

Adaptation preparedness scoreboard:

Summary for Ireland

Disclaimer

Based on the scoreboard in Commission Staff Working Document SWD(2018)460 accompanying the evaluation of the EU's strategy for adaptation to climate change. For referencing this Commission analysis from June 2018, please use the full version in the SWD.

SUMMARY

Overall progress

Ireland's first statutory National Adaptation Framework (NAF) was published in January 2018. The NAF specifies the national strategy for the application of adaptation measures in different sectors and by local authorities in their administrative areas. It specifies twelve sectors which must produce statutory sectoral adaptation plans. These plans are required to be submitted to the Irish Government for approval by 30 September 2019.

Ireland has met the criteria for many of the adaptation preparedness scoreboard indicators, however areas for improvement include the need for consideration of transboundary risks in climate vulnerability assessments (3d) and taking climate change impacts and projections into account in prevention/preparedness strategies under national disaster risk management plans (8b).

Adaptation strategies

Ireland's first national adaptation strategy, the 2012 National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (NCCAF), was the first step in developing a national policy in Ireland to address the anticipated impacts of climate change through a structured programme of action on adaptation.

This non-statutory Framework was replaced in January 2018 by the NAF.¹ The NAF identifies twelve sectors which must prepare sectoral adaptation plans: Seafood, agriculture, forestry, biodiversity, built and archaeological heritage, transport infrastructure, electricity and gas networks, communications networks, flood risk management, water quality, water services infrastructure, and health.

The NAF requires that local authorities (31 county and city county councils nationally) develop long term local climate change adaptation strategies and integrate these strategies into plans and policies that come under their remit (development plans etc).

Adaptation action plans

A number of sectoral plans were completed under the 2012 NCCAF covering flood risk, agriculture and forestry, transport and energy. Some local authorities have integrated climate change actions in their current development plans following the 2012 NCCAF,

¹ DCCAE, 2018, National Adaptation Framework, URL: <http://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/topics/adapting-to-climate-change/national-adaptation-framework/Pages/default.aspx>

e.g. Clare County Council and the Dublin local authorities are preparing a combined mitigation and adaptation action plan.

The NAF sets out the national adaptation strategy and the priority sectors that are required to prepare sectoral adaptation plans. These plans must be submitted to Government for approval by 30 September 2019 prepared in line with the requirements of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 ("the Climate Act") and also the NAF and statutory sectoral adaptation guidelines that have been developed to support adaptation planning at sectoral level.

The NAF also includes requirements on local authorities in Ireland to develop regional and local adaptation strategies. A network of 4 Climate Action Regional Offices has been set up in order to support this requirement and to drive climate action at local level.

Step A: preparing the ground for adaptation

1 Coordination structure

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) leads and coordinates national adaptation policy, supporting the implementation of adaptation at national, sectoral and local government levels.

Adaptation policy is coordinated across Government and down to the local authority sector via a National Adaptation Steering Committee. This includes members from key sectors (e.g. health, agriculture etc.) and bodies such as Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) and the County and City Management Association (CCMA) and attempts to ensure a coordinated and coherent approach to implementing the NAF. The National Adaptation Steering Committee reports to a Climate Action High Level Steering Group which is chaired by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

The 4 regional climate offices have established a National Steering Group for the Regional Offices with high level representation from all the regions, the Department, EPA, Office of Public Works (OPW) and Met Éireann.

2 Stakeholders' involvement in policy development

In 2015, the Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) was established as an independent advisory body on climate action. Its membership is composed of economists, climate change policy experts, and senior members of EPA, Teagasc, Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). It provides advice to Ministers and makes annual and periodic reports on progress.

The Citizens' Assembly also provided an avenue for stakeholder engagement. The Assembly comprised a chairperson and 99 citizens selected to be representative of the Irish electorate. In 2017 it met to discuss the topic of "How the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change" and provided recommendations to the Houses of Oireachtas.

The British Irish Council (BIC) and North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) established under the Belfast Agreement are identified as potential avenues for transboundary cooperation on climate adaptation. In April 2018, at the fifteenth ministerial meeting of the BIC's Environment Working Group, BIC Ministers discussed a paper on the topic of

adaptation to climate change and agreed to work together in the future in a number of areas of common concern.

The current “Programme for a Partnership Government” commits to establishing a National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA). The NDCA aims to create information flows and establish networks for knowledge sharing and discussion between stakeholders. The first regional gathering took place in June 2018.

Step B: assessing risks and vulnerabilities to climate change

3 Current and projected climate change

The Irish Meteorological Office Met Éireann has primary responsibility for atmospheric observations. Projections of Ireland’s climate using outputs from Global Climate Models were compiled by the EPA in 2015. Analysis of climate change impacts for Ireland are summarised in the 2017 “State of Knowledge Report” produced by the EPA which covers estimated impacts.

A National Climate Change Vulnerability scoping study was undertaken in 2013 to identify vulnerabilities across key sectors using risk ranking methodology.

In the development of sectoral adaptation plans, vulnerability and risk analysis are required as part of the plan development process.

A National Risk Assessment of Impacts of Climate Change (C-Risk)² is ongoing.

Vulnerability assessments to date such as the National Climate Change Vulnerability Scoping Study have not considered transboundary risk, however this is being considered under the NAF and local authorities are considering this in a regional context.

The Climate Information Platform Climate Ireland provides information and data required for climate adaptation planning in Ireland.

4 Knowledge gaps

DCCAE prioritises climate research needs and ensures that accessible information is provided to support the adaptation decision-making process. Climate research is also funded by a number of state bodies including Teagasc (Agriculture research), the SEAI ESRI.

The Climate Change Research Programme (CCRP), established and administered by the EPA, supports research to addressing knowledge gaps identified in the National Adaptation Framework.

5 Knowledge transfer

Ireland’s climate information platform Climate Ireland³ has been developed as a “one stop shop” information platform which aims to support adaptation decision making at all levels including the general public. The website contains resources and tools related to adaptation including a sectoral adaptation tool for key sectors.

² URL: <https://www.climateriskireland.com/>

³ URL: <http://www.climateireland.ie>

In addition, a programme of capacity building, outreach and training measures aimed at decision makers and adaptation practitioners is ongoing. Most recently, in May 2018, a series of seminars were held by the Climate Ireland research team to build the capacity of local authority staff in dealing with climate adaptation and plan head for a regional approach to climate action.

Step C: identifying adaptation options

6 Adaptation options' identification

Sectoral plans on flood risk management, agriculture and forestry, transport and energy networks have been published under the 2012 NCCAF and will be updated under the NAF. The NAF identifies twelve sectors which are required to prepare adaptation plans by 30 September 2019: seafood, agriculture, forestry, biodiversity, built and archaeological heritage, transport infrastructure, electricity and gas networks, communications networks, flood risk management, water quality, water services infrastructure, and health. Plans must be prepared in line with published sectoral adaptation planning guidelines (DCCAE, 2018) and must be based primarily on the results of a sectoral risk assessment and actions must also be prioritised. The NAF lays out the principles for the identification of adaptation actions in Ireland. The sectoral adaptation planning guidelines provide a detailed step by step guide on how sectors should develop and prioritise their adaptation actions.

The NAF notes the emerging acknowledgement of the need to enhance coherence and complementarity between the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

A subgroup of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning, jointly chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Office of Emergency Planning, is in place regarding Ireland's engagement with the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction. The DCCAE is represented on this subgroup.

Ireland published a National Framework on Emergency Planning in October 2017. This will be complemented by a series of Strategic Emergency Guidelines, including a guideline on climate adaptation.

7 Funding resources identified and allocated

Sectors identified under the NAF will consider longer-term funding strategies to enable domestic investment in adaptation measures in line with the actions identified in their sectoral adaptation plans.

Ireland's National Development Plan (2018-2027) recognises the role of public capital investment in achieving national climate action goals. The plan identifies flood defences, resilient infrastructure and agriculture as priority adaptation actions.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) includes an objective to support national targets for emission reductions and objectives for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Funding has been allocated to research and also the development of resources such as Climate Ireland. Funding for a five year period has also been allocated to establish the 4 regional climate offices.

Step D: Implementing adaptation action

8 Mainstreaming adaptation in planning processes

The national administration has made significant effort to integrate adaptation in land use and resource planning policies, though this is work in progress.

The National Planning Framework (NPF)⁴ is Ireland's overarching planning and development framework for the period up to 2040. It sets a high-level strategy for the coordination of a range of national, regional and local policies and activities, planning and investment, for delivery through both the public and private sectors. The NPF seeks to ensure that climate change considerations are further integrated into the planning system, and continue to be addressed as a matter of course in planning-related decision-making processes and contains a number of national policy objectives to achieve this.

The NAF identifies the importance of spatial planning as a means of integrating climate adaptation into national policies. It identifies the importance of considering heat-island effects, biodiversity and green spaces, development layouts and building materials within existing planning decision making processes.

Climate change considerations are required in the SEA of plans and programmes and the EIA of projects.

The NAF recognises the role of the private sector/insurance in quantifying, pricing, and reducing risk. In 2010, the enterprise advisory board Forfás published "Adaption to Climate Change: Issues for Business" which concluded that early adaptation measures reduce costs of climate change for businesses.

9 Implementing adaptation

Most adaptation activities in Ireland are currently linked to assessing impacts and vulnerability, and significant effort is being put into mainstreaming. Work has taken place to establish the institutional frameworks required for climate resilience addressing governance, guidelines and climate information, capacity building, the establishment of a regional structure and a National Dialogue on Climate Action.

The non statutory NCCAF published in 2012 led to the publication of four sectoral adaptation plans. Sectoral adaptation plans under the 2018 statutory NAF must be submitted to Government in accordance with a legal deadline of 30 September 2019.

The EPA has published guidelines on integrating climate change into SEA in 2015.

The National Adaptation Steering Committee includes representation from key government sectors, EPA research, the Climate Change Advisory Council Secretariat, and local and regional government. The Steering Committee's role is to provide advice and guidance to sectors, identified in the NAF, on the development of sectoral adaptation plans. Membership of the Steering Committee has recently been reviewed under the NAF and the group now also reports into a Climate Action High-Level Steering Group, chaired by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment. This group addresses climate mitigation and adaptation.

A network of 4 Climate Action Regional Offices has been set up in order to support this requirement and to drive climate action at local level.

⁴ <http://npf.ie/wp-content/uploads/Project-Ireland-2040-NPF.pdf>

In addition, progress has been made in mainstreaming climate change considerations into Ireland's planning system. Ongoing work in developing climate resources such as the CIViC and C-RISK projects, Climate Ireland, the Sectoral and Local Authority Adaptation Guidelines and the outputs of the Flood Policy Coordination Group may also be seen as relevant.

Step E: Monitoring and evaluation of adaptation activities

10 Monitoring and reporting

Under the Climate Act, Annual Transition Statements must be made by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment and relevant Ministers identified in the NAF on adaptation policy measures adopted in the previous year, which will include updates on implementation of NAF. Implementation of the NAF will also be monitored via the Climate Action High Level Steering Group and the National Adaptation Steering Committee.

The Climate Change Advisory Council also has a number of reporting obligations including annual and period reviews of progress, with the first periodic report published in July 2017. Sectors are required to consult with CCAC when developing sectoral adaptation plans

A network of 4 Climate Action Regional Offices has been set up in order to support this requirement and to drive climate action at local level. The Offices are overseen by a National Steering Committee, which will approve annual work programmes for each office and monitor delivery of same. DCCAE are represented on the steering committee. The Regional Offices are also represented on the National Adaptation Steering Committee.

The NAF will be reviewed at least once in every 5 years period by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

11 Evaluation

The NAF is mandated by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 to be reviewed every 5 years. As the NAF was published in January 2018 it should therefore be reviewed by January 2023. The National Adaptation Steering Committee and Climate Action High Level Steering Group also have a role in monitoring and evaluating progress, which the regional offices' work is subject to monitoring also.

The National Dialogue on Climate Action aims to enable stakeholder engagement in the evaluation and review of policy on a long term basis.