

Strengthening resilience to climate change

Recommendations for an effective EU adaptation policy framework

19 February 2026

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Chair of the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change

The Advisory Board

*shall serve as a **point of reference** for the Union on **scientific knowledge relating to climate change** by virtue of its **independence** and **scientific and technical expertise**.*

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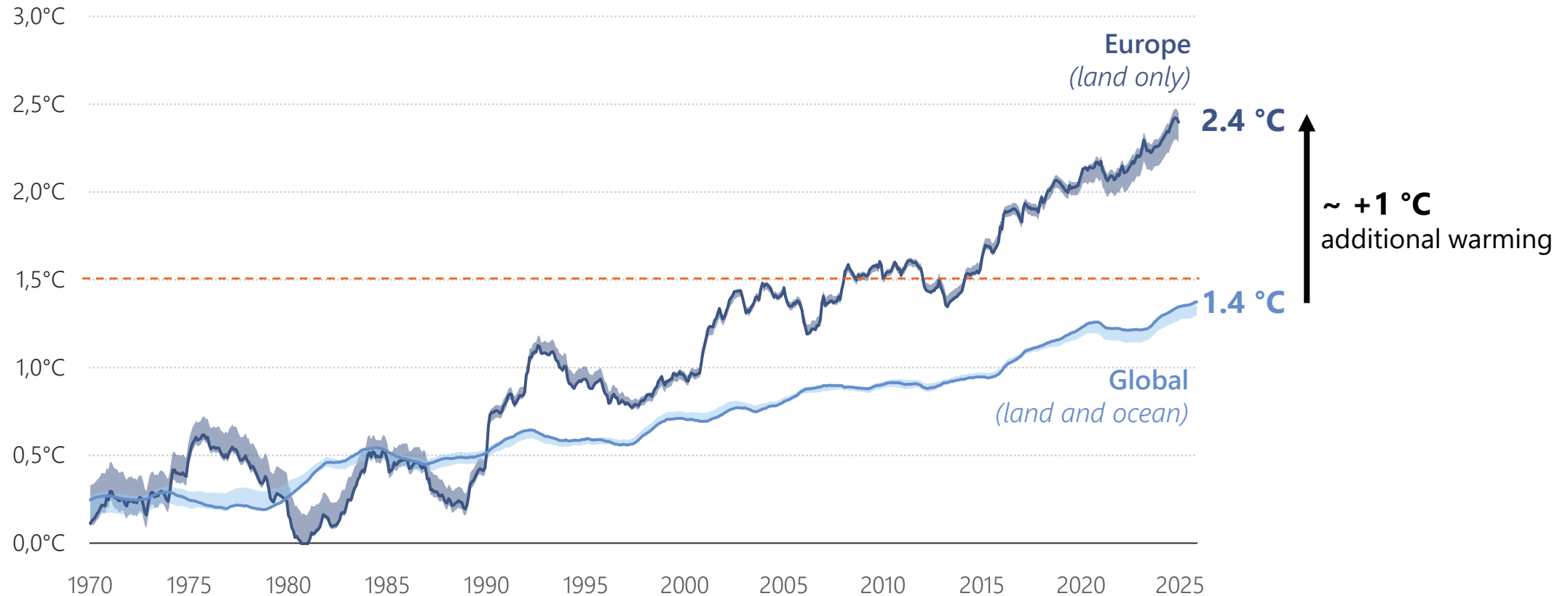
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1. Europe urgently needs to adapt to escalating climate risks
2. Effective adaptation requires coordinated EU-level action
3. Five recommendations for an effective, fair and transformational EU climate adaptation policy framework

Europe's climate is rapidly changing

Average warming above pre-industrial levels



Solid line: 60-month average surface air temperature anomalies from ERA5; wider range based on other sources

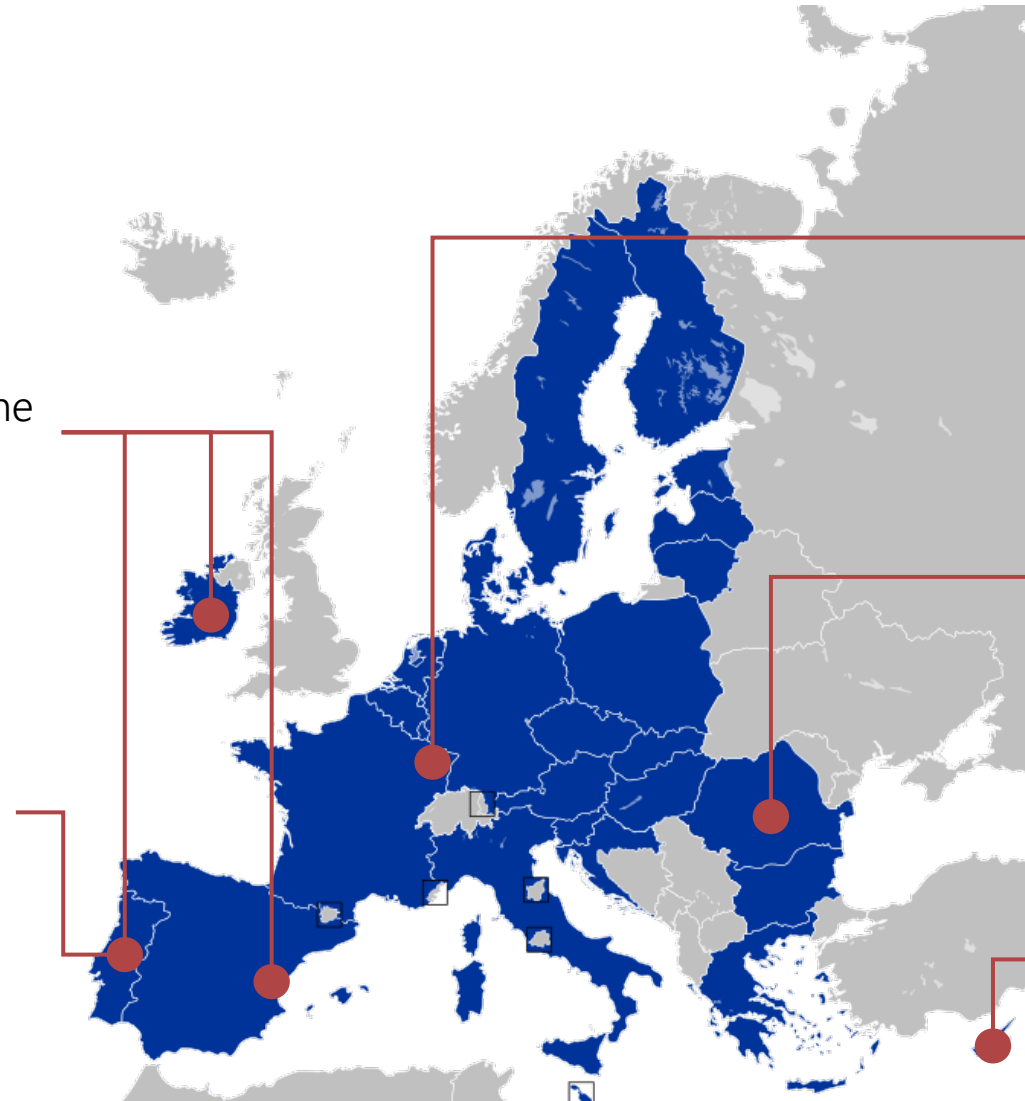
Source: EEA, based on C3S data (2025, 2026)

Driving increasing climate-related impacts

Heavier rainfall has driven severe flooding across Western and Central Europe every year since 2021, including the catastrophic flooding in Valencia in 2024 and most recently, severe flooding in Ireland, Spain and Portugal in 2026

In 2025, **wildfires** burnt over 1 million hectares across the EU, around three times the 2006–2024 average

Around 3% of the Portuguese territory burned that year



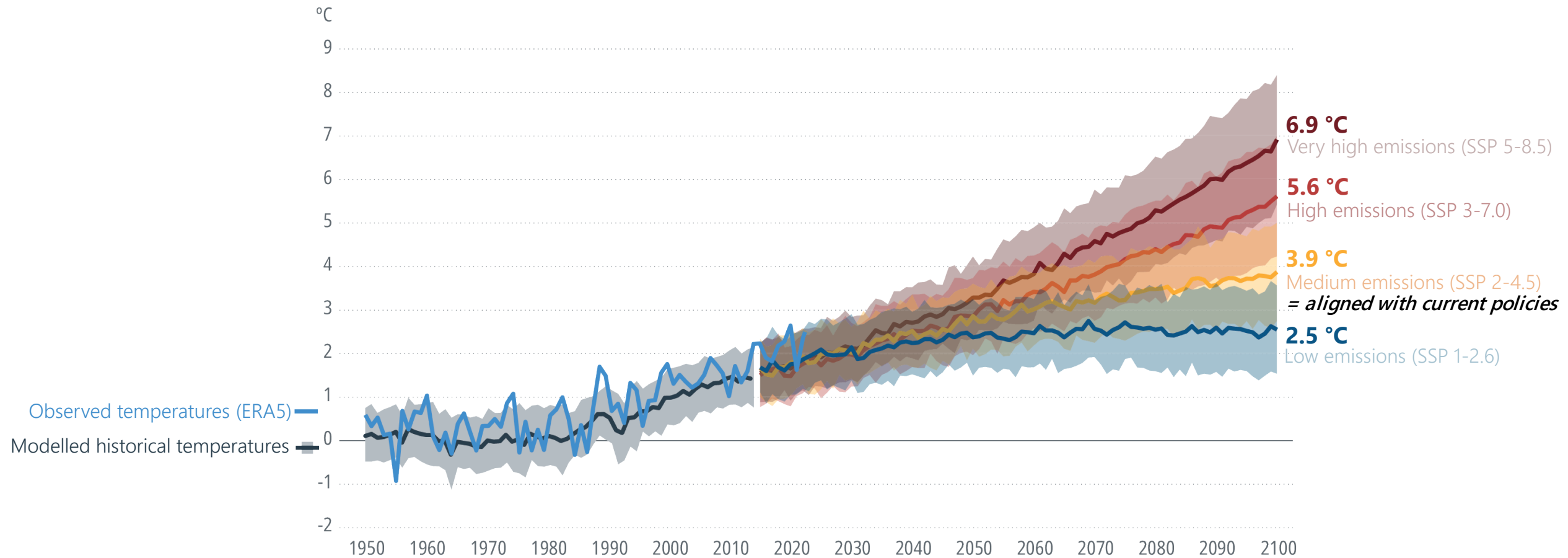
In 2025, countries in Western Europe experienced the **hottest summer** on record, leading to extreme heat stress and 24,000 heat-related deaths

In 2025, **repeated heatwaves** during summer led to irreversible yield losses in Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria

In 2025, Cyprus experienced its most **severe drought** since 1901, leading to a state of emergency

Further temperature increases will drive more frequent, severe and widespread climate hazards

Observed and projected warming on European land, compared to pre-industrial levels



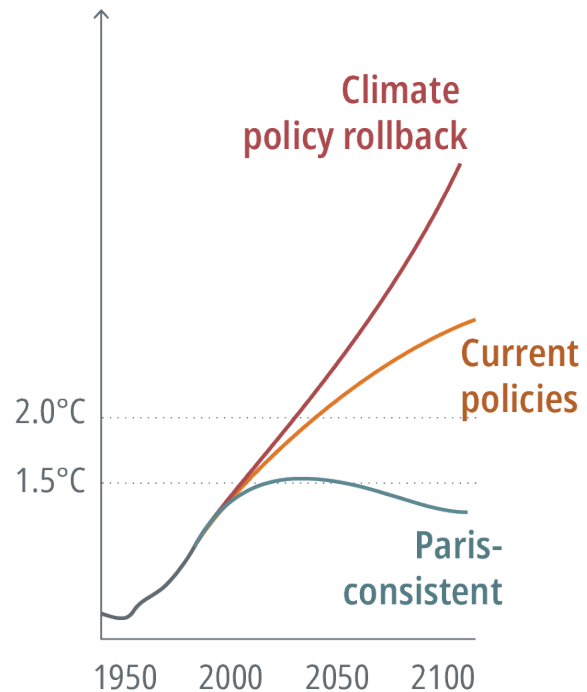
SSP: Shared Socioeconomic Pathways

Source: EEA, based on data from the Copernicus Climate Change Service (2024)

Mitigate to limit hazards, adapt to limit harms

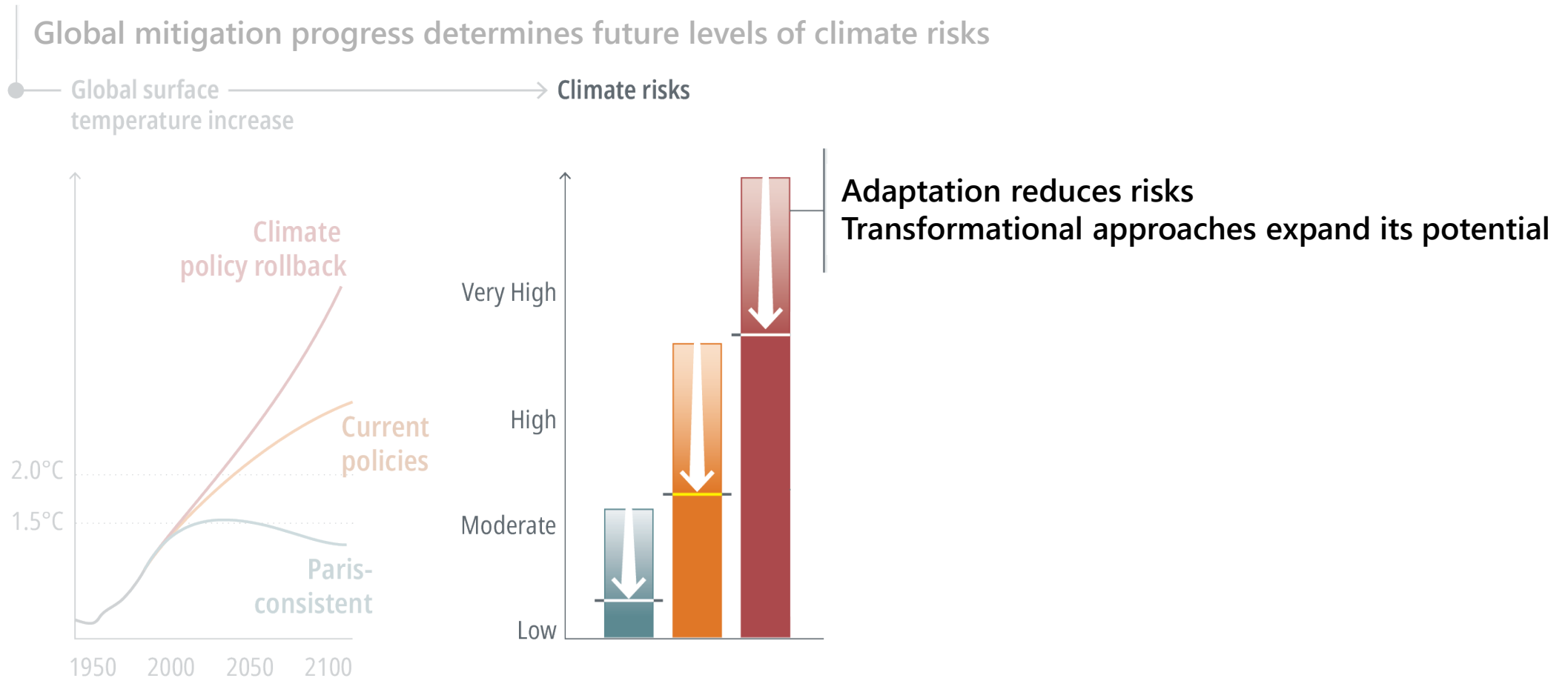
Global mitigation progress determines future levels of climate risks

● Global surface temperature increase → Climate risks



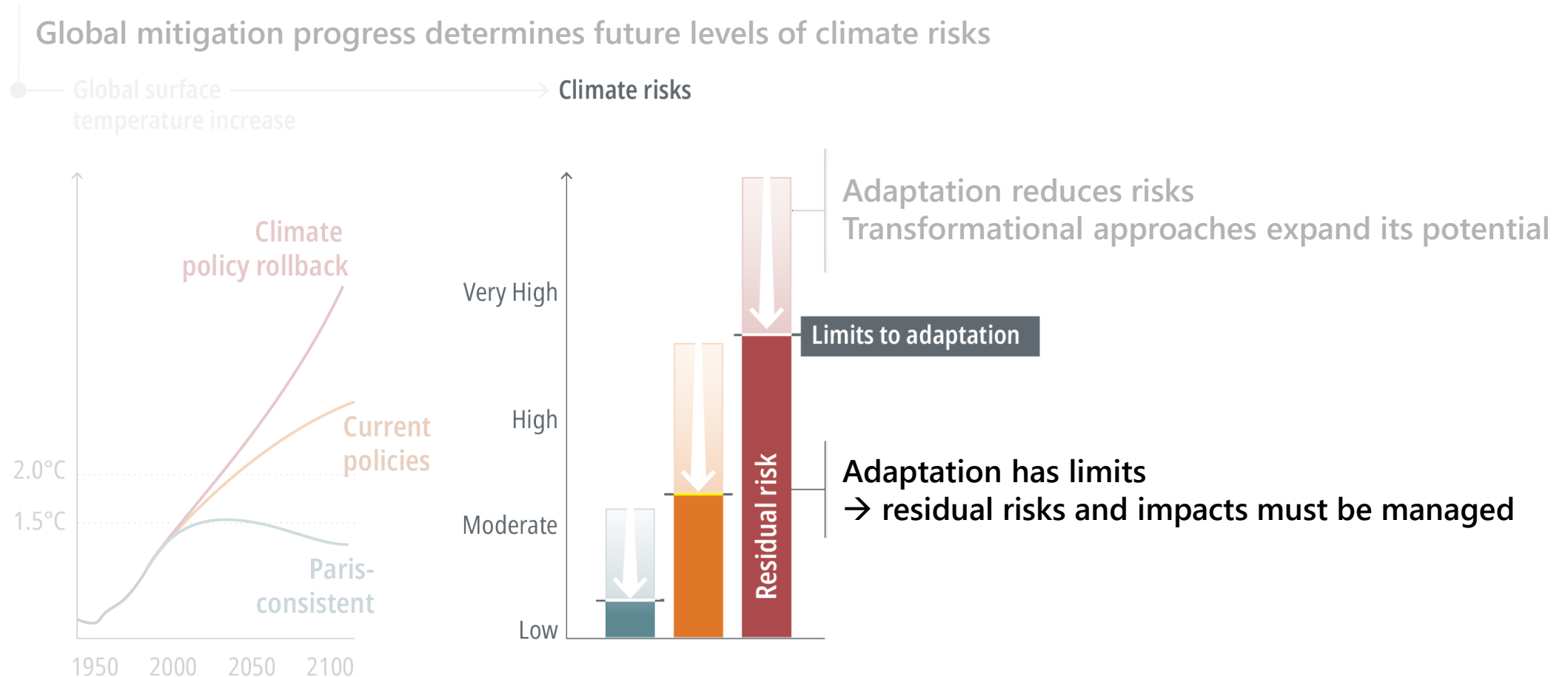
Source: ESABCC, adapted from UNEP (2025)

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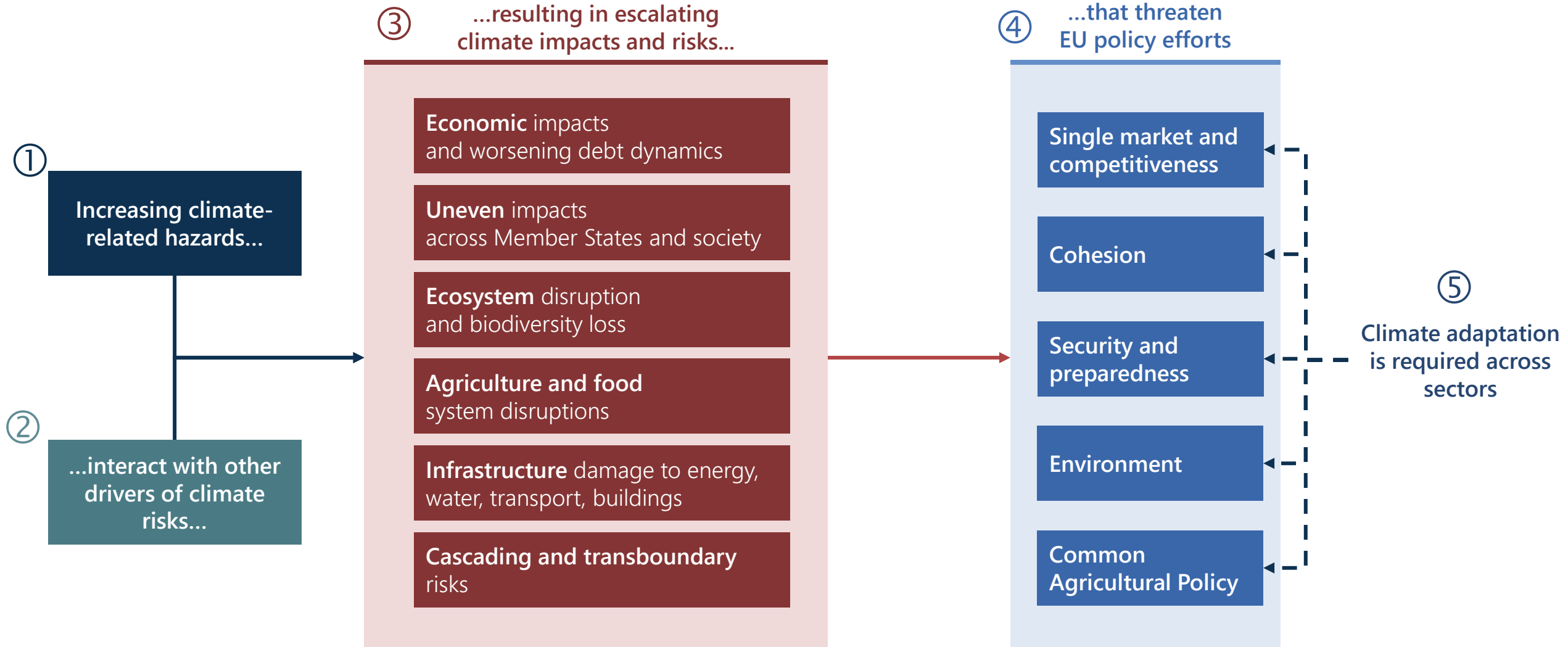
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3. Five recommendations for an effective, fair and transformational EU climate adaptation policy framework

Climate risks threaten people, ecosystems and the economy, undermining the delivery of EU policies



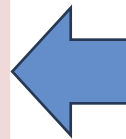
Adaptation across Europe is insufficient, fragmented and reactive

Adaptation efforts across Europe are:

Insufficient

Fragmented

Often come too late



...due to persistent barriers to adaptation

Low risk **awareness** and
perception

Lack of reliable and actionable
information

Uncertainty

Limited or conflicting **incentives**

Unclear roles and
responsibilities

Insufficient focus on **prevention**

Constraints of **policy structures**

Negative **spillover** effects

Coordination challenges

Limited **resources** and
capacities

EU-level action is necessary for effective adaptation across multiple levels of governance

Many adaptation measures are locally-led but **local and regional actors** face several barriers to adaptation

National action alone cannot address all transboundary risks and barriers remain

EU-level action can provide:

- **Coherence** in adaptation planning across policies, regions and governance levels
- **Long-term stability** via EU-level policy direction
- **Economies of scale** in data, investment and climate services
- Resilience of **EU-wide systems**
- **Solidarity** across regions with uneven capacity and exposure



Combined and coordinated efforts needed across governance levels, as well as sectors

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5 concrete recommendations for effective action on adaptation at EU level

1. Mandate and harmonise climate risk assessments
2. Adopt a common reference for adaptation planning
3. Set the vision for a climate-resilient Europe
4. Embed climate resilience in all EU policies and measures
5. Mobilise public and private adaptation investment

1. Mandate and harmonise climate risk assessments

Mandate **climate risk assessments** across relevant EU policies and funding

Co-developed **common climate scenarios**, based on the best available scientific evidence

Establish **methodological standards** for climate risk assessments based on common parameters

Strengthen **adaptation planning** across sectors and governance levels

Fully integrate **climate risk management by corporates** and **financial organisations**

2. Adopt a common reference for planning

Adopt a common reference for adaptation planning **based on SSP2-4.5** to prepare for a **pathway to 2.8-3.3°C of global warming** by 2100, which would translate to **even higher warming in Europe**

Use **more adverse emission pathways** (e.g. SSP3-7.0) for stress-testing

3. Set out a vision and targets for climate resilience

Set out a **clear vision** for a climate-resilient Europe by 2050 and the longer-term, supported by **sectoral strategies** and **adaptation targets**

Ground the vision and targets in **science**, the EU's **commitments** and ensure **inclusive participation**

4. Integrate climate resilience in all policies

Apply the climate resilience by design principle across all EU policies, programmes, and investment decisions

Develop and continuously update a **monitoring, evaluation, and learning system** for adaptation and support its use

Establish a **framework for fairness assessments** and apply it to relevant EU policies and measures

5. Mobilise public and private investment

Use the EU's economic governance framework to **embed climate risk management** in national economic and fiscal planning

Strengthen the **contribution of the next MFF** to climate resilience

Strengthen efforts to **mobilise and align private finance** with climate resilience objectives

Support efforts to address the **climate insurance protection gap** and strengthen the resilience of insurance systems to rising climate risks

Strengthen the EU's **crisis response and recovery instruments**

Recommendations for an effective EU adaptation policy framework



1. Mandate and harmonise climate risk assessments, using common climate scenarios and methodological standards to strengthen adaptation planning.



2. Adopt a common reference for adaptation planning to prepare for a pathway to 2.8-3.3°C of global warming by 2100 and use more adverse pathways for stress-testing.



3. Set the vision for a climate resilient Europe by 2050 and the longer term, supported by sectoral strategies and adaptation targets.



4. Embed fair and just climate resilience in all EU policies and measures, underpinned by monitoring, evaluation and learning to support progress towards EU adaptation targets.



5. Mobilise public and private adaptation investment and establish a coherent approach to managing the costs of climate impacts, through the EU budget and economic governance framework.



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