

Background document

Break-out group 3 (22 June): Urban adaptation

Recent policy and knowledge developments

The Urban Agenda for the EU, established in May 2016, identified twelve priority areas for action, including climate adaptation. A partnership on climate adaptation has been agreed in April 2017. This partnership of EU institutions, national, regional and local bodies and city networks will aim to provide better regulation, better funding and better knowledge to EU citizens living in cities. The Commission launched in October 2016 a [new city portal](#) on the Europa website to guide cities through different policies and instruments in place, including a page on [climate adaptation in cities](#).

The EU adaptation strategy of 2013 included as a key action the support to cities to adapt to climate change. This led to the EU funded MayorsAdapt initiative, which was in 2015 merged with the Covenant of Mayors. The EU funded Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy initiative joined forces with the Compact of Mayors and became [Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy](#) in June 2016. It is an international alliance of cities and local governments with a shared long-term vision of promoting and supporting voluntary action to combat climate change and move to a low emission, resilient society. Globally, around 7,500 cities have signed up, representing nearly 674 million people worldwide. The implications for the EU signatories and the EU agenda are not clear yet.

The [New Urban Agenda](#) was adopted in October 2016 At UN Habitat III conference - a new framework that lays out how cities should be planned and managed to best promote sustainable urbanization. In relation to climate change adaptation, the New Urban Agenda states that cities should adopt and implement disaster risk reduction and management, reduce vulnerability, build resilience and responsiveness to natural and man-made hazards, and foster mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

At the same time, in partnership with UN Habitat, the European Commission published [The State of European Cities 2016](#) report, which supports Urban Agenda by assessing the performance of European cities with regards to its priority themes. The section on urban environment and climate change emphasises the use of nature-based solutions in adaptation by cities.

Background information EEA and ETC CCA activities

In July 2016, the [Urban adaptation to climate change in Europe 2016](#) report was launched. It focussed on the state of actions in the field of urban adaptation and progress achieved since the first EEA urban adaptation report in 2012. Importantly, the report introduced ‘transformative adaptation’, which can be understood as ways of using governance, behaviour and technology to change the biophysical, social or economic components of the urban system fundamentally.

In February 2017, the report [Financing urban adaptation to climate change](#) was published, demonstrating practical, implemented examples of funding for adaptation actions through various funds and investments.

EEA co-organised with ICLEI Europe the [Fourth Open European Day \(OED\) at Resilient Cities 2017](#), in Bonn, Germany (3rd May 2017). The event was focussed on the exchange of knowledge and experiences on adaptation among European cities, around the themes of transformation (as above); innovation (both technological but also e.g. in governance); co-creation (planning and implementation of adaptation measures together with stakeholders and citizens). The recurring discussion topics at the conference included nature-based solutions and social vulnerability to climate change.

Building on the above activities, and taking into consideration the broader policy context, EEA and ETC/CCA are currently developing two working papers (to be completed in December 2017):

- 1) ***Socially-just adaptation in European cities: reducing social vulnerability through policy and practice*** (working title). This working paper looks at the social dimension of climate impacts, which to date has been included in adaptation planning in a limited manner. The paper focuses on exploring the social inequalities associated with climate change impacts and adaptive measures and it provides examples of assessments of social vulnerability assessments and implementation of socially-just adaptation measures. An expert meeting is planned on 12th September 2017 to explore the barriers and opportunities for socially-just adaptation from the perspective of knowledge, policy and practice.
- 2) ***Transformative urban adaptation*** (working title). This working paper builds on the conclusion from the 2016 report that currently adopted ways of dealing with climate change-related weather events will not be sufficient in the future. It will provide examples of adaptation measures that represent a change in the established way of doing things.

These papers will have a strong focus on practical examples and aim to provide a source of information and inspiration for practitioners (mainly but not exclusively at the city level). The papers will feed into EEA reports in the future or possibly lead to separate EEA reports, still to be decided.

Other ongoing activities:

Updating the interactive map book urban vulnerability to climate change <http://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/tools/urban-adaptation/introduction>

Ongoing collaboration with the Commission on Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy http://www.covenantofmayors.eu/index_en.html

Questions for the discussion

How relevant the recent work of EEA (Urban adaptation and Financing urban adaptation reports) has been to your activities/activities of cities in your country? What support has it offered?

How relevant the ongoing work on social vulnerability and socially-just adaptation and on transformative adaptation is to your activities/activities of cities in your country?

Which work areas and approaches within urban adaptation could EEA focus on in future, taking into account recent and expected policy and knowledge developments?

Questions related to current work

To what extent social vulnerability of people to climate change impacts is taken into account in developing climate change adaptation policies and actions for cities in your country?

Can you provide any examples of transformative adaptation in cities in your country?