



REVIEW OF EU STRATEGY ON ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

(Approved by the CPMR General Assembly, 19-20 October 2017, Helsinki-Finland)

BACKGROUND

This policy position is being prepared as a CPMR response to the review of the 2013 EU Strategy on Adaptation on Climate Change. It will be used to contribute to the web-based consultation that the European Commission is planning for the autumn of 2017.

The CPMR established a Climate Task Force at the end of 2016 in response to the strong interest of its member regions in taking a more active role on climate action, and the review of the EU Adaptation Strategy was identified as a key priority for 2017.

The Climate Task Force held a meeting on 28 June 2017 focused on preparing a CPMR policy position on EU Adaptation Strategy, based on the experiences of CPMR regions in implementing the strategy on the ground. This, together with further background information on CPMR regions activities, and drawing on work of our Geographical Commissions and its other thematic policy work (including maritime, transport and cohesion areas), provides the evidence base on which we have prepared this policy position. We will use this to submit a contribution to the Commission's web-based consultation.

KEY POINTS

- 1) Climate change is and must remain a central priority for the EU and, given the regressive steps under the current US presidency, the importance of EU leadership at a global level is even more significant;
- 2) The damaging consequences of climate change are already evident, across the EU, although they differ according to the physical, environmental, social and economic circumstances of each territory;
- 3) Adaptation and mitigation are two sides of the same coin, and coherent and complementary strategies and actions are required within both domains if the EU is to deliver on its ambition
- 4) Adaptation, however, has suffered from less political attention and prioritisation; the EU Adaptation Strategy has played an important role in redressing this, and a further impetus is needed in the second iteration of this Strategy following the review;
- 5) Regional and local authorities have a central role in this field, with an important maritime dimension to the climate agenda, due to their competencies and proximity to citizens and stakeholders
- 6) Many regional and local governments in the EU have approved their own adaptation strategies across the EU since the adoption of the EU adaptation strategy; there are excellent examples from the CPMRs membership of a strong strategic approach;
- 7) There is clear evidence that regional governments play a pivotal role in co-ordinating and driving forward climate action, providing a focal point for local led actions. . Regional governments offer all their experience to the EU institutions and Member States and suggest that the EU Adaptation Strategy is an excellent framework where the regional contribution should be included.
- 8) Access to data and scientific expertise have been identified as crucial success factors in designing, implementing and monitoring adaptation strategies. Although some initiatives have been developed at the EU level (like the CLIMAT ADAPT platform provided by the European Environment Agency) and at regional and local scale, more action and financial instruments need are needed at EU level to support capacity building and sharing of expertise and data;
- 9) Adaptation costs need to be assumed by all levels of government in order to avoid higher economic, social and environmental damages. In this context, there is clear evidence that EU funding provides strong added value in supporting adaptation (and mitigation) activities across Europe, and this should be a top priority for the future EU budget discussions;
- 10) Concerns remain with regard to the responsibilities and liability for the negative impacts of climate change, including the increasing number of large-scale disasters due to extreme climatic events. EU level action is needed to address the policy and legislative framework within which insurance for climate-related risks can be developed.

1. CPMR's regions support international action on climate

The CPMR fully supports the Paris Agreement on Climate Action and strongly approves efforts to enhance climate policies on a global level. This support is not new: CPMR regions have a strong and longstanding commitment to climate action.

For CPMR regions, the effects of global warming are clearly already visible and there is no doubt that the wide array of events that we see taking place across Europe and elsewhere have an anthropogenic origin, as recognised by the Scientific Community gathered under the auspices of the IPCC.

The CPMR, therefore, deeply regrets the decision of the current US administration to pull out of the Paris Agreement at a time when scientific evidence as well as factual observations, including in North America, demonstrate the very concerning reality and impacts of global warming.

This decision underlines the vital leadership role for the EU, supported by all levels of governance, including CPMR regions, in promoting a progressive climate policy at global level. The CPMR offers its solidarity and support to US states and local governments taking a progressive approach to climate action.

The EU Adaptation Strategy provides a clear example of why such strong leadership matters and the clear added value of action at the supra-national level. In 2014 only 50% of EU Member States boasted an adaptation strategy that involved sub-State governments in their implementations. This figure has increased since the agreement of the EU Adaptation Strategy, standing at around 80% in 2017. This shows that EU level action has an impact and, through encouraging EU members to design National Adaptation Strategies, has had a beneficial knock-on effect at the sub-national level.

Recommended actions:

The CPMR:

- Underlines the importance of the European Union continuing to support engagement by local and regional governments in UNFCCC and Lima Paris Action Agenda programmes including showcase good practice from such initiatives;
- Encourages the European Commission to pursue an even more ambitious strategic approach to climate adaptation and support of bottom-up approaches at local level;
- Asks the European Commission to explore the potential for co-operation initiatives between US States and cities and EU regions and cities as part of the review of the EU Adaptation Strategy and other measures to deliver on the Paris Agreement.

2. Clear evidence of climate impact on regions

Regional authorities are in the frontline when it comes to experiencing the effects of climate change and in dealing and responding to the climate changes that are already taking place. This is particularly true for peripheral and maritime regions, their sea basins, coastal areas and islands, rising sea levels, flooding, coastal erosion, rapidly changing eco-systems, impact on species distribution and a growing problem of invasive alien species. Water management systems are also under pressure be this due to drought or excessive and erratic rainfall patterns. These impacts will have severe impacts for key economic sectors, such as fisheries, aquaculture, agriculture, and tourism. Severe impacts are also observed in forests and mountain areas in some CRPM regions, with evident consequences on ecosystem services.

This rapidly changing environment makes it very difficult to plan coherently, particularly where policy objectives may come into conflict. We have heard evidence of this from our regions for example between nature protection, farming activities, and flood defence measures. Whilst these are challenging issues it is important that the EU policy framework is coherent and sets clear priorities for local and regional authorities to follow. For example, the Danish Environmental Protection Agency is having difficulties balancing conflicting interests of the Floods Directive and the Habitats Directive according to the risk management plan and the Natura2000 areas at Randers Fjord.

What is clear is that the effects of climate change play out at the local level and place huge burdens and pressures on local and regional services in responding to these changing circumstances. It is these pressures that CPMR regions must to cope with. It demonstrates the need to take preparatory actions and to plan carefully at the local and regional level to cope with the meteorological and other changes that climate change is bringing.

Recommended actions:

The CPMR:

- Calls on the European Commission to review existing legislation to ensure a clear and coherent (and ambitious) policy framework is in place, that avoids policy conflicts.

3. Integrated approach essential... adaptation needs more focus

Against this backdrop CPMR gives it full support to the EU Adaptation Strategy as part of the EUs broader approach to addressing climate change. The CPMR is of the firm view that an integrated approach to climate action is required which views mitigation and adaptation as two sides of the same coin, aimed at helping Europe's communities to adjust to the new realities of global warming, to prepare for further short to medium-term changes and through mitigation measures to work towards making Europe a more sustainable and climate-friendly place.

It is clear, however, from the experiences of our regions and through the work of the Climate Task Force that less political attention has been given to adaptation compared to the mitigation agenda.

Adaptation can be viewed as challenging, involving tough decisions for policy-makers, with expensive preventive and adaptive measures to avoid or reduce highly costly climate-related events (flooding, drought etc.) but also in taking preventative or adaptive measures. That said, we have heard from CPMR regions of the potential for economic opportunities from developing innovative solutions to the challenges of climate adaptation. Therefore, we would like to see more emphasis placed on this in any revisions to the existing EU Adaptation strategy, including increased scope for EU financial contributions to this (more on this below).

Recommended actions:

The CPMR:

- Calls for the EU Adaptation Strategy to include core adaptation measures that, in parallel, boost job creation and economic growth at the EU level. These measures should support the efforts of CRPM regions to adapt their territories to climate change while promoting transition to green and circular economy growth.

4. Enhancing the role of regions in the governance of climate change adaptation

The CPMR welcomes the recognition of the local level, and the priority placed on the Covenant of Mayors as a bottom-up initiative aimed at generating political momentum around climate action. However, further attention is needed to address the role of regional authorities in climate adaptation, as these represent a key governance level between national government and local authorities and many of the required actions have a supra-local dimension. Indeed, regional governments have competences in many of the areas where adaptation measures are required, and they also have the capacity to co-ordinate and mobilise co-operation.

Case studies considered by our Climate Task Force – in particular with reference to Central Denmark, the Murcia, Catalonia, Nouvelle Aquitaine, Lower Saxony and the Zuid-Holland – show clear evidence that European regions play a fundamental role in enhancing coordination and cooperation across all levels of governments. boosting policy coherence and ensuring concrete results of adaptation actions. When provided with the right governance tools, regions can act as catalysts and facilitate the uptake and the integration of adaptation plans at local level, covering both urban, peri-urban and rural areas and therefore ensuring cohesion within territories.

While recognizing the clear European added value of the EU Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change, the CPMR Climate Task Force considers that the regional level is not sufficiently taken into consideration by the current Strategy.

Recommended actions:

The CPMR:

- Calls on the European Commission to better reflect the role of regions as coordinators and intermediaries between Member States and local authorities in the review of the EU Adaptation Strategy;
- Considers that the European Commission should develop the right institutional framework for the involvement of regional governments in the definition and review of the EU and national adaptation strategies.
- Considers that the European Commission should encourage a stronger cooperation between all government levels including across national boundaries.

5. Promoting capacity building and knowledge sharing

Our work has also shown that there is a great variation in the degree of understanding and awareness of climate change related risks and challenges across regions.

The ACCLIMATERRA initiative in the Nouvelle Aquitaine Region and the work of the government of Catalonia and the national academy of Science (Institut d'Estudis Catalans) in preparing regional reports on climate change are excellent examples of approaches to build a clear picture of the particular regional context. It shows clearly how different forms of cooperation between scientists, practitioners, and policy makers at local/regional levels can improve the understanding of climate related risks at regional level and therefore guide both the decision-making process and the management of climate change adaptation.

However, for the vast majority of CPMR regions adaptation is institutionally an entirely new subject. This poses enormous challenges on regional administrations and underlines the importance of knowledge-sharing.

Although availability of climate change information is a pre-condition, it is also crucial to ensure an effective transfer of this information and a stable and successful dialogue between the scientific community and policy-makers. It seems clear that a well informed and educated society, with improved awareness and access to information on climate change, is likely to be in a better position to understand the consequences of a changing climate and engage with joint adaptation (and mitigation) efforts.

In general terms members of the CPMR Climate Task Force consider the lack of accessible scientific knowledge and climate information as well as the lack of climate expertise at regional level as two main obstacles to the delivery and implementation of effective adaptation policies.

Recommended actions:

The CPMR:

- Encourages the European Commission to continue gathering existing and effective good practices from leading regions, to store them in an accessible repository (i.e. the Climate Adapt portal managed by the EEA), and use them as a basis to provide guidelines on how to develop Climate Adaptation strategies and how to obtain climate data and services;
- Considers that the European Commission should facilitate, promote and finance peer-to-peer activities among regions in order to enhance capacity building and stress the European added value of the future EU Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation;
- Calls on the European Commission, through the European Environmental Agency (EEA) to support regions in assessing climate related risks and vulnerabilities through the development of a European network of experts and scientists. The EEA should promote the inclusion of region at the EIONET for a;
- Similarly, regions should report on the implementation of adaptation measures so as to actively contribute to the collection of data.

6. Essential role for EU in supporting investments

The members of the CPMR Climate Task Force stress the importance of existing EU financing instruments to support local and regional climate action (i.e. European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020, LIFE+). Such instruments are often described by regions as enablers, both economically and politically, capable of making the case for further and more structured action at local level.

Having access to EU funding is also a strategic guarantee of continuity when national budgets are shrinking and are putting local actions at risk. Two excellent examples of this are the Balearic Islands Reusing Posidonia LIFE project, which focuses on using locally sourced materials in social housing; and Central Denmark's Coast to Coast Climate Challenge LIFE IP project, which focuses on building resilience in climate adaption between the Region, 19 municipalities inside and outside the Central Denmark Region as well as water companies, universities, and other stakeholders.

The LIFE programme has become a widespread tool regarding water and ecosystem management as well as innovation in the field of locally sourced material presenting good isolation from summer heat waves. In Catalonia, the LIFE+ MEDACC project (Adapting the Mediterranean to climate change) aims to provide innovative solutions to adapt agroforestry and urban systems to climate change in the Mediterranean.

For the CPMR regions that often cooperate on cross-border action, the INTERREG programme is another tool that encourages cooperation, such as in mountain areas (for example the Pyrenees

Climate Change Observatory) addressing catastrophic flood prevention from running downstream in river basins.

Besides facilitating technical and economic assistance to local authorities and stakeholders for adaptation initiatives, regional governments also play a significant role as contact point for local authorities and other stakeholders to facilitate access to EU grants. Similarly, regions play a pivotal and innovative role in co-operation initiatives across Member State boundaries (cross-border co-operation), and adaptation provides an excellent area where such co-operation should be encouraged and supported by future EU programmes.

However, regions still face difficulties in accessing those funds, while the urgency of climate change should call for easier and diffuse access to finance. This is true also regarding financial instruments and the blending of different EU funding sources, which are perceived as useful financial tools especially when it comes to financing bigger infrastructural projects. However, regions pointed out the lack of information and capacity on how to access and apply these rather new financial tools. Finally, regions from the CPMR Climate Task Force have identified the need for bankable adaptation projects and therefore the need for business cases for solutions.

The next EU budgetary cycle must give a high priority for supporting initiatives in both adaptation and mitigation. This includes the future Cohesion Policy (with Territorial Co-operation an important part of this) – the CPMR is a strong advocate of a place-based investment policy across all regions – which, together with the Common Agriculture Policy and Common Fisheries Policy, provides EU-wide tools to support action at the local and regional level. Similarly, given the need for research, data and innovation, future EU programmes to replace Horizon 2020, COSME, Erasmus+ and similar, should also have a strong mainstreaming of measures to address climate change, both adaptation and mitigation.

Recommended actions:

The CPMR:

- Calls on European Commission to maintain and extend the EU financial support for adaptation and mitigation measures at regional level, underlining the importance of Cohesion Policy, Territorial Co-operation Programmes, the Common Agricultural Policy, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, LIFE programme, EU research and innovation programmes, and other financial mechanisms;
- Calls for the European Commission to prioritise use of EFSI to support key investments in adaptation at the regional level and to explore other innovative mechanisms that can leverage investment into adaptation schemes at the regional level, including cross-border investments;
- Considers that such actions should be accompanied by the development of adequate advice, guidance and support for regions in order to improve access to the different types of funds, for example through the European Investment Advisory Hub for the development of bankable projects.

7. Insurance and risk management

We propose to look at insurance issues in further detail through the Climate Task Force as this is a growing challenge – particularly the question of who pays for costs of climate-related damage through floods, drought etc. whether this falls on regional governments and other public authorities or private insurance companies. Accuracy of data, predictability and who determines how data is interpreted play an important role in this calculation, and as we have noted there are difficulties in each of these elements at present.

We have seen through the Dutch approach how a national response to a major flood crisis in 1953 effectively put in place a country-wide ‘insurance’ scheme or fund to set in place preventative mechanisms to avoid a repeat of these events, as well as a tool to respond to flooding events where they occur. There are examples of municipalities exploring possibilities of co-operation, working across administrative boundaries, to find cost-effective solutions for managing climate risks. However, there is much scope for this to be developed further, and a central role for the EU in helping to stimulate and support innovative approaches in this area.

These issues will only grow in significance as the effects of climate change (already described) escalate. Therefore, the EU must provide leadership in identifying the nature and scale of the issues and challenges to be overcome, in trying to create a more cohesive framework for what is a fragmented insurance industry across the EU, working with all key governance levels including CPMR regions.

Recommended actions:

The CPMR:

- Calls on the European Commission to show leadership at EU level in addressing the challenges of managing risk and insurance for climate adaptation, including exploring the potential added value of EU level policy frameworks within this area;
- Underlines the need to involve CPMR regions in EU level discussions on developing sustainable solutions for insurance and risk management;
- Calls for support to be made available through EU programmes for pilot projects and innovative actions to develop regional level solutions to insurance and risk management for climate adaptation.



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The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) brings together some 160 Regions from 25 States from the European Union and beyond.

Representing about 200 million people, the CPMR campaigns in favour of a more balanced development of the European territory.

It operates both as a think tank and as a lobby group for Regions. It focuses mainly on social, economic and territorial cohesion, maritime policies and accessibility.

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