

Policy
recommendations
for tackling
**climate
change**



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European Regions Taking Action on Climate Change

Climate change - a significant and lasting change in the distribution of weather patterns – is a real challenge for local and regional authorities. Interregional cooperation through the INTERREG IVC programme has identified hundreds of good practices demonstrating innovative and practical ways to tackle climate change at the local and regional levels. Collectively, the results stemming from 11 projects and 115 partners from all over Europe have demonstrated the benefits of taking early action, both to mitigate and to adapt to climate change, at local and regional level.

Our analysis of these results lead us to a series of recommendations for action which are organised according to the five core themes that reflect the typical policy planning process.

Jennifer McGuinn, Venelina Varbova and Dora Almassy were contracted by the INTERREG IVC programme to analyse, benchmark and capitalise on the wealth of knowledge generated by cooperation projects in the field of climate change.

These policy recommendations are the result of a two-year analysis, providing targeted actions for those involved in this policy field.

1.

Making the case for climate change action

As climate change is a relatively new policy field, it is crucial to gain an understanding of the climate problems and potential solutions regions are facing. This helps both in defining action and convincing others that action is necessary. The gap between scientific knowledge and policymaking on climate change is important, as this policy field is so dependent upon accurate information. INTERREG IVC projects have carried out demonstration projects and developed decision-support tools that facilitate this process and can be adapted for use in other communities.

→ **Use demonstration projects to help clarify concepts on both sides of the gap between science and policymaking.** We recommend an Assessment Tool developed within the *GRaBS* project that played an important role in the preparation of Adaptation Action Plans, with a particular focus on flooding and heat stress. The tool assesses the vulnerability of urban areas to climate change impacts and allows stakeholders to visualise vulnerability, exposure and climate hazards within a particular location.

→ **Use decision-support tools that are specifically designed for understanding the risk of climate change impacts,** and the vulnerability of communities to those impacts, to really help scientists and policymakers work together to define and implement solutions. The *RegioClima* project identified the *AQUATOOL* applied in the Valencia region (Spain) and the Coastal Flooding Decision Support Systems introduced in the Severozitochen region (Bulgaria). These tools have been proven effective in addressing adaptation to climate change in water management of river basins, and management of coastal flooding. As they can easily be applied in different geographic contexts, we think that they can be useful in other regions.

2.

Stakeholder involvement and policy networks

Tackling an issue as complex and cross-cutting as climate change requires sincere efforts to build consensus across stakeholders and to establish a new range of cooperation between people, institutions and disciplines. It is essential to involve stakeholders, but they must also work together on a shared vision while taking joint responsibility to achieve climate-related objectives.

→ **Involve the right organisations and individuals in climate change planning and action** through a careful, strategic approach. *F:Acts!* project partners developed a toolbox of methods for stakeholder involvement at the planning phase of integrated territorial strategies. It includes techniques like mind-mapping and stakeholder analysis, which have helped to improve communication processes.

→ **Gain high-level political commitment within an authority** as this is usually a pre-requisite for successful climate change action. Pressure from an outside party, such as an EU-level organisation can really make a difference. *RSC* project partner Liguria (Italy) recently launched the “Mayors Adapt” initiative, based on similar principles as the “Covenant of Mayors” climate mitigation initiative, which several municipalities in the region had joined.

→ **Set up dedicated working groups so that authorities from all policy sectors can work together.** Frequently set up by national authorities, these groups have also proven effective in regions and local authorities. Some outstanding examples of cooperation across sectors are the Town and Country Planning Association-led Planning and Climate Change Coalition in the United Kingdom (*GRaBS* project) and the Regional Network for Climate Change Adaptation in Northern Hessen, Germany (*WATER CoRe* project).

3.

Strategic and action planning

Climate change requires strategic planning across sectors and levels of governance, bringing particular challenges of integrating climate science and technologies into policy-making and building consensus across different sectoral and stakeholder perspectives.

→ **Develop an organised but flexible approach to the complexity of climate change planning.** The practical guidance developed by the *GRaBS* project for the development of climate change

adaptation action plans offers an iterative approach to working with scientific and technical information and with the right stakeholders at every stage of the process. Organisations interested in climate change mitigation could consult the *CLIMACT* project good practice collection on climate change strategies and the *RSC* project handbook on planning for low carbon development.

→ **Ensure that climate change considerations are taken into account in a wide range of existing policies and plans.** Useful methods developed by some projects include a multifunctional approach to land use planning in the water, agricultural and housing sectors (*WATER CoRe* project) or the “Tipping Point” method on incorporating disaster risk mitigation techniques into investment projects (*MISRAR* project). Countries and regions must also consider the natural environment as a natural buffer against the impacts of climate change. We believe that the good practice from Italy’s Secchia river basin (*F:Acts!* project) — which combines flood-risk prevention with habitat conservation — is a step forward in exploring the multi-functional use of a territory.

4.

Implementation measures

Planning is critical, but it has to lead to the implementation of concrete policy measures. Good practices mostly focus on measures aimed at raising awareness and educating, but also include incentives to foster specific actions to tackle climate change.

→ **Change the behaviour of citizens, businesses and academia with regard to climate change through education and awareness.** The “Community Energy Champions” initiative identified through the *POWER* project is a particularly interesting approach to train individuals to become multipliers of action in their communities. Good examples of educational measures include the “Sketch Match” method for staff training about

public participation strategies and methods (*F:Acts!* project), a training programme on climate change for small-forest owners in Brandenburg (*FUTUREforest* project), an eco-driving training for citizens in Tallinn (*POWER* project), and a capacity development programme for investors at the Stockholm Royal Seaport (*CLUE* project).

→ **Offer financial and other incentives to citizens and companies to promote climate change action.** In the Province of Forlì-Cesena (Italy) private companies were granted rights to exploit areas along provincial rivers, on the condition they develop detention bases for better flood protection (*MISRAR* project). In Monte do Carrio (Spain) electricity companies established a fund for wildfire prevention activities, which was financed from payments to install wind power mills (*F:Acts!* project).

5. Measuring and monitoring progress

Adequate and regularly updated information is crucial for assessing the baseline situation about greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and climate vulnerabilities, as well as for orienting future activities. The availability of data and information at regional and local level about GHG emissions and climate change impacts has been identified as a key challenge for regions.

→ **Avoid costly and inefficient duplication of effort between parallel measurement and monitoring practices.** We recommend that interested regional and local authorities join the network of Regional GHG Emissions and Energy Watch (*ENERGee-Watch*), initiated by the *CLIMACT* project. It connects GHG emissions observatories throughout Europe and provides participating regions with an opportunity to achieve standardisation, share experiences, consolidate efforts and results.

→ **Use tools to assess data properly and develop scenarios.** The “Prioritisation of Actions for a Low-Carbon Economy” (*RSC* project) employs an Excel-based tool that assesses and compares measures according to their impact on carbon saving, cost efficiency and job creation on a regional scale. A downscaling methodology for developing high-resolution climate change scenarios (*WATER CoRe* project) was identified in Emilia Romagna (Italy), and a tool called “Marteloscope” (*FUTUREforest* project) was developed in Auvergne (France) for assessing the impacts of forest management actions.

→ **Use indicators to inform policy making and improve low-carbon policies.** We believe that The “Low-Carbon Indicators Toolkit” (*RSC* project) is a valuable example in this respect, as it assists European regions with reviewing existing low-carbon indicators and provides inspiration for developing their own indicators.

Learn more, do more...

To learn more about these examples and explore further innovative good practices in tackling climate change, download the full thematic capitalisation report. The report contains a detailed overview of good practices stemming from the 11 INTERREG IVC projects, identifies synergies between the projects and other initiatives and programmes, and offers further recommendations to European regions and cities on how to tackle climate change.

This publication is one of a series of twelve thematic policy recommendations.
For more information and downloads, visit:
www.interreg4c.eu/capitalisation

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