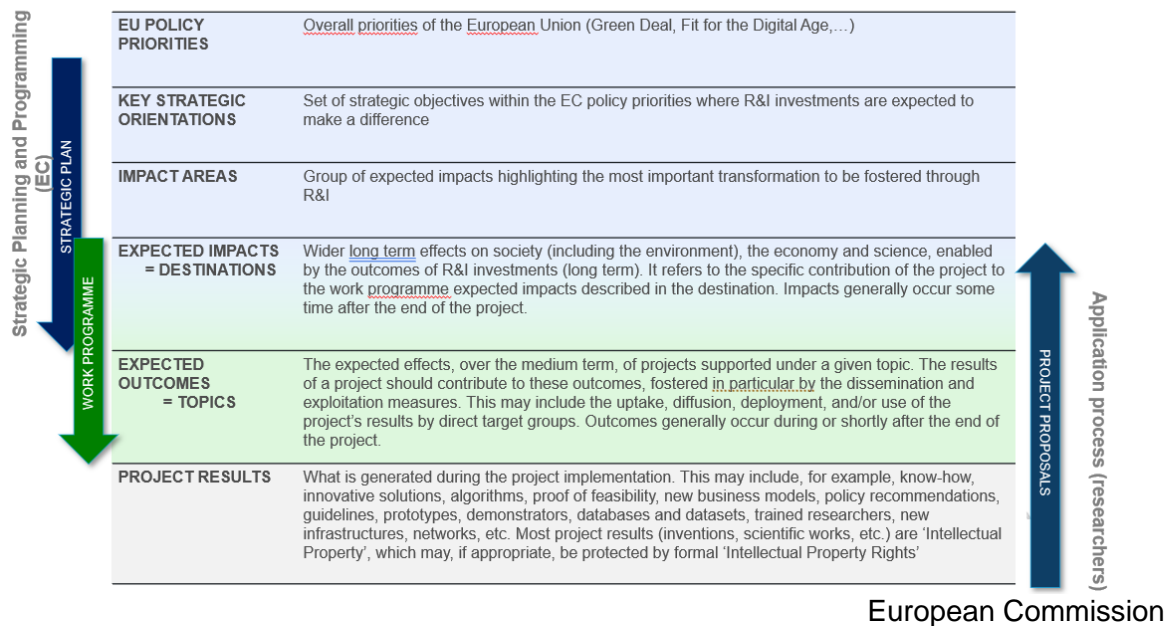


Fig 5: Relationship between Policy Priorities KSO and Project Results



3.7 HORIZON EUROPE CLUSTER 6: FOOD, BIOECONOMY NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

This Cluster spans a wide range of disciplines and subject areas that are fundamental to our understanding of life on earth. Each of the Destinations in Cluster 6 have a range of supporting Policies, Strategies, Action Plans, Directives and Regulations to underpin the rationale for activity.

Destination 1: Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Destination 4: Clean environment and zero pollution

Destination 2: Fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food systems from primary production to consumption

Destination 5: Land, oceans and water for climate action

Destination 3: Circular economy and bioeconomy sectors

Destination 6: Resilient, inclusive, healthy and green rural, coastal and urban communities

Destination 7: Innovative governance, environmental observations and digital solutions in support of the Green Deal

3.8 CLUSTER 6 DESTINATIONS

The following brief descriptions of the Destinations are taken from the introductory sections in the 2023-2024 Cluster 6 Work Programme.

Destination 1: Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

It will support R&I activities benefitting ecosystems in good ecological condition and a clean and healthy environment for the EU, including water, soil, air, health, climate adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, sustainable circular bioeconomy and blue economy policies.

The R&I activities will also reflect the strong interconnections between the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 and the farm to fork strategy, among others also the pollinators initiative. Connections are expected to be made with the future Commission proposal on legally binding nature restoration targets.

Destination 2: Fair, healthy and environment-friendly food systems from primary production to consumption

National, EU and global food systems are facing sustainability challenges, from primary production to consumption that could jeopardise food and nutrition security. The farm to fork strategy, and its follow-up initiatives aim to address these challenges and supports transition to more resilient and environmentally, socially and economically sustainable food systems on land and at sea that provide healthy diets for all and respect planetary boundaries.

It is key to the success of the “Fit for 55 package”, the European Green Deal and achievement of the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs). Research and innovation (R&I) under this destination will steer and accelerate the transition to sustainable, safe, healthy and inclusive food systems from farm to fork, ensuring food and nutrition security for all and delivering co-benefits for the environment, health, society and economy.

Destination 3: Circular economy and bioeconomy sectors

This destination and its topics target climate-neutrality, zero pollution, fair and just circular and bioeconomy transitions, covering safe, integrated circular solutions at territorial and sectoral levels, for important material flows and product value chains, such as the textiles, electronics, chemicals, packaging, tourism, plastics and construction, as well as key bioeconomy sectors such as sustainable bio-based systems, sustainable forestry, small-scale rural bio-based solutions, environmental services and aquatic (including marine and freshwater) value chains.

With synergies ensured with Horizon Europe Clusters 4 and 5 (including their European Public Private Partnerships), while Cluster 4 targets the industrial dimension (including digitalisation, circularity and climate-neutrality / low GHGs emissions industry transition, including developing bio-integrated manufacturing). Cluster 5 covers cost-efficient, net zero-GHGs energy systems, centred on renewables (including R&D&I necessary to reduce CO₂ emissions from the power and energy-intensive industry sectors, such as solutions for capturing, utilisation and storage of CO₂ (CCUS), bioenergy/biofuels and other industrial sectors)

Cluster 6 covers the research and innovation based on sustainable biological resources (bioeconomy sectors), for new sustainable feedstock development and valorisation through the development of integrated bio-refineries).

Destination 4: Clean environment and zero pollution

Anthropogenic pollution undermines the integrity of Earth’s ecosystems and severely affects natural resources essential for human life. Keeping our planet clean and our ecosystems healthy will not only contribute to addressing the climate crisis but also help regenerate biodiversity, ensure the sustainability of primary production activities and safeguard the well-being of humankind.

In line with the objectives of the European Green Deal and the related initiatives targeting environmental challenges, particularly the EU zero pollution action plan, the 2030 Climate Target Plan, and other relevant EU legislation, this destination seeks to halt and prevent pollution by



focusing on removing the pollution of fresh and marine waters, soils, air, including from nitrogen and phosphorus emissions, on substituting harmful chemicals, on improving the environmental sustainability and circularity of bio-based systems as well as on reducing environmental impacts and pollution from food systems.

Destination 5: Land Ocean and Water for Climate Action

Reducing GHG emissions and enhancing carbon sinks in primary production and natural systems as well as in harvested wood products and other carbon storage products are key elements of the European Green Deal. Achieving sustainable ocean, water and land management, and an efficient use of natural resources that foster climate change mitigation implies finding the right balance between productivity, climate, biodiversity and environmental goals in the agriculture and forestry sectors, with a long-term perspective.

R&I activities will support solutions for climate and environmentally friendly practices, to reduce emissions of major greenhouse gases, other pollutants and the environmental impact of ocean and land use changes and agricultural activities. R&I will rely on the application of digital technologies where relevant.

Destination 6: Resilient, inclusive, healthy and green rural, coastal and urban communities

Places and people matter when it comes achieving of a more sustainable Europe. The Sustainable Development Goals and the ecological and digital transitions brought forward by the European Green Deal with its farm to fork and biodiversity strategies, zero pollution action plan, common fisheries policy (CFP), along with the recent pandemic, bring challenges and opportunities that vary for different places and people.

Destination 7: Innovative governance, environmental observations and digital solutions in support of the Green Deal

Taking advantage of the use, uptake, and deployment of environmental observations as well as digital and data-based green solutions, assessed through the European Green Deal's 'do no harm' principle, is key for innovative governance models and for designing, implementing and monitoring science-based policy.

In the Excel spreadsheet found at the [CARE4BIO website](#) each of the Destinations has a list of accompanying policy documents.

We hope that this document and the spreadsheet will be helpful in making accessible the policy background to Cluster 6.