

Plenary – Reporting Session 12h00

Impacts and Adaptation Workgroup

The Working Group on Impacts and Adaptation was chaired by Outi Berghäll of the Finnish Ministry for Environment.

The first speaker in the working group was Paul Watkiss of the AEA Technologies, who gave an overview of the research perspective on Adaptation to Climate Change.

Paul pointed out that adaptation is becoming increasingly important in our response to climate change. He also listed some of the key impacts in economic terms, a list which resembled the one identified in the draft mandate. He also reminded the group that adaptation policy objectives and indicators are currently being developed in several countries (Finland, Canada, UK) who are integrating adaptation into their Climate Change policy.

Paul then provided a list of challenges which need to be addressed and include the existing uncertainty within which decisions need to be made, the policy actions and legislation required (which should be stakeholder led rather than command and action), the issue of cost as well as cost-effective adaptation action, the need to avoid mal-adaptation, the issue of cost analysis and finally the economic, ethical and political issues which around the context of adaptation policy.

Paul pointed out that there also are 3 crucial criteria for successful adaptation: building capacity for adaptation, altering existing plans to manage climate change and taking opportunities and the implementation for adaptation.

To conclude Paul stressed the need for developing policy framework for adaptation to conduct research about cost-effectiveness and the proportionality of action and the need to integrate and mainstream.

This was followed by a presentation by Abigail Howells (DG Environment), who gave an overview of the draft mandate for the ECCP Working Group on Impacts and Adaptation.

Sebastian Catowsky from the Association of British Insurers (ABI) then presented the perspective of the Insurance Industry on Adaptation to Climate change.

Adaptation can often be seen as risk management, and that risks indeed need to be managed. The cost of extreme weather events have more or less doubled in each decade. Although some impacts may not in some cases appear particularly huge yet the damage cost may increase rapidly and societies are really sensitive to weather events.

He concluded by indicating that the insurance industry can be a messenger for the change that is taking place.

In relation to the mandate for the working group a number of more specific comments were raised. In particular it was suggested that the group should:

- include a measure of different levels at which adaptation can take place: consider the principle of subsidiarity: e.g. what can be done at community level and in which way can the community support action at local and regional level
- consider the impact of Climate change on citizens (particularly children)
- the objective should make a reference to the vulnerability of the natural environment and ecosystems, not just the European society and economy
- consider activities currently occurring at international level beyond the EU

- raise the understanding of impacts of climate change and adaptation amongst stakeholders and ordinary citizens
- clarify the concept of adaptation: dealing with conserving status quo or managing change
- include the infrastructure of transport and energy sectors in sectoral approach
- consider the mechanisms required to engage stakeholders in adaptation process
- clarify the criteria of vulnerability which should be understood by citizen and made accessible to citizens
- include a reference to a series of cross-cutting elements throughout the thematic groups
- invite representatives of local government and regions to participate in meetings