

BASE Policy Brief May 2013: Summary

Challenges to planning climate adaptation strategies in Europe

There is broad consensus that climate change impacts may lead to serious ecological, economic and social impacts across Europe, with some regions and sectors more deeply affected than others. Appropriate adaptation can reduce these impacts and, in some cases, yield benefits and business opportunities, but this often requires a multi-scale and multi-sector exercise in complex decision making across multiple levels of government. Decision makers at all levels in Europe currently face a number of significant challenges when devising appropriate and sustainable adaptation strategies. These challenges include:

1. Uncertainties and insufficient knowledge: The development of effective climate adaptation strategies is restricted by uncertainty and ambiguity in our understanding of future conditions. Oftentimes, existing knowledge is scattered, poorly integrated, difficult to access, or is framed for a scientific audience. These uncertainties relate to physical changes, socioeconomic trends and processes, and the costs and benefits of adaptation.

2. Need to improve assessments: Assessments of adaptation activities can lead to improved understanding and future planning as well as the identification of best practices and lessons learned. However, there are limitations to our current ability to assess climate adaptation in Europe in a way that integrates 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' assessments. In particular, research on strategic level Integrated Assessment Models is limited, and undercut by the need

to improve the design of ground level case study analyses.

3. Mainstreaming climate adaptation in policy: The majority of adaptation actions do not arise from policies devoted to climate change, but are embedded in policies and strategies that are implemented for other reasons. Therefore, the challenge is to identify needs and opportunities for adaptation considering the broader social and policy context, and identifying synergies and trade-offs with existing policies.

The BASE project aims to address the challenges identified in this policy brief over the course of four years (2012-2016). BASE examines climate change adaptation through the analysis of over 20 case studies from across Europe. The case studies focus on key adaptation sectors such as water and ecosystem services, rural and urban areas, food production and coastal zones. The case studies cover multiple sectors or policy levels, examining the interactions between sectors and across scales. BASE will model the costs and benefits of adaptation strategies and identify critical lessons and practices in order to replicate success in other regions and at other levels.

The information needs of decision makers in Europe are diverse, but the need to find sustainable solutions is common across sectors and regions. Through the provision of a suite of integrated data and analyses, BASE research will improve the delivery of sustainable adaptation strategies to climate change in Europe.

This is a summary version of a Policy Brief produced in the context of the research project "Bottom-Up Climate Adaptation Strategies for a Sustainable Europe (BASE)". The project is

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adaptation.eu/policy-brief-challenges-planning-climate-adaptation-strategies-europe.
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