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Europe adapts to climate change: Comparing National Adaptation Strategies

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Description / Abstract

For the last two decades, European climate policy has focused almost exclusively on mitigation of climate change. It was only well after the turn of the century, with impacts of climate change increasingly being observed, that adaptation was added to the policy agenda and EU Member States started to develop National Adaptation Strategies (NASs). This paper reviews seven National Adaptation Strategies that were either formally adopted or under development by Member States at the end of 2008. The strategies are analysed under the following six themes. Firstly, the factors motivating and facilitating the development of a national adaptation strategy. Secondly, the scientific and technical support needed for the development and implementation of such a strategy. Thirdly, the role of the strategy in information, communication and awareness-raising of the adaptation issue. Fourthly, new or existing forms of multi-level governance to implement the proposed actions. Fifthly, how the strategy addresses integration and coordination with other policy domains. Finally, how the strategy suggests the implementation and how the strategy is evaluated. The paper notes that the role of National Adaptation Strategies in the wider governance of adaptation differs between countries but clearly benchmarks a new political commitment to adaptation at national policy levels. However, we also find that in most cases approaches for implementing and evaluating the strategies are yet to be defined. The paper concludes that even though the strategies show great resemblance in terms of topics, methods and approaches, there are many institutional challenges, including multi-level governance and policy integration issues, which can act as considerable barriers in future policy implementation.

Publication year

2010

Publisher

Global Environmental Change

Keywords

Governance Climate Change Adaptation Climate Change

Thematic Tagging

Climate

Language English

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Source URL: <https://iwrmaactionhub.org/resource/europe-adapts-climate-change-comparing-national-adaptation-strategies>