Geophysical Research Abstracts
Vol. 14, EGU2012-1118, 2012
EGU General Assembly 2012

Facilitating a stakeholder-led approach to the development of Mediterranean climate services: co-ordinating the CLIM-RUN case studies

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The CLIM-RUN case studies provide a real-world context for bringing together experts on the demand and supply side of climate services. They are essential to the CLIM-RUN objective of using iterative and bottom-up (i.e. stakeholder led) approaches for optimizing the two-way information transfer between climate experts and stakeholders. The region of interest for CLIM-RUN is the Mediterranean, which is a recognised climate change hotspot (i.e. a region particularly sensitive and vulnerable to global warming) and which does not currently have developed climate service networks such as exist in a number of Central and Northern European countries.

The case studies focus on the energy and tourism sectors, but also include a cross-cutting study on wild fires (an issue of increasing concern in the Mediterranean) as well as a cross-sectorial integrated case study for the Venice lagoon. They span coastal (e.g., Tunisia and Croatia), island (e.g., Cyprus) and mountain (e.g., Savoie) environments, the eastern (e.g., Greece) to western (e.g., Spain, Morocco) Mediterranean regions, and regional to local foci.

Stakeholder involvement has been critical from the start of the project in March 2011, with a series of targeted workshops helping to define the framework for each case study. Two specific workshop objectives were to (i) better understand who are the climate services stakeholders and (ii) what they need/want from climate services (both in terms of data products and broader knowledge). Many of the workshops were held in local languages to maximise stakeholder participation, with expert knowledge provided by the CLIM-RUN climate and stakeholder expert teams (the CET and SET). Following the workshops, CET members are 'translating' the user needs into specific requirements from climate observations and models and identifying areas where additional modelling and analysis are required.

As part of the central co-ordination of the case studies, a perception and data needs questionnaire was produced to solicit information about stakeholder institutions and organisations, risk perception and current use of climate/weather information, perspectives on climate services, data requirements and handling uncertainties. The questionnaire was designed to be used in a very flexible way, adapted to individual case studies. It has been circulated via email, during and after workshops, made available in on-line form and has also provided the basis for structured interviews with stakeholders.

From the preliminary CLIM-RUN work, it is evident that the different sectorial requirements and contexts, including differences in stakeholder expertise and perspectives and the importance of non-climatic considerations in decision making, support the tailored, bottom-up approach adopted. For instance, the energy sector is more keen to use detailed present-day climate information, while tourist stakeholders, although less constrained by climate issues, prefer seasonal timescale information. At the same time, these differences provide a challenge in terms of developing common methodologies and identifying priorities for the provision of climate services. Other challenges relate to the differences in stakeholder engagement across the case studies.