



Northern  
Periphery  
Programme  
2007–2013

Innovatively Investing  
in Europe's Northern  
Periphery for a sustainable  
and prosperous future



European Union  
European Regional Development Fund

---

## Climate Change - Adapting to The Impacts, by Communities in Northern Peripheral Regions

### **Clim-ATIC's definition of a community climate change adaptation strategy:**

A *community climate change adaptation strategy* could be manifested in different ways. It could be manifested in an overall non-binding policy document (e.g. the Nottingham declaration for the case of UK municipalities) and/or in some sort of planning process and documented in a planning document; typically (due to the nature of climate change adaptation) a long-term plan (10 to 25yrs) plan and a binding planning document (e.g. the mandatory system of land-use planning which exist in most European countries).

Furthermore, an adaptation strategy may (or may not) be the result of a participatory process in which community stakeholders are involved to set out a proposed route map to successfully adapt to the existing and future local and global impacts of climate change on that communities activities.

A community climate change adaptation strategy will build on – or in some cases include - a *local climate change vulnerability assessment* of some sort. Such an assessment will consist of a description of how expected future climatic changes may affect the local community, either directly (by means of local climatic changes) or indirectly (by means of climatic changes occurring outside of the community at stake, in which effects are transmitted by means of changes in society that in turn may effect the local community).

A climate change vulnerability assessment has to take into consideration that the total vulnerability is constituted by the combined effects of a changing climate and a changing society. A climate change vulnerability assessment can be produced in many ways, but should initially result in some kind of document describing the expected climate changes and the expected direct or indirect effects of these.

### **What is a community?**

- Geographical group of people eg town, village, river catchment etc.
- Group of people with similar interests or activities eg a business sector, community volunteer organisation, cyclists etc.
- Group of people with a similar responsibility - a stakeholder group eg. all or part of a local authority and other public support agencies etc

### **What is a strategy?**

A strategy is normally conceptualised as a early-stage or a superior level of policy making; that is a process that is before or “above” the actual implementation of concrete adaptation measures. A second option would be to include the more concrete parts of policy making – that is implementing measures – in the concept of a strategy. In the case of Clim-ATIC both options are viewed as relevant.

### **What form should the strategy take?**

A climate change adaptation strategy is most often in written form produced on paper and in electronic format. It needs to be accessible to the wider community it represents and so needs to be a short easy to read document. However a strategy may also be supported by various multi-

media tools eg films, animation, PowerPoint presentation etc. to aid communication and local decision making

### **What content should the strategy take?**

We may differ between three main types of a climate change adaptation strategy.

- 1) Climate change vulnerability assessments: In many cases, the main strategy of a first generation adaptation strategy may be to further assess more in detail the possible effects of climate change.
- 2) Effect oriented adaptation strategies: These are strategies that try to reduce the effects of expected climate change incidents, like strengthening flood protection installations.
- 3) Cause oriented adaptation strategies: These are strategies that try to reduce society's exposure to climate change incidents, like forbid development of new dwellings in areas expected to be hit by floods.

Furthermore, a fourth category may also be included, introducing the issue touched upon above regarding the possible negative and positive interactions between climate change adaptation and mitigation:

- 4) Post carbon and climate robust strategies: Secure that we develop both a low-emission and low-vulnerable society, thus avoiding negative interactions between climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

We may also differ between an explicit and implicit strategy. The explicit strategy – which is actually documented (e.g. in a “plan”) is the preferred here – but in some cases it is right to identify an implicit strategy. In the case where e.g. a municipality for some reasons have not documented such a strategy, but still has carried out specific adaptation actions, it could be right to sum up the general perspectives laid out in these activities and define them as an implicit strategy.

### **The strategy should consist of the following:**

1. A comprehensive vulnerability assessment for the community identifying what the relevant climate change impacts will be for them,
2. How the community intends to build their ‘adaptive capacity’ - i.e.
  - a. how they can increase their knowledge about what the impacts of climate change will be, and will mean to them,
  - b. how they can increase their experience of communicating, understanding and implementing adaptation activities and
  - c. how they can increase their capacity to access resources (funding, volunteer time and professional advice)
  - d. how they can make efficient evidence based decision making
3. A framework (e.g. a planning process) for a community adaptation strategy and follow-up actions, highlighting both the direct and indirect negative impacts and the opportunities, and an identification of the priority areas that require adaptation to impacts and the opportunities that exist in an action plan.

Furthermore, even if we are focusing in this context on adaptation, we should at the same time have a focus on the possible negative and positive interactions between climate change adaptation and mitigation. The overall goal should be to develop strategies that secures both a low-emission and low-vulnerable society.

A *Community Adaptation Action Plan* can be developed after publication of the strategy, this will be a shorter term document, typically 3 to 5 years, which typically could be based on so called SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time related) - targets. This action plan requires the ‘signing up’ of a wide number of community stakeholders who will have the authority to

implement adaptation actions – this document may be more difficult to adopt than a generic framework adaptation strategy.

**Summary of key criteria for a community climate change adaptation strategy:**

- Build on or include a local climate change vulnerability assessment.
- Have a long term (typically 10 to 25yrs)
- Designed by community stakeholders - local people themselves define the risks related to change
- Easier to bring together a community group with a specific defined shared interest
- Identify the direct and indirect consequences of climate change will be on a community's activities ideally through facilitated workshops.
- Faced with uncertainty focus on how to reduce vulnerability by spreading the risk
- Excepting that it is impossible to reduce all types of risk; climate change adaptation is basically about adapting to uncertainty.
- Includes how the community intends to build their 'adaptive capacity'
- Includes a framework for a community adaptation action plan
- Climate change adaptation needs to be incorporated into the spatial planning framework within a region
- A preferred solution may be that a communities adaptation objectives are integrated into existing relevant strategies rather than creating a new local strategy
- Local climate change adaptation has to be linked tight to that of mitigation.
- Adaptation is fundamentally about sustainability - it needs to be understood and recognised within the whole matrix of drivers that affect communities and their planning for the future

*Authors; Carlo Aall, Clive Bowman and Annika Nordstrom, March 2010*