



Guiding principles for adaptation to climate change in Europe

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The EU target is to stabilise the global mean temperature to 2 °C above pre-industrial levels. But even a global increase of 2 °C will result in impacts to which Europe will need to adapt. These impacts affect most sectors, different actor groups, all regions and levels of decision-making. To avoid conflicts and create synergies between adaptation activities, coordinated and integrated adaptation governance and management is necessary.

In order to support coordinated and integrated adaptation actions, a set of generic guiding principles for good practice in adaptation to climate change in Europe is being developed by an ongoing project funded by the European Environment Agency (project consortium: Environmental Agencies of Austria and Germany and Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research). The guiding principles are intended to support planners and decision makers when dealing with the challenges of adapting to a changing climate. They aim to be a common basis for cooperative adaptation activities for all sectors and decision-making levels from local to the European scale.

In a first step, literature on adaptation to climate change was identified, analysed and integrated to develop a set of 12 guiding principles for adaptation. In a second step, the guiding principles were evaluated in an online survey by more than 250 adaptation experts across Europe.

The results of the survey confirm the generic nature and the wide applicability of the guiding principles. More than 80% of the experts agreed that the guiding principles integrate the most important aspects of adaptation, give good orientation in realising adaptation and could be used as a basis for cooperative adaptation activities of various actors in Europe.

Based on the comments from the survey, a final set of guiding principles for good practice in adaptation to climate change was produced and will be available in autumn 2010. The final set of 10 generic guiding principles are: Initiate adaptation, ensure commitment and management; Build knowledge and awareness; Identify and cooperate with relevant stakeholders; Work with uncertainties; Explore potential climate change impacts and vulnerability and identify priority concerns; Explore a wide spectrum of adaptation options; Prioritise adaptation options; Modify existing policies, structures and processes; Avoid maladaptation; Monitor and evaluate systematically.