

Climate Adaptation in Europe - The CIRCLE-2 Role

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Adaptation to a changing climate presents a call to action in Europe and beyond. To coherently address this challenge there is a growing need to incorporate sound scientific knowledge into policy and practice. But uncertainties on the science side are large and policy has to deal with a multitude of problems (e.g. economic, social) often leaving little room to “think” and “act” on climate change adaptation.

At the national and sub-national levels, knowledge on climate adaptation is growing but is hardly accessible to the European level since joint coordination is lacking and language barriers still remain. Member states are looking to the European White Paper on Adaptation as a framework for compiling, organizing and sharing information on their own initiatives (e.g. National Adaptation Strategies).

Mainstreaming adaptation into policies and concrete instruments is proving to be a difficult task at all levels. Reasons for this are diverse, but some can be traced to the fact that different notions of “what does adaptation mean” are common across countries and because scientific uncertainties are hard to cope in decision-making processes subjected to changing conditions (e.g. changing public support).

Gearing up enough financial resources to set up and move adaptation forward in Europe is a third issue facing difficulties, and in times of economic downturn, priorities have to be clearly set. In this context and considering current policy developments and research gaps, where exactly does the European Research Area (ERA) come into play and what can be the role of European scientific (and policy) networks such as CIRCLE-2?

CIRCLE-2 (Climate Impact Research & Response Coordination for a Larger Europe) will run between 2010 and 2014. It builds upon a network of 34 institutions (23 countries) committed to fund and share knowledge on climate adaptation research. The project’s aim is to access the possibility of, and take the necessary steps to DESIGN a long-term, collaborative programme able to FUND and SHARE science-driven, transnational research knowledge on climate adaptation. CIRCLE-2’s prime objectives are to: (a) establish a funding network that fosters responses to policy-relevant climate adaptation questions; (b) facilitate cooperation across Europe’s climate adaptation research programmes and projects; (c) promote the alignment of national and regional climate adaptation agendas under common science and policy areas; (d) fund joint initiatives and joint calls on climate adaptation research; and (e) share knowledge in support to European and CIRCLE-2 member organisations.

The present communication will address past, current and planned activities of CIRCLE-2 as well as how the project seeks to strengthen the science-policy interface on climate adaptation in Europe.