EEA Expert workshop on climate change adaptation platforms

16 June 2016, Room 8.0.6, EEA
(Kongens Nytorv 6, 1050 Copenhagen, Denmark)

Introduction

As adaptation policy and practice progress in Europe, it is important that access to high-quality, comprehensible and up-to-date adaptation-relevant information and knowledge is steadily promoted. This information is expected to support decision-making and to facilitate the successful development and implementation of adaptation strategies, plans and other relevant climate and sectoral policies.

Web based adaptation platforms serve as entry points to such information for a wide range of users with different backgrounds, interests and skills. In an attempt to present the state-of-play of adaptation platforms in Europe, the EEA published in May 2015 a Technical report entitled "Overview of climate change adaptation platforms in Europe"[1]. The report explored the scope, history, targeted users, funding models, and potential links across adaptation platforms, climate services and disaster risk reduction platforms. Also the report presented and discussed several of the various challenges and lessons learnt in developing and maintaining these platforms.

Objectives of the workshop

This expert workshop uses the information presented in the EEA (2015) Technical report as a starting point. **The objective of the workshop** is to provide an update on the recent changes in the European web-based adaptation platform landscape, by looking at both national and transnational examples, and to investigate (in three parallel breakout groups) selected aspects of platform development and management that were highlighted in the report as challenging areas requiring further attention. The breakout groups aim to enhance our current knowledge and to share recent experiences and lessons learnt associated with the need:

- to continuously improve the understanding of platform users, and communicate and engage with them using effective and tailored approaches (*Breakout group 1*);
- to select the appropriate content and ensure that it is presented in a way fitted to user needs and skills (*Breakout group 2*);
- to implement regular quality and relevance monitoring and evaluation of an adaptation platform in order to assess the achievement of its goals and overall performance (*Breakout group 3*).

The agenda for the workshop has been developed to provide experts with the opportunity to participate in two of the three breakout groups. For each of the three breakout groups there are two 45-minute sessions on offer. Furthermore, there will be opportunities to share the discussion outcomes during the 30-minute networking break between the two sessions and the plenary reporting session at the end of the workshop. Experts are kindly asked to indicate to Kati Mattern (Kati.Mattern@eea.europa.eu) the breakout groups in which they wish to participate by Monday 13th June. Detailed descriptions of the three breakout groups are provided later in this paper.

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[1]   http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/overview-of-climate-change-adaptation

Workshop outcomes
The key findings from the discussions of the different sessions will be presented in a follow up paper after the workshop. The paper will be circulated to all workshop participants and NRCs.

Breakout Group 1: Understanding, communicating and engaging with users

Chair: Birgit Georgi	Rapporteur: Eleni Karali
First session: 13:30 - 14:20 - *Networking break* - **Second session**: 14:50- 15:40	

Background: Platform users are often characterised by wide diversity of backgrounds, interests and competencies. These characteristics shape the reasons why they decide to use a platform and determine the type of information they are looking for, as well as what information and resources they find useful and appealing.

Identifying and understanding users, and recognising that the users themselves as well as their roles, interests and needs may change over time, can be challenging for platform developers and managers in ensuring that the available resources and information match the needs and capacities of the targeted user groups. This understanding is crucial for decisions related to an adaptation platform's content, appearance and technical features, as well as for the platform's perceived value and therefore its longevity and efficiency in co-operating and complementing other platforms.

Communication and engagement with intended users have been found to be more effective when established at an early stage and continued throughout all phases of a platform's development and maintenance. These have been shown to be essential in building a long-term relationship of trust and commitment. Experience has shown that the mechanisms and strategies used to achieve this are multiple and may vary depending on the context and the stage of a platform's life. For example, awareness of a platform and its content has been promoted so far via: workshops and training events; presentations at conferences and seminars; newsletters and press releases; social media; links to key websites; communication material (e.g. apps, videos) and information campaigns.

Other ways of improving users' engagement include: developing the platform through participatory processes; collecting feedback from the users (e.g. using surveys, questionnaires, targeted interviews, contact button); asking users to provide input to the platform (e.g. case studies); establishing user-based editorial and testing panels; and creating communities of users.

Example: Involving users in the platform's development process – The case of Ireland
The Irish national platform, Climate Ireland (ICIP), was developed through a stepwise approach (3 phases) from a discovery prototype to an operational phase. The first phase (2011-13) involved undertaking a wide stakeholder scoping strategy to establish decision-making requirements for climate adaptation and to identify and assess available information to support these processes. The second phase (2013-15) aimed to support adaptation planning at the local level. Knowledge and tools were selected and developed in consultation with three local authorities. The same approach is being followed in the third phase for the development of the national level information and tools. A users' sub-group provides continuous feedback on new content and functionality developments of the platform based on a background test version. These comments are being used to gradually improve the platform that is publicly available.

Aim: This breakout group aims to further investigate if and how adaptation platforms have managed to improve the understanding of their user profiles and needs, and how they communicate and engage with users. Discussion in this group will revolve around the following three guiding questions:

<u>**Guiding questions**</u>

1. *Which communication and engagement mechanisms and strategies do you value as successful and why? (Please consider both your perspective and that of the platform's users)*

2. *Which aspects of your approach would you suggest changing and why?*

3. *What are your plans for communicating and engaging with users in the future? (for what purpose, when etc.)*

Breakout Group 2: Selecting and presenting knowledge

Chair: Blaz Kurnik	Rapporteur: Silvia Medri
First session: 13:30 - 14:20 - *Networking break* - **Second session**: 14:50 - 15:40	

Background: Information and knowledge available on climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation are constantly growing. At the same time the needs of stakeholders evolve over time while they progress in the adaptation policy process, and hence learn and build their capacities. The utility (and value) of the platform is determined by its success in delivering relevant, credible, accessible and understandable knowledge, data and information that are screened and tailored to fit the purpose of the platform and the needs of the intended users. This depends both on the selection of the right content to be published on the platform, as well as on its appropriate presentation.

The process for selecting a platform's content should be embedded in a framework with clear criteria. These criteria should consider the appropriateness of the presented content for the targeted user groups. For example criteria related to the user-friendliness of the content; its relevance to meeting specific user requirements and the range of the displayed information. A similar procedure with criteria can also be useful for identifying the need for platform updates and for guiding decisions about the introduction of new information or features. Such decisions should result from an agreed and transparent process developed with the engagement of intended users, and also be supported by an appropriate quality assurance, making the assumptions and limitations of the presented information explicit.

Furthermore, special care needs to be given to the way that knowledge, data and information are presented on the platform. This may refer to different aspects of content presentation, ranging from the language used to communicate the relevant content, which needs to be clear and understandable, to the navigation flows, which need to be perceived as logical and self-evident by different types of users.

Example: New ways of presenting knowledge on platforms – The case of the Netherlands
Adaptation platforms are increasingly developing and incorporating new, more efficient ways of presenting knowledge, data and information. A recent example is that of the Dutch Climate Adaptation Services platform, which introduced a modular set-up of the platform content and initiated the use of interactive visualization tools such as touch tables and story mapping. Furthermore, examples of practical applications of the tools are featured on the respective tool pages.

Aim: This breakout group aims to investigate the processes that underpin the selection of the content that appears on an adaptation platform and to exchange new experiences on how to best present the selected knowledge and information. Discussion in this session will revolve around the following three guiding questions:

Guiding questions

1. *What is the procedure in place for identifying the knowledge and information to be presented on your platform? Why do you use this particular procedure?*

2. *How do you ensure the information and data presented are useful and that the navigation through your platform is easy and efficient for the users? Are there specific mechanisms or criteria for this purpose?*

3. *What are your plans in terms of enhancing your ability to select and present new and / or additional knowledge and information?*

Breakout Group 3: Monitoring and evaluating platforms' quality and relevance

Chair: Tiago Capela Lourenço	Rapporteur: Kati Mattern
First session: 13:30 - 14:20 - *Networking break* - **Second session**: 14:50 - 15:40	

Background: Monitoring and evaluation of a platform are essential means to track the progress of the platform towards the achievement of specific goals, to assess its success over a certain period of time and to improve its value for the intended users (and for those funding the platform). Monitoring may measure, for example, the impact that a platform has on its users' ability to adapt or the added value of a platform towards knowledge exchange and mobilisation in support of adaptation policy and planning. Further, a periodic review of a platform content and functionality is of utmost importance. Evaluation results may inform decisions about whether or not adjustments in the content, functionality and maintenance procedures are necessary in order for the platform to continue supporting stakeholder needs in an evolving adaptation policy process or for identifying the gaps that need to be addressed.

Both monitoring and evaluation require a clearly defined platform mandate, as well as a set of explicit aims that the platform endeavours to achieve. Attribution of the effectiveness of an adaptation platform supporting adaptation policy and action is difficult considering the variety of their drivers. Therefore the evaluation of an adaptation platform's success should be embedded in the national Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation scheme of the respective policy process. The success of these tasks depends among others upon:

- an explicit description of the monitoring and evaluation procedures, supported by clearly identified metrics and criteria;
- a timeline showing when the platform monitoring and evaluation should take place; and
- a clear assignment of responsibilities, specifying the actors who will carry out the monitoring and evaluation (e.g., information providers; platform owners and managers; external consultants).

Currently many platforms monitor their use through an in-depth analysis of web statistics and individual users' feedback. These are important means for evaluating a platform's content and functionalities and ultimately for improving the presentation of the knowledge via the navigation's structure.

> **Example: Evaluating platforms based on a self-assessments accompanied by a knowledge assessment - The case of Climate-ADAPT**
> The European Commission is planning to evaluate the activities undertaken based on the 2013 EU Adaptation Strategy including the European Climate Adaptation Platform (Climate-ADAPT) as part of its report to the European Parliament on the implementation of the strategy in 2017. In an attempt to improve the process of knowledge selection, and hence the knowledge that appears on the platform, and support better informed decisions, a dedicated service contract will focus on the assessment of adaptation knowledge at EU level. The intention is that the identified adaptation knowledge gaps as well as the decisions about the level to address them will inform the review of the criteria used for selecting knowledge for Climate-ADAPT from 2017 onwards. This process will be further supported by a self-assessment of the platform. The latter is based on a regular analysis of the platform's content and aims at identifying gaps taking into account user needs.

Aim: Despite the important information that monitoring and evaluation may reveal, these processes are currently the least developed ones and perhaps those that require most attention. This breakout group aims to exchange experiences on how different platforms monitor and evaluate their performance towards the achievement of their individual aims, and to explore how these processes could be further improved. Discussion in this session will revolve around the following three guiding questions:

> **Guiding questions**
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> 1. *What procedures do you have in place to monitor the content and use of the platform and how do you use the collected information? Why have you selected these particular procedures? (Please consider their strengths and weaknesses)*
>
> 2. *Having in mind the goals that your platform aims to achieve, how do you evaluate the effectiveness (platform's utility from the users' perspective) and performance of your platform and how do you identify the needs for improvements?*
>
> 3. *Which are your plans in terms of monitoring and evaluation of your platform?*

Annex I: Adaptation Platforms in Europe

Adaptation Platforms	Title	URL
National		
Austria	Climate Change Adaptation in Austria (Austrian Adaptation Platform)	http://www.klimawandelanpassung.at/ms/klimawandelanpassung/en/
Denmark	Climate Change Adaptation (Danish National Adaptation Platform)	http://en.klimatilpasning.dk/
Estonia	Estonian Environmental Research Centre (Estonian Adaptation Platform)	http://www.klab.ee/kohanemine/en/
Finland	Climate Guide (Finnish Adaptation Platform)	http://ilmasto-opas.fi/en/
France	Observatoire National sur les Effets du Réchauffement Climatique (ONERC) (French National Adaptation Platform)	http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/The-Observatory-ONERC.html
Germany	KomPass - Climate Impacts and Adaptation (German National Adaptation Platform)	http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/en/topics/climate-energy/climate-impacts-adaptation
Hungary	The Climate Dialogue Forum (Hungarian National Adaptation Platform)	http://nak.mfgi.hu/en/node/371
Ireland	Climate Ireland (Irish National Adaptation Platform)	www.climateireland.ie
The Netherlands	Spatial Adaptation Knowledge Portal	http://www.ruimtelijkeadaptatie.nl/en/
Norway	The Norwegian Climate Change Adaptation Portal	http://www.klimatilpasning.no/infosider/english/
Poland	KLIMADA Adaptation to Climate Change (Polish National Adaptation Platform)	http://klimada.mos.gov.pl/en/
Spain	AdapteCCa.es - Platform of the exchange and consultation of information on adaptation to the Climate Change in Spain	http://www.adaptecca.es/en

Sweden	Swedish Portal for Climate Change Adaptation	http://www.klimatanpassning.se/en
Switzerland	BAFU Thema Anpassung an den Klimawandel (Swiss Information Platform on Adaptation to Climate Change)	http://www.bafu.admin.ch/klimaanpassung/
United Kingdom	Gov. UK - Climate Change Adaptation (UK Adaptation Platform)	https://www.gov.uk/governm/policies/adapting-to-climate-change
Transnational		
Alpine Region	Alpine Convention - The Climate Portal	http://www.alpconv.org/en/ClimatePortal/default.html
	C3 - Climate Adaptation Platform for the Alps	http://www.c3alps.eu/kip
Baltic Window	Baltic Sea Region (BSR)	http://www.baltadapt.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=154&Itemid=291
Pyrenees	Observatoire Pyrénéen du Changement Climatique; OPCC (Pyrenees Climate Change Observatory)	http://www.opcc-ctp.org/en
European		
European Environment Agency	European Climate Adaptation Platform - Climate-ADAPT	http://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/