



QUICK TIPS

ACTIVITIES THAT QUALIFY FOR RIO MARKERS IN GREEN URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Over the 2014–2020 period, the EU committed to spend at least 20 % of its budget on climate related actions. These commitments are being stepped up in the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI - Global Europe) to at least 30 % for climate action. As regards biodiversity, in 2012 the Union endorsed the Hyderabad objective to ‘double total biodiversity-related international financial resource flows to developing countries’ by 2015 – and up to 2020 – against a baseline value of € 167 million per year. Over the coming years, the EU should also ensure that spending has no negative impacts on biodiversity and supports the achievement of biodiversity targets, including by aiming to dedicate 7.5% of the overall EU budget to biodiversity objectives as of 2024 and 10% as of 2026.

Four ‘Rio markers’ were developed by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to identify the contribution of actions to the objectives of UN Rio Conventions (two markers related to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, one to the Convention on Biological Diversity and one to the Convention to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation). The Rio markers are used by DG INTPA to keep track of financial contributions to the Rio themes. In line with a methodology adopted by the OECD DAC, there are three possible scores (0, 1 and 2) for Rio markers. DG INTPA assesses that a certain percentage of an action’s budget can be considered to contribute to a Rio theme, based on the score of the corresponding Rio marker, as follows:



if Biodiversity, Desertification or Climate Change



IS NOT TARGETED	RM=0	0% BUDGET
IS A SIGNIFICANT OBJECTIVE	RM=1	40% BUDGET
IS A PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE	RM=2	100% BUDGET

The scoring must be carried out in accordance with the corresponding [OECD DAC directives](#).¹

An activity can be marked as “principal” when the objective (biodiversity, combating desertification, climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation) is explicitly stated as fundamental in the design of, or the motivation for, the activity. To be marked “significant”, the objective must be explicitly stated but is not a fundamental driver or motivation for undertaking and designing the activity.

¹ [OECD DAC \(2018\) Converged Statistical Reporting Directives for the Creditor Reporting System \(CRS\) and the Annual DAC Questionnaire. Annexes – modules D and E \(Annex 18 – Rio markers\). DCD/DAC/STAT\(2018\)9/ADD2/FINAL.](#)



Biodiversity

An activity should be classified as biodiversity-related if it promotes at least one of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity: (1) the conservation of biodiversity; (2) sustainable use of its components (ecosystems, species or genetic resources); or (3) fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of the utilisation of genetic resources.

Eligibility criteria are as follows:

The activity contributes to:

- a) Protection or enhancement of ecosystems, species or genetic resources through in-situ or ex-situ conservation, or remedying existing environmental damage; **or**
- b) Integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services concerns within recipient countries' development objectives and economic decision-making, through institution building, capacity development, strengthening the regulatory and policy framework, or research; **or**
- c) Developing countries' efforts to meet their obligations under the Convention.

The activity will be scored '**principal objective**' (i.e. RM2) if it directly and explicitly aims to achieve one or more of the above three criteria.

Typical green urban development activities that can qualify for the Biodiversity Rio marker² include:

- ▶ Development and management of large urban green spaces protecting local wildlife species and autochthonous plants
- ▶ Capacity building for local municipalities to implement urban planning activities that include an ecological, sustainable, socially balanced and efficient steering of use of land.
- ▶ Urban planning aimed at avoiding urban sprawl into biodiverse areas.
- ▶ Development of Urban Greening Plans promoting healthy urban ecosystems, green infrastructure and nature-based solutions, including measures to create biodiverse and accessible urban forests, parks and gardens; urban farms; green roofs and walls; tree-lined streets; urban meadows; urban beekeeping; and urban hedges.
- ▶ Creation of green infrastructure, i.e. networks of (semi-)natural or constructed nature within or around the urban area that provide a variety of ecosystem services, for:
 - Improving physical and mental well-being by providing green public space for recreational activities or safe biking/hiking lanes.
 - Flood management and storm water retention areas such as wetlands.
 - Nature-based solutions that use natural ecosystem processes to address issues traditionally solved by hard (or grey) infrastructure - sometimes in combination with grey infrastructure. Examples include water treatment, storage and infiltration, flushing of sediments and pollution, soil stabilisation, etc.
- ▶ Restoring degraded natural areas or reducing pressure on or risks for biodiversity by e.g.:
 - Restoring freshwater ecosystems and the natural functions of rivers (free flowing rivers) that traverse urban areas.
 - Sanitation and waste management activities that contribute to protecting biodiversity by avoiding pollution
 - Developing a model of green municipality integrating solid waste and natural resources management practices
 - Creation of functionally connected natural areas within urban space to maintain ecological coherence, by e.g. wildlife overpasses or traffic overpasses, fish passages and ladders, fencing to guide terrestrial animals, green infrastructure.
- ▶ Sustainable food supply/organic farming in urban agriculture. Promote the goal of zero pollution from nitrogen and phosphorus flows from fertilisers through reducing nutrient losses, while ensuring that there is no deterioration in soil fertility.
- ▶ Reduction of pollution and the use of pesticides in urban agriculture. Biodiversity is suffering from the release of nutrients, chemical pesticides, pharmaceuticals, hazardous chemicals, urban and industrial wastewater, and other waste including litter and plastics.

² OECD (2019). Indicative Table for the Rio marker for Biodiversity. DCD/DAC/STAT(2018)26/final.



Combating Desertification

An activity should be classified as desertification-related if it aims at combating desertification or mitigating the effects of drought in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas through prevention and/or reduction of land degradation, rehabilitation of partly degraded land, or reclamation of desertified land.

Eligibility criteria are as follows:

The activity contributes to:

- a) Protecting or enhancing dryland ecosystems or remedying existing environmental damage; **or**
- b) Integrating desertification concerns in recipient countries' development objectives through institution building, capacity development, strengthening the regulatory and policy framework, or research; **or**
- c) Developing countries' efforts to meet their obligations under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

The activity will be scored '**principal objective**' (i.e. RM2) if it directly and explicitly aims to achieve one or more of the above criteria, including in the context of the realisation of national, sub-regional or regional action programmes.

Typical green urban development activities that can qualify for the Desertification Rio marker include:

- ▶ Urban planning aimed at avoiding urban sprawl into sensitive areas.
- ▶ Actions aimed at restoring degraded land in or in the vicinity of planned or already developed urban areas, by:
 - Creating green infrastructure to combat desertification (e.g. green belts) and to protect against dust storms.
 - Hydraulic infrastructure to restore floodplain dynamics in degraded wetland or floodplain areas.
 - Terracing and other counter-erosion measures such as enhancing green cover to avoid landslides and sedimentation.



Climate Change Mitigation

An activity should be classified as climate change mitigation-related if it contributes to the objective of stabilising green-house gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system by promoting efforts to reduce or limit GHG emissions or enhance GHG sequestration.

Eligibility criteria are the following:

The activity contributes to:

- a) The mitigation of climate change by limiting anthropogenic emissions of GHGs, including gases regulated by the Montreal Protocol; **or**
- b) The protection and/or enhancement of GHG sinks and reservoirs; **or**
- c) The integration of climate change concerns with the recipient countries' development objectives through institution building, capacity development, strengthening the regulatory and policy framework, or research; **or**
- d) Developing countries' efforts to meet their obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The activity will be scored '**principal objective**' (i.e. RM2) if it directly and explicitly aims to achieve one or more of the above four criteria.

See below the table with examples of activities that qualify for a climate change mitigation marker.



Climate Change Adaptation

An activity should be classified as climate change adaptation-related if it intends to reduce the vulnerability of human or natural systems to the current and expected impacts of climate change, including climate variability, by maintaining or increasing resilience, through increased ability to adapt to, or absorb, climate change stresses, shocks and variability and/or by helping reduce exposure to them.

This encompasses a range of activities from information and knowledge generation to capacity development, planning and the implementation of climate change adaptation actions.

Eligibility criteria are the following:

An activity is eligible for the climate change adaptation marker if:

- a) The climate change adaptation objective is explicitly indicated in the activity documentation; and
- b) The activity contains specific measures targeting the definition above.

To guide scoring, a three-step approach is recommended as a 'best practice', in particular to justify a Rio Marker 2 score:

- ▶ **Setting out the context of risks, vulnerabilities and impacts related to climate variability and climate change:** for a project to be considered as one that contributed to adaptation to climate change, the context of climate vulnerability should be set out clearly using a robust evidence base. This could take a variety of forms, including use of material from existing analyses and reports, or original, bespoke climate vulnerability assessment analysis carried out as part of the preparation of a project.
- ▶ **Stating the intent to address the identified risks, vulnerabilities and impacts in project documentation:** the project should set out how it intends to address the context- and location-specific climate change vulnerabilities, as set out in existing analyses, reports or the project's climate vulnerability assessment.
- ▶ **Demonstrating a clear and direct link between the identified risks, vulnerabilities and impacts and the specific project activities:** the project should explicitly address risk and vulnerabilities under current and future climate change scenarios as identified in the project documentation.

See below the table with examples of activities that qualify for a climate change mitigation and/or adaptation marker. As urban development may cover various sectors it is suggested to also check the other Quick Tips on activities that qualify for Rio markers, notably on [mobility](#), [energy](#), [agriculture and food systems](#), [infrastructure](#), [education](#), [private sector and trade cooperation](#) and [digitalisation](#).

GREEN URBAN DEVELOPMENT

SUB-SECTOR/ CRS PURPOSE CODE

430
Other multisector
43030
Urban development and management

MITIGATION

1, 2 or 0

ADAPTATION

1, 2 or 0

RATIONALE FOR SCORING

Urban development activities often address environmental and climate issues.

Mitigation

If reduction aspects are at the centre of a measure (e.g., public transport development and more efficient service delivery through compact town planning), mitigation gets scored 2 while adaptation is likely to score 0.

Adaptation

If the issue of adaptation to climate change is central to a measure's purpose (e.g., ecological measures counteracting overheating in urban areas) adaptation gets scored 2 and mitigation is likely to score 0.

Mitigation and adaptation

In many cases, sustainable urban development is equally beneficial to both strands (mitigation score 1 and adaptation score 1).

When urban development activities do not address climate aspects as a priority (e.g., activities that are dedicated primarily to improving the lives of slum dwellers), the content of the activity determines whether climate is a secondary objective.

EXAMPLES OF QUALIFYING ACTIVITIES

Mitigation

- ▶ Energy efficiency planning in cities (mitigation score 2).

Adaptation

- ▶ Support to development of climate action plans with vulnerability assessments in cities (adaptation score 2).
- ▶ Mitigation of impacts of weather-related events in cities (urban heat island effect, landslides following heavy rains, floods) and related climate adaptation measures.

SUB-SECTOR/ CRS PURPOSE CODE

321
Industry

MITIGATION

0, 1 or 2

ADAPTATION

0, 1 or 2

RATIONALE FOR SCORING

Inclusive and sustainable industries can be marked as mitigation or adaptation.

Mitigation

For mitigation, changes in the demand patterns influence the resource chain and have impacts on GHG emissions. Improvements in processes and cleaner production (e.g. cement, chemicals) can bring mitigation benefits. A mitigation marker score 1 can be applied to relevant improvements in the production methods to reduce emission of GHG emissions.

Adaptation

Activities designed to include considerations of climate change impacts, like design of climate-resilient equipment, can be scored against the adaptation marker with score 1, or even 2 depending on the purpose of the activity.

EXAMPLES OF QUALIFYING ACTIVITIES

Mitigation

- ▶ Promotion of adoption of energy-efficiency standards and other environmental standards expected to reduce GHG emissions as part of trade-related assistance targeting urban industries (mitigation score 1 if a sufficiently prominent objective).

Adaptation

- ▶ Retrofitting of industrial facilities within urban areas to enhance resilience to climate-related risks (adaptation score 1).
- ▶ Switching to less water consuming production technologies in urban industries reduces vulnerability against water shortage (adaptation score 1).

SUB-SECTOR/ CRS PURPOSE CODE	MITIGATION	ADAPTATION
321 Industry	0, 1 or 2	0, 1 or 2
RATIONALE FOR SCORING	EXAMPLES OF QUALIFYING ACTIVITIES	
<p>Inclusive and sustainable industries can be marked as mitigation or adaptation.</p>	<p>Mitigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Promotion of adoption of energy-efficiency standards and other environmental standards expected to reduce GHG emissions as part of trade-related assistance targeting urban industries (mitigation score 1 if a sufficiently prominent objective). <p>Adaptation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Retrofitting of industrial facilities within urban areas to enhance resilience to climate-related risks (adaptation score 1). ▶ Switching to less water consuming production technologies in urban industries reduces vulnerability against water shortage (adaptation score 1). 	
<p>Mitigation</p> <p>For mitigation, changes in the demand patterns influence the resource chain and have impacts on GHG emissions. Improvements in processes and cleaner production (e.g. cement, chemicals) can bring mitigation benefits. A mitigation marker score 1 can be applied to relevant improvements in the production methods to reduce emission of GHG emissions.</p>		
<p>Adaptation</p> <p>Activities designed to include considerations of climate change impacts, like design of climate-resilient equipment, can be scored against the adaptation marker with score 1, or even 2 depending on the purpose of the activity.</p>		
SUB-SECTOR/ CRS PURPOSE CODE	MITIGATION	ADAPTATION
74010 Disaster prevention and preparedness	0 or 1	1, 2 or 0
RATIONALE FOR SCORING	EXAMPLES OF QUALIFYING ACTIVITIES	
<p>Mitigation</p> <p>Activities that include the provision of services/tools to be better prepared in case of occurrence of a disaster can qualify to score 1 in mitigation if they lead to significant GHG emission reductions.</p>	<p>Mitigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provision of solar lights in anticipation for a disaster impacted by climate change (mitigation score 1). <p>Adaptation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Developing disaster prevention and emergency/disaster preparedness measures including insurance schemes to cope with potential disasters triggered by weather- or climate-related hazards such as floods or droughts (adaptation score 2). ▶ Support to civil protection agencies to improve their information on climate change impacts through the use of satellite-based maps in the preparation of event scenarios and rescue plans after heavy rains (e.g. during monsoons or tropical cyclones) that caused floods (adaptation score 1). ▶ Developing national/sub-national DRR strategies, local/ emergency preparedness plans in order to protect key infrastructure assets, people and their livelihoods from the impacts of climate change and natural hazards altered by it; this includes setting up early warning systems, addressing governance issues and promoting awareness (adaptation score 2). ▶ Promoting disaster preparedness and the links to climate change adaptation at various levels of government as well as at community level (adaptation score 2). ▶ Social protection for climate-related disasters: e.g. as part of a pre-disaster preparedness programme having a social protection scheme in place to enable emergency cash transfers to happen when a flood/storm strikes (or in anticipation thereof based on good forecasts of hazards and their potential impacts) – means the poorest people do not need to sell down their assets in the immediate aftermath of a disaster (adaptation score 1 or 2 if main objective). 	
<p>Adaptation</p> <p>Activities that aim at reducing the vulnerability (or strengthening the resilience) of the population, the economy, and its infrastructure against the short-term negative consequences of climate change related disasters can score 1 or 2 against the adaptation marker, depending on the purpose of the activity (adaptation score 1 is appropriate if the measure is not directly aimed at adapting to climate change, but still significantly contributes to it). Climate risk management which consists in preventing and dealing with long-term loss and damage resulting from climate change (e.g., impacts of sea level rise) qualifies for adaptation score 2.</p>		

SUB-SECTOR/ CRS PURPOSE CODE	MITIGATION	ADAPTATION
410 General Environmental Protection 41020 Biosphere protection 41030 Biodiversity	1, 2 or 0	1, 2 or 0
RATIONALE FOR SCORING	EXAMPLES OF QUALIFYING ACTIVITIES	
<p>There are various mitigation and adaptation effects for this topic which usually result in a combination of both climate markers (but scoring both mitigation and adaptation as a principal objective should remain exceptional).</p>	<p>Mitigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Preservation of the CO₂ storage capacity of vegetation cover (especially forests) and soil (especially wetlands) located within urban centres (mitigation score 1 or 2). ▶ Protection and enhancement of sinks and reservoirs through sustainable management and conservation of oceans and other marine and coastal ecosystems, wetlands, wilderness areas and other ecosystems within urban areas or where urban centres are located near coastal zones (mitigation score 1 or 2). <p>Adaptation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Contribution to the preservation of urban water resources or erosion prevention to adapt to the effects of climate change (adaptation score 1). ▶ Ecosystem-based adaptation or nature based solutions, i.e. the use of ecosystems or ecosystem services to help people to adapt to climate change and reduce disaster risks (e.g. wetland restoration and management to enhance continuity of drinking water supply in drought prone areas) within urban hubs (adaptation score 2). 	
SUB-SECTOR/ CRS PURPOSE CODE	MITIGATION	ADAPTATION
41050 Flood prevention/control	0 or 1	2 or 1
RATIONALE FOR SCORING	EXAMPLES OF QUALIFYING ACTIVITIES	
<p>Mitigation</p> <p>In specific cases where flood prevention and control measures include GHG emission reductions, the activity could score 1 for mitigation if properly justified.</p> <p>Adaptation</p> <p>Flood and coastal protection, as well as drainage measures often directly relate to the impacts of climate change (adaptation score 2). For measures not primarily employed for adaptation to the impacts of climate change, or measures that are only part of larger measures, adaptation score 1 is appropriate.</p>	<p>Mitigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Flood protection measures and sustainable urban drainage systems that reduce the consumption of energy and reduce GHG emissions (mitigation score 1). <p>Adaptation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Flood protection measures in urban areas which are becoming increasingly flood-sensitive (e.g. closing of estuaries, building of dikes and sea defences, restoration of wetlands) – with due consideration for the potential environmental impacts of such measures (adaptation score 2 or 1). ▶ Restoring the function of floodplains in combination with sound land-use planning of watersheds and wetlands thereby reducing the exposure to floods and improving water availability in urban areas affected by increasing water scarcity and/or more variable rainfall patterns (including higher amounts of rain) (adaptation score 2). 	

SUB-SECTOR/ CRS PURPOSE CODE	MITIGATION	ADAPTATION
14050 Waste management /disposal	2, 1 or 0	1 or 0

RATIONALE FOR SCORING	EXAMPLES OF QUALIFYING ACTIVITIES
<p>Mitigation Activities that promote modern waste-to-energy with waste collection/ recycling (especially separation of biogenic waste) and recovery/use of methane gas can result in significant GHG reductions and therefore justify the application of the mitigation marker (mitigation score 2). If the methane gas is only flared the activity would score 1 and 0 if not captured, as there are no emissions reductions involved.</p> <p>Adaptation Effective waste management systems that protect water resources or fragile ecosystems and strengthen their resilience to the impacts of climate change can score against adaptation.</p>	<p>Mitigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Biogas production and reuse of energy produced by wastewater facilities (mitigation score 2). <p>Adaptation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Project to reduce risks of urban flooding of water systems due to climate change and causing contamination through sewage overflow (adaptation score 1). ▶ Protect lagoons, which are highly vulnerable to climate change, from salt-water intrusion and contamination (adaptation score 1).