



## Political Statement

### Accepted by the Sustainable Development Working Group of the North Sea Commission at March 8<sup>th</sup> 2011

#### Summary

An important conclusion of the Climate Proof Areas partnership (CPA) is the need to mainstream climate adaptation into relevant EU policies and programmes. The experiences of CPA strongly support the efforts and actions mentioned within EU communication documents such as the White Paper for climate adaptation. CPA encourages the EU and its Member States to improve these actions by best-practice projects and experiences gained within this EU Interreg IVB project. Cross-sectoral and cross-scale cooperation leads to sound stimulation of climate adaptation measures with multiple benefits. Detailed investigation and communication of regional climate change impacts raise the awareness of necessary actions. A **C**limate **A**daptation **P**re-**A**ssessment (CAPrA) for policies and programmes helps avoid conflicts between the mitigation and adaptation options concerning climate change. The communication strategy of CPA is twofold: this political statement addresses the climate adaptation at the European and North Sea level while a booklet will be published to serve as policy communication tool on national and regional level.

#### Climate Proof Areas

“Climate Proof Areas” (CPA, [www.climateproofareas.eu](http://www.climateproofareas.eu), 2008-2011) is a European project co-funded by the Interreg IVB North Sea programme. Within this project, partners of local and regional administration, universities and institutions of five countries around the North Sea are working together to develop adequate steps towards regional climate adaptation measures based on pilot studies. While the occurrence of climate change and its likely consequences are widely accepted, two complementary strategies are discussed to address climate change: mitigation and adaptation. CPA is mainly dealing with the development and implementation of climate adaptation measures at a local and regional level. According to the current advancements in European strategies, CPA moves on from the Lisbon Agenda (enhancing European competitiveness) and the Gothenburg Strategy (European sustainable development strategy) to the European Regions 2020 and White Paper policies.

CPA concludes that the likely consequences of expected climate change can not serve alone as a major driver for action. Therefore CPA recommends to consider climate adaptation measures not only by assessing their reduced vulnerability to climate change, but also by stressing the multiple benefits, i.e. for climate change related sectors such as nature conservation, agriculture and tourism. The mainstreaming climate adaptation into EU, national and regional policies must be promoted in order to integrate climate adaptation measures into comprehensive regional development plans. The CPA partners experienced this issue by incorporating measures which in fact were initiated for the improvement of water quality. I.e., a flood retention basin can improve the safety against flooding and serve – in case of an appropriate management – as wetland habitat. On the other hand, measures on climate change mitigation can get in conflict with climate change adaptation. I.e., generating renewable energy in urban areas (solar panels on roofs) might hamper strategies to reduce runoff by green roofs (grass on the roof top).

#### European Regions 2020 – Climate Change

Today’s knowledge on climate change has led to diverse action within the European Union<sup>1</sup>. Climate change effects are likely to differ from region to region. CPA collates the available climate change impact assessments on a regional level for the North Sea region. Regional climate projections based on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) scenarios<sup>2</sup> show a uniform trend until the

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Regions 2020 – The Climate Change Challenge for European Regions, DG Regio SEC(2008) 2868 Final

<sup>2</sup> IPCC (2000): Special Report on Emissions Scenarios. WMO/UNEP.

2050's, but then diverge until the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>3</sup>. The projected climate trends are similar for the CPA partner regions. Extreme events are expected to increase in frequency and intensity. Consequently, the CPA partner regions are facing similar problems due to climate change, and aim for comparable solution options. Adaptation options will differ according to geographical characteristics (low-lying coastal area, hilly hinterland, rural or urban environment). But, the preparedness to adequately react to these events is important anywhere. This has to be included into the adaptive capacity of all regions exposed to climate change. One important barrier experienced in the CPA project is the anticipation of regional climate change impacts which is an important precondition for successful pro-active regional preparation. The main factors mentioned in the Regions' 2020 climate change report influencing the adaptive capacity are as follows:

- *Information:* The information on global climate change provided by the IPCC is an important trigger for the understanding of global interlinkages between the influence of human beings on the climate and the environmental reactions. On regional or even local level, specific knowledge on climate change effects and the underlying uncertainty is required. Stakeholders from CPA pilots ask for specific data on how climate change could impact their specific sector. Providing such information improves the understanding and evidence of necessary steps towards cross-sectoral climate adaptation on local and regional level.
- *Resources:* The pressure on efficient administration structures leads to increasing fragmentation of responsibilities and unfavourable compartmentation. For example, the responsibilities on the implementation of measures regarding the Water Framework Directive are separated in coastal and inland waters, inducing complex and time consuming processes. Administrative boundaries can hamper the implementation of beneficial solutions. CPA provides promising examples: The improvement of the waterways in Schouwen-Duiveland (NL) will be combined with regional ecological and economic benefits. Gentle slopes will serve as potential habitats, improving the ecological status of these artificial waterways. The installation of bicycle and foot paths serves as additional recreational service. The National Trusts Wicken Fen Vision (Cambridgeshire, UK) is trying to demonstrate this multifunctional approach on regional scale and will be able to demonstrate best practice examples to assist climate adaptation.
- *The ability of a society to act collectively:* The previous factors play a key role in the ability of acting collectively. The information provided has to be as comprehensive as possible and processable for the relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the complexity of identified problems needs to be tackled within the regional cross-sectoral context while the compartmentation of administration impedes an integrated approach. Within CPA, regional fora have been set up to develop a joint approach for climate adaptation beyond sectors and administration boundaries. The willingness to actively participate in those regional fora depends on whether burning issues are tackled within the respective pilot area. CPA recommends to support the cooperation amongst European regions by EU policies and programmes. The exchange of experiences and knowledge between regions could raise the awareness and the necessity for pro-active steps towards climate adaptation.

## White Paper - Adapting to climate change

The White Paper<sup>4</sup> stresses the needs for sound steps and actions for climate adaptation in the EU and its Member States. It identifies the perception of climate change and its likely consequences for policy-makers as one major challenge. It promotes strategies which increase the resilience to climate change. CPA contributes to this action by providing good practice examples on local and regional adaptation processes and the necessary increase of perception. One important conclusion of CPA is that recent climate variability can be used to raise attention to the climate change issue. Recent water management systems already face severe problems due to today's extreme weather conditions. They regularly need to be assessed with regard to their dimension and capacity. Climate scenarios consistently project that extreme events will be more likely in future<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, existing water management systems need to be adapted in any case. CPA indicates that properly coordinated action is necessary not solely between related sectors, but also to integrate climate change adaptation into existing and future directives.

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<sup>3</sup> Bormann et al. (2009): Climate Proof Areas - Konzeption von an den Klimawandel angepassten Wasser-managementstrategien im Norddeutschen Küstenraum. Korrespondenz Wasserwirtschaft: DOI: 10.3243/kwe.2009.07.002 and Final report of Work Package 1 in „Climate Proof Areas“.

<sup>4</sup> White Paper – Adapting to Climate Change: Towards a European Framework for Action. COM(2009) 147 Final.

<sup>5</sup> IPCC (2007): Synthesis Report. WMO/UNEP.

Within CPA, methods, models, data sets and prediction tools have been developed according to the local and regional requirements. Tools successfully applied to the pilots are described in the adaptation toolkit of CPA<sup>6</sup>. For several pilots, climate projections of global climate models were regionalised by a regional climate models and processed by regional hydrological models. The results in terms of likely changes in hydrological fluxes provided the basis for discussion processes on regional climate adaptation strategies, e.g., within a regional forum in the Wesermarsch, consisting of representatives of different sectors and administrative bodies. In Schouwen Duiveland, CPA initiated a cooperation between Dutch farmers and a drinking water supplier to improve the storage and preparation of fresh water in the local community.

Climate proofing is not yet adequately considered in relevant EU policies, e.g. Water Framework Directive, Flood Risk Management Directive and NATURA 2000. Similarly, climate change adaptation and water management are not yet adequately embedded in rural development plans. The insight that climate change might have severe spatial impacts and that the adaptation to these impacts will have spatial implications may lead to a greater openness. The lessons learnt by CPA endorse this development and strongly recommend enhancing these activities. The TEN-T<sup>7</sup> guidelines provide an appropriate basis for assessing vulnerability and improving critical infrastructure according to climate change impacts. They could be applied to investigate how infrastructure could improve the preparedness of a region, for example by heightening the foundation of roads to create an additional benefit for flood protection. CPA encourages EU policymakers to include climate adaptation as part of infrastructure development policies to ensure potential multifunctional benefits are realised.

## Conclusions

CPA encourages the European administration to take the issue of climate adaptation for existing and future policies into account. CPA therefore recommends:

-  To elaborate a **C**limate **A**daptation **P**re-**A**ssessment (CAPrA) approach of plans, programmes and directives according to and based on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
-  To raise the adaptive capacity of regions by stimulating and enhancing the ability to act collectively. Encourage through the revision of existing or the development of new EU policies the cross-sectoral and cross-scale cooperation, especially with regard to climate adaptation.
-  To create “windows of opportunities” by policy to accelerate the climate adaptation process
-  To encourage the further development and application of sound methodologies for building climate and socio-economic scenarios.

The CPA partners are asking the North Sea Commission to support this paper and to encourage the European Commission to integrate climate adaptation/proofing into all relevant European directives.

## The CPA partnership



<sup>6</sup> See policy communication tool of CPA, i.e. Memorandum of Understanding

<sup>7</sup> Trans-European Network for Transport Program.