

*The Latin American Network for Public Policy Research and Development (REDLATAMPP), the Pharos Foundation and the Universidad Columbia del Paraguay present the*

## **POLICY BRIEF COMPETITION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

# **Official Call for Entries — 2026 Edition**

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## **1. About the competition**

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Across Latin America, thousands of students in the social sciences and economics receive rigorous theoretical training. Yet a persistent gap remains between academic knowledge and its practical application, particularly when it comes to public policy design.

The policy brief has emerged as a key tool for bridging this gap. It translates research and evidence into concrete, clear, and decision-oriented policy proposals. Despite its importance, university curricula across the region rarely include training in how to write one.

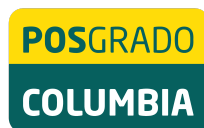
To address this gap, the Latin American Network for Public Policy Research and Development, the Pharos Foundation and the School of Government from Universidad Columbia del Paraguay are launching the **Policy Brief Competition for Latin America and the Caribbean**: an initiative designed to introduce students from diverse fields to the world of public policy design, foster evidence-based critical thinking, and promote innovative solutions to the current challenges that the region is facing.

We invite undergraduate and graduate students and professionals from across the region to submit original policy briefs addressing pressing issues in their countries or the region as a whole.

## **2. About the organizers**

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The **Latin American Network for Public Policy Research and Development** is a regional platform dedicated to generating data and supporting local governments in the design and implementation of territorial public policies. Through its programs on open government, disaster risk management, govtech, anticipatory governance, and human rights, the Network articulates with change agents across municipalities, businesses, academic institutions, and civil society organizations to produce high-quality statistical



information that feeds innovative, evidence-based policymaking aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The **Pharos Foundation** is an Argentina-based organization that connects young people with educational and professional opportunities across the country and the world, seeking to overcome geographic and knowledge barriers. Through its initiatives Pharos helps students and professionals to access scholarships, exchange programs, internships, and training that expand their academic and career horizons. Moreover, as part of its institutional growth, Pharos Foundation is currently launching Pharos Sophia, a new area dedicated to research and evidence generation in the fields of education and the labor market, with a particular focus on youth.

The **Universidad Columbia del Paraguay** is a higher education institution based in Paraguay. As part of its institutional offerings, the university has a **School of Government**, an academic unit dedicated to specialized postgraduate and continuing education for public managers, executives, and public servants, political researchers and analysts, as well as professionals from civil society and the private sector involved in government affairs. This school emphasizes the study and research of public policy, public administration and management, comparative political institutions and processes, and international relations.

### 3. Who can participate

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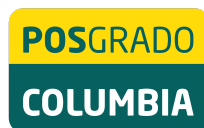
The competition is open to undergraduate students and young professionals from any country in Latin America and the Caribbean, across all disciplines, who are interested in policy problems and have ideas for addressing the challenges facing their communities.

#### Category 1 — Undergraduate Students

Open to university students at any year of their undergraduate degree. Participation is in teams of 2 to 3 members. Minimum of 18 years of age, up to 25 years old. Teams may include members from different universities, disciplines, and countries.

#### Category 2 — Young Professionals & Graduate Students

Open to young professionals and students enrolled in postgraduate programs (specialization, master's, or doctoral) from 18 up to 40 years of age. Participation is individual.



**Note: Categories cannot be mixed.** Each team or individual must apply to a single category, and all team members in Category 1 must meet the eligibility requirements for that category.

## 4. Registration

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**Registration is free and open to all eligible participants.** The online registration form for participants will be made available from **August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026** at the official competition webpages within the Pharos, REDLATAMPP and the Universidad Columbia del Paraguay's School of Government websites. Participants must fill out their information correctly and submit all requested documents within the form for their registration to be valid. For teams participating in Category 1, information and documents of all team members will be required.

Applicants must complete their registration by **August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026 at 23h59** (Argentina Standard Time, UTC-3).

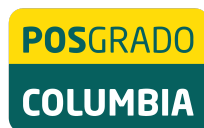
|   |                         |                                                                                                     |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <b>Register</b>         | Complete the online registration form. Individual participants and teams both register here.        |
| 2 | <b>Receive manual</b>   | You will automatically receive our “How to write a policy brief” manual by email upon registration. |
| 3 | <b>Write and submit</b> | Upload your completed policy brief as a PDF via the submission link before the deadline.            |

## 5. Submissions

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A policy brief is a key tool for synthesizing the lessons learned from research and empirical evidence, exploring a problem, and providing strategic advice (policy advice) to various stakeholders in the public, private, or civil society sectors (for instance governments at all levels, NGOs, businesses, among others).

Applicants will choose a policy challenge encountered within the Latin America and the Caribbean region – whether at a national, regional or community level – to address in their briefs. They will then develop a policy solution that will be presented and argued for in the brief, with the goal of persuading their audience to support and – in the case of policymakers – adopt their recommendations.

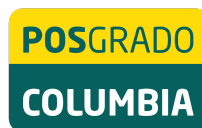


Participants must choose one of the five thematic areas described below when applying for the competition, and their submission must explore a challenge within the chosen theme:

| Thematic Area                                                      | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Open Government &amp; Civic Engagement</b>                      | Initiatives and mechanisms that aim to improve governments' relationships with the population by focusing on transparency, accountability, collaboration, and citizen participation <sup>1,2</sup> .                                                                                                             |
| <b>Human Rights &amp; Social Inclusion</b>                         | Interventions that protect fundamental rights (life, freedom, food, education, and many others) <sup>3</sup> , reduce inequalities, and ensure access to opportunities to marginalized and disadvantaged groups <sup>4</sup> .                                                                                   |
| <b>Health Policy</b>                                               | Policies that aim to strengthen health systems, address the social determinants of health, expand access to health, and improve public health outcomes <sup>5</sup> .                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Education &amp; Employment</b>                                  | Strategies to improve educational quality and access <sup>6</sup> , create work opportunities, ensure smooth employment transitions, regulate the labor market <sup>7</sup> , and promote professional qualification <sup>8</sup> .                                                                              |
| <b>Economic Sustainable Development &amp; Environmental Policy</b> | Policies focused on fostering economic development based on sustainability principles, aiming to balance growth and environmental protection <sup>9</sup> . These can range from climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies <sup>10</sup> to clean energy and green economy initiatives <sup>11</sup> . |

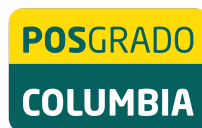
Submissions will be received via an online form, which will be made available from **August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026** at the official competition webpages within Pharos, REDLATAMPP and the Universidad Columbia del Paraguay's School of Government websites. Participants must fill out the necessary information and upload their policy brief to the form as a PDF file.

Submissions must be sent before **September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at 23h59** (Argentina Standard Time, UTC-3).



## 6. Policy brief format and requirements

|                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Length</b>                             | 2,000 words (excluding references) with an allowed variance of plus or minus (+/-) 10%                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Language</b>                           | Spanish, English, or Portuguese                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>File format</b>                        | PDF                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Anonymity</b>                          | <b>Do not include your name or any type of personal identification</b> in the policy brief document so that we can ensure anonymity.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Structure</b>                          | <p>Your brief must include the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Title</li> <li>• Target audience</li> <li>• Executive summary</li> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Body, which can be organized and displayed as the applicant wishes, but must contain as its content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Problem analysis</li> <li>○ Evaluation of two (2) alternative policies (<b>required for CATEGORY 2 ONLY</b>) that should show the pros and cons of the alternatives and why the proposed solution is better</li> <li>○ Policy solution</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Policy recommendations (3 to 4)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Connection to the SDGs</b>             | Explicit mention of the SDGs connected to the chosen problem in your introduction or problem analysis section.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Visual presentation and formatting</b> | Your brief must be formatted using the Times New Roman font, size 12, with line spacing 1.5. You should use graphs, tables and visual resources, making sure that they are relevant and correctly cited.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Referencing</b>                        | A minimum of 10 references is required. Participants must choose a referencing format (Vancouver/AMA or APA) and use it correctly and consistently throughout the policy brief.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |



## New to policy briefs? We've got you covered.

We have developed an introductory manual — designed specifically for participants with no prior experience writing policy briefs. It covers what a policy brief is, how to structure it, how to define a problem, how to evaluate policy alternatives, and how to write actionable recommendations.

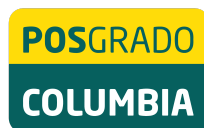
The manual is available on the Fundación Pharos, REDLATAMPP and the Universidad Columbia del Paraguay's School of Government websites, and will also be sent to all applicants via email after the registration is confirmed, in order to help them choose a problem and develop a solution and structure and format their submission.

## 7. Evaluation Criteria

Papers will be evaluated by an expert jury across two dimensions:

### 1. Structure & Presentation – 40% of the final grade

| Criterion                       | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Audience awareness</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clear definition of target audience</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Writing quality</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Precise, clear and concise writing using adequate language for the target audience</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Visual presentation</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clear presentation of policy brief sections</li><li>• Use of relevant subheadings, tables, and visual aids</li><li>• Overall design and readability</li></ul>                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Citation and referencing</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Correct citation of all sources, according to the chosen style (AMA or APA)</li><li>• Use of at least 10 references</li><li>• Adequate and consistent use of reference style (no bare URLs, standardized citations)</li><li>• Originality (no plagiarism)</li><li>• AI disclaimer</li></ul> |



### Structure and coherence

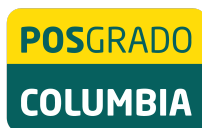
- Well-organized sections
- Respect for the required length (both minimum and maximum)

## 2. Analytical Content – 60% of the final grade

| Criterion                     | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Problem definition</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear definition of the problem</li> <li>• Relevance of the problem addressed</li> <li>• Coherent connection to the chosen SDGs</li> </ul>                                                       |
| <b>Use of evidence</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality and integration of data and sources in the argument</li> <li>• Use of updated data</li> </ul>                                                                                            |
| <b>Argumentation quality</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coherence and articulation of the argumentation</li> <li>• Logical flow from problem to recommendation</li> <li>• Persuasiveness of the analytical reasoning</li> </ul>                          |
| <b>Recommendation quality</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specificity and feasibility of the proposed policy solution</li> <li>• Innovation and creativity of the proposal</li> <li>• Relevance and applicability of the policy recommendations</li> </ul> |
| <b>FOR CATEGORY 2 ONLY:</b>   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Policy alternatives</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and evaluation of two policy options other than their proposed solution</li> <li>• Clear identification of why the proposed solution is the best available option</li> </ul>      |

Each submission will be evaluated by 3 randomly selected jurors. The jurors will, individually, award a grade to each criterion listed above, resulting in a total amount of points awarded by that juror. The two dimensions will be weighted (structure and presentation weighting 40%, and analytical content weighting 60%), and the final grade of the policy brief will be calculated as the average of the three totals.

Unfortunately, we will not be able to provide individualized feedback to applicants. Appeals will not be accepted. The organizing commission's decision is final.



## 8. Key Dates

| DATE                              | MILESTONE                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| August 3 <sup>st</sup> , 2026     | Competition opens — registration begins       |
| August 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2026    | Online form for submissions opens             |
| Late August                       | Q&A Session #1 — Live virtual event (~1 hour) |
| August 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2026    | Registration ends                             |
| Late September                    | Q&A Session #2 — Live virtual event (~1 hour) |
| September 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2026 | Submissions deadline                          |
| October 2026                      | Jury evaluation period                        |
| November 2026                     | Announcement of finalists and awards ceremony |

## 9. Q&A Sessions

Two live virtual Q&A sessions will be held to support participants throughout the competition. Both sessions are free and open to all registered participants.

### Session #1

- When: Late August 2026 (exact date TBC)
- Platform: Zoom / Google Meet (link sent to registered participants)
- Duration: approximately 1 hour

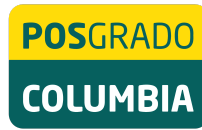
### Session #2

- When: Late September 2026 (exact date TBC)
- Platform: Zoom / Google Meet (link sent to registered participants)
- Duration: approximately 1 hour

Can't attend live? Don't worry: a written Q&A summary will be shared with all participants after each session. Additionally, you can always contact us if you still have doubts or questions.

## 10. The Jury

The jury will be composed of professionals from across the policy ecosystem, including:



- Academics from partner universities
- Public sector professionals
- Public policy experts and practitioners

## 11. Prizes

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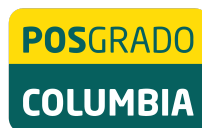
The three best policy briefs of each category will be awarded the following prizes:

### 1st Place

- Scholarship to pursue a Diploma in Public Policy at the School of Government (Columbia Postgraduate Campus) of the Universidad Columbia del Paraguay.
- Publication of the winning work in the journal *Territorio y Políticas Públicas* (ISSN 3135-0143)
- Honorary lifetime membership in the Latin American Network for Public Policy Research and Development
- Presentation at a regional event (in-person or virtual)
- Mentorship with network experts, including access to GovLab2050 (100% scholarship)
- PRO Mentorship from Fundación Pharos, including support in applying for scholarships and opportunities
- Media and social media coverage by the organizers (Fundación Pharos, REDLATAMPP, and Universidad Columbia del Paraguay)
- Certificate of recognition

### 2nd Place

- Publication of the work in the journal *Territorio y Políticas Públicas* (ISSN 3135-0143)
- Two-year membership in the Latin American Network for Research and Public Policy Development
- Presentation at a regional event (in-person or virtual)
- Mentorship with network experts, including access to GovLab2050 (100% scholarship)
- PRO Mentorship from Fundación Pharos, including support in applying for scholarships and opportunities
- Media and social media coverage from the organizers (Fundación Pharos, REDLATAMPP, and Universidad Columbia del Paraguay)
- Certificate of recognition



### 3rd Place

- Publication of the work in the journal *Territorio y Políticas Públicas* (ISSN 3135-0143)
- One-year membership in the Latin American Network for Research and Public Policy Development
- Media and social media coverage from the organizers (Fundación Pharos, REDLATAMPP, and Universidad Columbia del Paraguay)
- Certificate of recognition

## 12. Use of Artificial Intelligence

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We recognize that AI tools are now part of how many people research, and write. We want to reflect this reality while preserving the integrity and purpose of the competition.

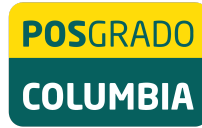
The use of AI does not replace the authors' intellectual responsibility for the presented content. The authors declare that the manuscript may be subject to plagiarism checks. Therefore, the artificial intelligence tools cannot be considered authors of the manuscript nor assume responsibility for its content.

### What is permitted

- Using AI tools to support initial research and explore background information on your policy problem.
- Using AI to organize and structure your ideas.
- Using AI to review grammar, clarity, or style.
- Using AI to generate initial outlines that you then develop independently.

### What is not permitted

- Using AI to write the substantial content of the policy brief (problem definition, analysis, argumentation, recommendations).
- Using AI to generate analytical reasoning of your brief or your policy solution on your behalf.
- Using AI to generate content and not citing a proper source that supports your claims. This will trigger plagiarism and automatically disqualify the paper.
- Using AI to generate sources that have not been verified. In a policy brief references are important and will be checked for authenticity.
- Submitting AI-generated text as your own work without meaningful transformation.



## AI usage declaration requirement

You must include an AI disclaimer at the end of your brief. Using AI or not using it will not impact your grade, but forgetting to include this disclaimer in your brief will, as it is part of the evaluation criteria. If you have not used AI in any stage of your brief, please state in the disclaimer that no AI tools were used.

If you have used AI at any stage of your brief, you must indicate this clearly. Below we provide an example of a statement you can add at the end of your document (e.g. after your references) explaining which AI tools were used, in what manner, and in which sections.

*The authors of this policy brief used artificial intelligence tools in the following stages of its preparation:*

- **Initial research and background exploration:** *[AI tool name, e.g., ChatGPT] was used to identify background information and explore existing literature on [policy topic]. All sources identified through this process were independently verified for existence and accuracy.*
- **Language and structure:** *[AI tool name] was used to review and improve the clarity, grammar, and structure of the text. All analytical content, argumentation, and recommendations were written exclusively by the authors.*
- *[Add the rest of tools following what you have used]*

## Enforcement

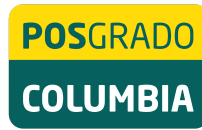
The organizing entities will actively review submissions for AI misuse and invalid sources via **Turnitin**. Papers found to violate this policy, particularly concerning unverified and unoriginal information, claims or sources will be disqualified.

## The spirit of the rule

One of the main goals of this contest is to encourage students to use their knowledge and creativity to propose solutions to problems that affect all of us. Therefore, the policy brief must reflect your thinking, your analysis of the problem, your evaluation of alternatives and your recommendations.

## 13. Frequently Asked Questions

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### **Can I participate if I have never written a policy brief before?**

Absolutely. The competition is designed for participants at all experience levels. Our policy brief manual will walk you through everything you need to know.

### **Do I need to read the manual even if I already have experience with policy briefs?**

Yes! The manual also includes important information and examples of what is expected in this competition (both from the structure and content of the submission), and was designed to facilitate your planning and writing processes. Even if you have already written a policy brief before, it is important that you read it before starting to prepare your submission.

### **Can people from any discipline or field of work participate?**

Yes, participation from all disciplines and fields is welcome and encouraged, as policy problems happen in all areas and often require multidisciplinary solutions.

### **Can a team have members from different countries, universities and courses?**

Yes. Cross-country and multidisciplinary teams are welcome and encouraged, as are teams made up of students from different universities.

### **Can I sign up individually to Category 1?**

No. Category 1 submissions are only accepted from teams of 2-3 people who all meet the eligibility requirements.

### **Can a team sign up to Category 2?**

No, only individual submissions will be accepted in this category.

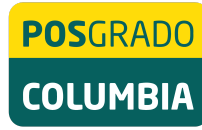
### **Is there a registration fee?**

No. Registration and participation are completely free.

### **Can I submit more than one policy brief?**

Each participant or team may submit only one policy brief. Participants can only participate in one category, and participants in Category 1 can only be a part of one team.

### **Can I use AI tools to help write my submission?**



AI may be used as a research and editing aid, but the substantive analysis and recommendations must be your own. See Section 12 for full details.

### **Is the manual available in all three languages?**

Yes, the manual is available in Spanish, English, and Portuguese.

### **In which language will the Q&A sessions be held?**

The sessions will be primarily held in Spanish, with automatic translated captions available. However, Portuguese and English-speaking staff members will also be in attendance and available to translate and further explain information whenever needed.

### **What happens if I can't attend the Q&A sessions live?**

You will receive a written summary after each session. We are also available via email if you have further questions.

### **Will I receive feedback on my submission?**

Unfortunately, we are not able to provide individualized feedback to all submissions. Only the selected finalists will receive commentary from the jury on their policy briefs.

### **Who owns the copyright of the submitted paper?**

Authors retain copyright of their work. By submitting, you grant the organizers permission to publish and disseminate the paper if it is selected as a finalist.

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*For questions not covered here, contact us at: [competencia@redlatampp.org](mailto:competencia@redlatampp.org)*



## REFERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> Controladoria-Geral da União. (n.d.). *Entenda a OGP*. Gov.br.

<https://www.gov.br/cgu/pt-br/governo-aberto/a-ogp/entenda-a-ogp>

<sup>2</sup> United Cities and Local Governments. (n.d.). *Gobierno abierto*. Open Government (UCLG).

<https://opengov.uclg.org/es/gobierno-abierto>

<sup>3</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (n.d.). *What are human rights?* OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/what-are-human-rights>

<sup>4</sup> World Bank. (n.d.). *Social inclusion*. World Bank Group.

<https://www.worldbank.org/ext/en/topic/social-development/social-inclusion>

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Supporting national health policies, strategies, plans*.

<https://www.who.int/activities/supporting-national-health-policies-strategies-plans>

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO. (2026, July 29). *What you need to know about education policies and strategies*.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/education-policies/about>

<sup>7</sup> European Commission. (n.d.). *EU employment policies*. Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion.

[https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/eu-employment-policies\\_en](https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/eu-employment-policies_en)

<sup>8</sup> Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego. (n.d.). *Qualificação profissional*. Gov.br.

<https://www.gov.br/trabalho-e-emprego/pt-br/servicos/trabalhador/qualificacao-profissional>

<sup>9</sup> IMD Business School. (2026, February). *Economic sustainability: Principles and practices for long-term success*. <https://www.imd.org/blog/sustainability/economic-sustainability/>

<sup>10</sup> European Environment Agency. (2024, August 20). *What is the difference between adaptation and mitigation?*

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/about/contact-us/faqs/what-is-the-difference-between-adaptation-and-mitigation>

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Environment Programme. (2018, January 23). *Green economy*.

<https://www.unep.org/regions/asia-and-pacific/regional-initiatives/supporting-resource-efficiency/green-economy>

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