

EEA report: Coping with urban climate change challenges in Europe (2016)

Aim and target audience

Four years after the publication of the first report on urban adaptation, a new report on this issue will be able to take advantage of an already well developed stock of experiences with planning and implementing urban adaptation, coming from different levels of policy action. These actions range from the EU level, where the European Commission has explicitly confirmed the particular attention it is going to pay to urban adaptation policies in the Communication on the EU Strategy on Adaptation to climate change (European Commission, 2013a), as well as in the Urban Agenda (European Commission, 2014). Particular expressions of this interest are the new Mayors Adapt Initiative, where the Commission aims at promoting adaptation activities among urban leaders; and the decision of dedicating targeted finance from the EC Structural Funds and the LIFE Programme in support of urban adaptation actions. Several national governments have adopted adaptation strategies, where urban adaptation and local action receive specific attention and support. Scientific research on climate change adaptation is actually producing relevant results which can potentially support guidance to local authorities for shaping local urban adaptation strategies and provide evidence to be used for decision making. Practical guidance for adaptation policy making exists in different contexts, for example, on the CLIMATE-ADAPT platform contains a specific support tool (called the URBAN AST) which was developed by the Mayors Adapt Initiative in order to provide support for cities in their adaptation progress.

A key question to answer is if the chosen action and pathways will be enough to cope with the challenges ahead.

The report aims at supporting a broad range of policy makers who are working on urban adaptation at different levels, either directly in urban planning at the local or regional level, or by supporting adaptation action by framing, facilitating, financing, planning or regulating urban adaptation at a regional, national and European level.

Governance level	How could this report be relevant?
all	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides an updated overview of urban vulnerabilities and challenges across Europe.• Puts the urban adaptation challenges into the perspective of overall challenges for Europe and its cities and initiatives to cope with the challenges towards resilient and attractive cities.• Highlights the inter-linkages to other policy areas and between the different governmental levels when coping with climate change.

<p>EU level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides an indication of the state of the art, leading initiatives and cutting edge experiences for urban climate change adaptation across Europe, including the needs of smaller cities. • Provides an analysis of EU initiatives started recently to support urban adaptation, identifies promising approaches as well as challenges in multi-level perspective. • Provides inspiration to develop further the relevant policy framework to support urban areas in their adaptation.
<p>National Level /subnational regions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides an overview of approaches to support urban adaptation from the national level in other countries that could be taken as inspiration, including the needs of smaller cities. • By taking a multi-level perspective provides a better idea which role national action could play in this context. • Supports the development of an effective policy framework to support urban areas in their adaptation.
<p>City / city regional level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows cities and their supporting regions to consider their specific situation in the overall European context of urban adaptation. • Provides a broader view of the challenges and possible strategies to cope with them for both large and small cities. • Provides ideas to go beyond single city approaches but consider the options in a mutually supportive multi-level governance approach. • Indicates sources of information from international and EU-wide initiatives and inspiring examples and to set up own learning mechanisms.

Content overview

Part 1 - Urban climate change challenges and state of action

Chapter 1 sets the scene by describing the challenges of climate change and the socio-economic changes intertwined with it. It then lists possible pathways to cope with the challenges: a passive coping approach, an active incremental strategy or an active transformative strategy.

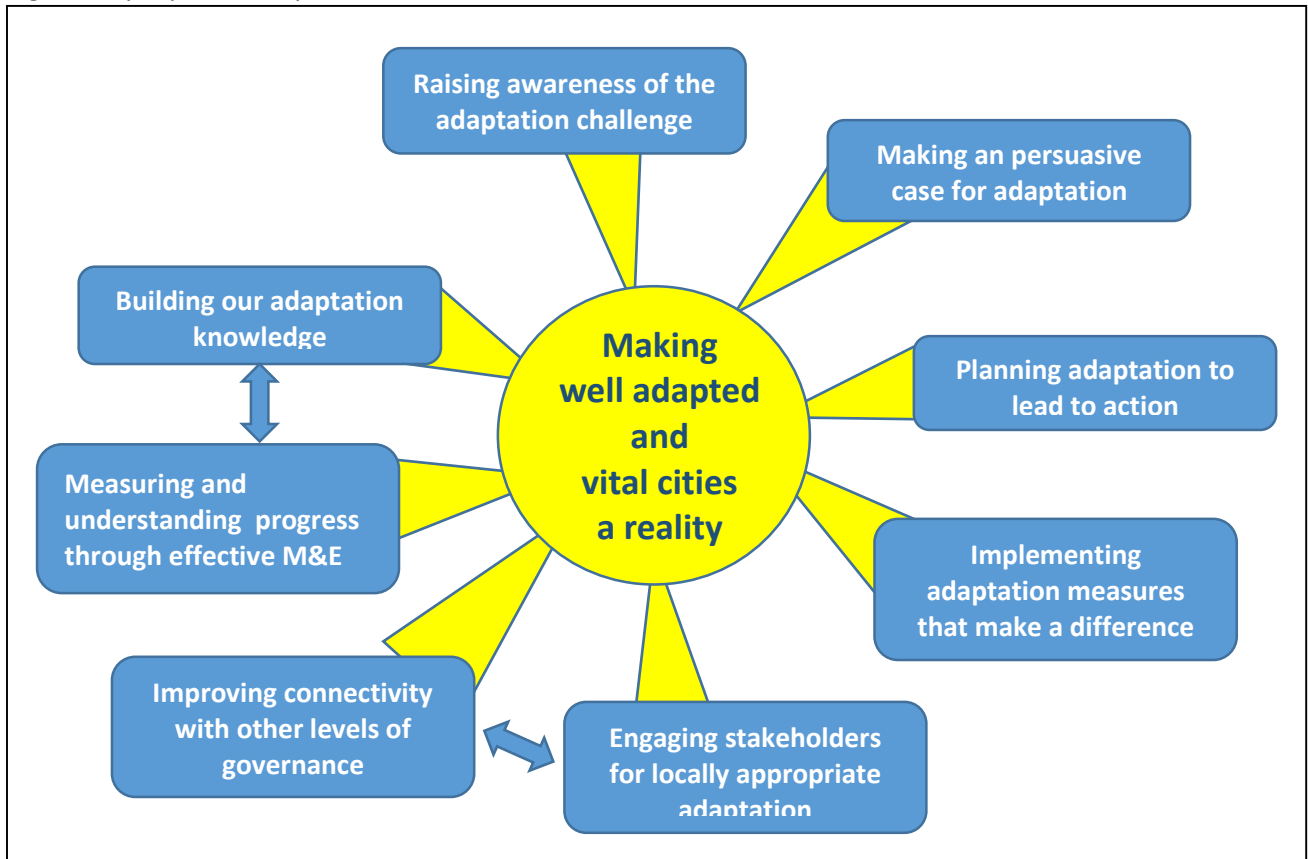
The focus is on adaptation action but considered as an integrative part of overall sustainable urban development. The chapter presents a general overview on current action at all governmental levels and reflects these against the needs for change and the different pathways.

Part 2 – A closer analysis of key topics

This chapter 2 looks again at action at all governmental levels – supporting action from the national and European level and the implementing of adaptation plans and projects at the local and regional level. It considers key areas in the adaptation process that are important to transform cities into well adapted, attractive and vital cities that have used adaptation as an opportunity (figure 2.1). It analyses the current state of action in these areas and critically reflects on them, which pathways they follow if these approaches seem to be ambitious enough according to the challenges cities (will) face.

It also highlights that policies aimed at adapting are highly relevant to areas such as biodiversity, green infrastructure, etc. and span economic and social domains. Thereby, this chapter will not be a step by step guidance but complement it. Step by step guidance can be found in the Urban Adaptation Support Tool at Climate-ADAPT: <http://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/tools/urban-ast/>

Figure: key topics of chapter 2



Part 3 – Summary an outlook