



# CIRCLE 2 Policy Brief

## - ADAPTATION to CLIMATE CHANGE -

### From National Adaptation Strategies to concrete Adaptation Actions

#### Summary

This policy brief is directed towards policy makers and decision developers in the area of adaptation to a changing climate as well as funders and managers of climate change impacts and adaptation research programmes. It notes various challenges in developing and implementing National (incl. regional and local) Adaptation Strategies, as well as Adaptation Actions at the local and regional level. Additional “good” practice examples were identified and showcased.

Besides efforts in the field of mitigation, projections of future climate change and associated impacts show that adaptation is urgently needed in order to be well prepared for the upcoming challenges of a changing climate. Efforts on the European, national, regional and local levels have been undertaken since the early years of this millennium to prepare in a sound way for these changes. A number of national, regional and local adaptation strategies and action plans have been developed and are being or will be developed.

Climate change adaptation has to be seen as a long-term vision and learning process. Adaptation is a social process which needs to be tailored to the specific context as, a “one size fits all”-solution is rarely appropriate. Clear commitment and leadership as well as early and broad engagement of stakeholders are needed in order to make climate change adaptation a success process.

Regarding engaging stakeholders, decision relevant messages have to be formulated and financial support is needed for information, continued engagement and innovative demand driven knowledge production. In addition, mainstreaming adaptation into policy and practice processes and increasing the adaptive capacity are key elements towards successful adaptation.

Adaptation actions showcased that adaptation is taking place at the regional and local level, partly independent of national adaptation efforts (bottom-up), partly connected to national efforts and frames (top-down). The variety of approaches being taken is a result of differences in cultural backgrounds and differences in the planning systems as well as specific needs and responsibilities from the private and public sector.

*Reference: Leitner M., Avelar D., Prutsch A., 2011. From National Adaptation Strategies to concrete Adaptation Actions. Summary of the CIRCLE-2 workshop “From National Adaptation Strategies to concrete Adaptation Actions, Vienna, 20-21 October 2011.*

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**Governments in different countries have set out different goals**, which they want to achieve in their adaptation strategies. In general they deal with ensuring a good, safe and attractive place for people to live and work - a safe country now and in the future (2050-2100), building adaptive capacity, fostering the opportunities and mainstreaming of adaptation into legal/economic instruments.

⇒ **CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION integrated into routine planning, implementation and follow-up**

**Strategy implementation and encouraging/supporting local and regional adaptation actions** depend on several factors, like an institution that takes the overall responsibility for NAS implementation and links to other national players (e.g. coordination groups or inter-ministerial WG). It is important to provide guidance that can inform all participants in the adaptation process, foster cross-sectoral cooperation and create an effective institutionalization. Adaptation needs to be regionally implemented and continuously integrated into existing legal and economic instruments.

**Challenges for implementation** are amongst others an effective coordination of various players and detailed regional and local information on the impacts of climate change. Therefore an inventory of the particularly vulnerable areas, communities and awareness raising, also in the private sector is needed. At different stages of the process, the measures need to be systematically evaluated.

**Prioritization of impacts and adaptation actions** can be based on e.g. adaptation assessments (e.g. risks, vulnerability, geographical circumstances), including adaptation option identification, appraisal, monitoring and evaluation. In additional, **climate change** can be a **driver for sustainable development** and system rethinking.

**Governance challenges of adaptation** – a clear **focus on stakeholder engagement and communication** was stressed. **Commitment to adaptation actions** is ensured **through involving stakeholders in the process** (meaning that different players have different information needs at different times). The challenge is that generally **only the well organised groups are reached** and there is a need to be **clearly informed on the terms of their engagement**. **Communication** on climate change adaptation has to be a **two-ways process between researchers and stakeholders** and it is **best to use** both, the **comprehensive and sectoral approach**, due to more interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral thinking.

**Costs of climate change still focuses on damage costs** - Exposure of values / socio-economic developments outweigh climate change signal and costs of current climate (variability and extreme events) damages significant. The society changes are faster than the climate (up to now) and still major disasters drive societal awareness. There are **different types of costs**, like direct costs (repairing, reconstructing), indirect costs (production, traffic interruption) and costs that are not measurable (e.g. health, loss of life and ecosystem services).

With **monitoring and evaluation** we can identify **successful and no longer appropriate adaptation measures** – recognise that adaptation is a continuous learning process. Lessons can be **learned** from the development and disaster risk reduction communities. There is a need for **process and outcome based evaluations**. One key **challenge** is to **integrate monitoring and evaluation into adaptation assessment – learning by doing**.