NEWSLETTER OF THE ORIENTGATE PROJECT • Issue 1 • January 2013

Climategateway

Integrating science into planning policy

Finding a balance between mitigation and adaptation
Photo: iStock

Shaping resilient development strategies

A sunny day in southern Italy; children swimming and making sandcastles. It might be a normal summer day, but in fact it is late autumn. Just natural climate variability? Or an indication of climate change, and changes in the frequency, intensity, spatial extent, duration and timing of weather and climate events?

Climate change is under way — the scientific evidence is incontrovertible — and it will increasingly affect access to water, food production, health and the environment globally. In principle, improving environmental management and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods would help reduce vulnerability to climate change impacts. There is therefore a need to place climate change in the mainstream of economic policies and sustainable development projects.

Climate finance can be effective in reducing GHG emissions, promoting structural change, building capacity, catalysing private investments and increasing the coordination of donor funding. The climate challenge requires determined policy action to scale up public and private investments for the implementation of low-carbon, climate-resilient development strategies.

One obstacle to shaping the climate agenda is a lack of understanding of the effectiveness of climate finance, especially in measuring adaptation impacts, due to a lack of data and assessment methodologies. For 2010–2050, the World Bank estimates the annual cost of adaptation at between USD 75 billion and 100 billion, and other estimates are higher. A balance must be found between mitigation and adaptation. We need to learn how climate information can become an essential component of regional and local planning, and how we can engage communities in designing adaptation strategies and achieving consensus on mitigation policies. OrientGate is well placed to play a key role in this process and we look forward to a successful and exciting project.

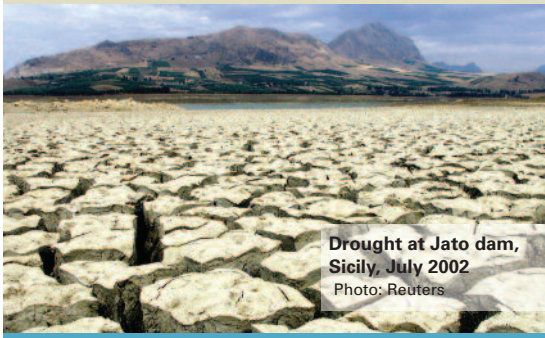
Antonio Navarra • CMCC (President)

Building bridges

The OrientGate project aims to build a partnership between communities that produce climate knowledge and communities that apply that knowledge in order to coordinate climate adaptation actions across South Eastern Europe (SEE).

The goal is to build a dynamic bridge to supply urban planners, territorial and nature protection authorities, regional and local development agencies, decision makers and other stakeholders with data and analyses, contributing to a better understanding of the impact of climate variability in urban and rural areas, raising awareness and strengthening cooperation.

The main outputs will be six pilot studies of specific climate adaptation assessment activities developed by three thematic centres; a data platform linked to the EU Clearinghouse on Climate Adaptation; capacity-building seminars and workshops; and a working partnership among hydrometeorological services in SEE. The web-based network ensures the accessibility of all project data, documentation, discussions and guidelines not only to project partners but also to SEE territories not directly involved in the project.



Drought at Jato dam, Sicily, July 2002
Photo: Reuters

SOUTH EAST EUROPE
Jointly for our common future

Programme co-funded by the EUROPEAN UNION

Responding to the challenge

A flooded island in Budapest, August 2002
Photo: Reuters

Background

Many SEE countries are exposed to a rise in sea level. Already disadvantaged rural areas face increased water stress due to altered precipitation, runoff and recharge patterns and rates, saltwater intrusion into coastal aquifers, higher domestic water demand, and higher demand for water in the agricultural sector. The decline in ecosystem services is exacerbated by a deterioration in water quality, land and ecosystem losses, and a decline in fish stocks.

Over 40 years ago the first numerical climate simulations were undertaken. Since then, numerical methods have allowed enormous progress, expanding the number and type of variables predicted, the range of the predictions and the type of sectors involved. The accuracy, reliability and scope of forecasts have all improved.

However, this knowledge often does not reach stakeholders quickly enough or in sufficient quantities. Climate change adaptation in SEE is hindered by fragmented and uncoordinated data services, patchy risk assessment procedures, and the low uptake of available knowledge in climate-sensitive sectors. There is an urgent need to overcome barriers to the efficient exploitation of the knowledge produced by the scientific community so that it can be taken into account in the development of policies and strategies.

Goals at a glance

The OrientGate project aims to:

- develop a comprehensive and consistent methodology for assessing risks arising as a result of climate variability and change;
- harmonise risk assessment and communication procedures of hydrometeorological services;
- foster the integration of climate adaptation knowledge in territorial planning and development; and
- enhance capacity to reconcile the risks and opportunities of environmental changes.

Areas of innovation

OrientGate will:

- form a bridge between the scientific community and stakeholders, transforming basic climate data into sector-specific information;
- collect examples of methodologies, practices and lessons learned from a variety of climatic applications; and
- prepare a series of guideline papers and handbooks.

ORIENTGATE IN ACTION

Project activities will be carried out under seven work packages (WPs):

WP1 Transnational project and financial management

WP2 Communication activities

WP3 Mapping and harmonising data and downscaling

WP4 **Thematic Centre 1:** Forestry and Agriculture
Pilot Study 1: Adapted forest management at LTER Zöbelboden, Austria
Pilot Study 2: Climate change adaptation measures in Romanian agriculture

WP5 **Thematic Centre 2:** Drought, Water and Coasts
Pilot Study 3: Climate change adaptation in the new water regime in Puglia region, Italy
Pilot Study 4: Effects of climate change on wetland ecosystems in Attica region, Greece
Pilot Study 5: Water resources and hydroelectric use, Trento, Italy

WP6 **Thematic Centre 3:** Urban Adaptation and Health
Pilot Study 6: Vulnerability assessment in two Hungarian municipalities — 13th district of Budapest and Veszprém

WP7 Regional Planning Cross-Sectoral Study

Budapest, Hungary,
Photo: iStock

Vineyards in Fruska Gora, Serbia
Photo: iStock

Local focus in Doha

During the 18th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Doha, OrientGate was presented at the side event "A Local Focus on EU Climate Policy: Adaptation in an Enlarging Europe".

The side event was organised by the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) on December 5, 2012, and focused on efforts to increase the climate resilience of new EU member states and candidate/accession countries, with an emphasis on gaps and needs, challenges, good practice at regional and local level, and the enhancement of regional cooperation.

The project's regional approach was also highlighted and examples of adaptation measures at regional and local level in South Eastern Europe were presented. A panel discussion focused on national efforts, the gaps between the scientific and decision-making communities, and financing challenges.

According to COP18 President Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Doha has opened a new gateway to greater ambition and greater action — the Doha Climate Gateway. At the conference in Qatar, governments took the next step in the global response to climate change. In particular, the countries participating in the UNFCCC launched a new commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol, agreed a timetable for the adoption of a universal climate agreement by 2015, and together identified a path towards achieving the necessary ambition to respond to climate change. They also endorsed the completion of new institutions and agreed ways and means to deliver climate finance and technology to developing countries.

source • http://www.cop18.qa/news/singlestory.aspx?id=297

Inspiring greater ambition in Doha
Photo: Zsolt Bauer

PROJECT PARTNERS

The OrientGate partnership comprises 21 financing partners, nine associates and three observers, covering 13 countries. Partners have differing roles and can be grouped into three main categories: scientific institutions; national hydrometeorological services; and institutions responsible for policy planning. The project was launched in July 2012 and is co-funded by the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme.

Partners

Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change, Italy (lead partner)

Forestry Department, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria

Gradiska Local Development Agency, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Hydrometeorological Service of Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, Bulgaria

National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology, Bulgaria

City of Koprivnica, Croatia

Meteorological and Hydrological Service, Croatia

Attica Region, Greece

Center for Technological Research of Crete, Greece

Goulandris Natural History Museum, Greek Biotope Wetland Centre, Greece

Hungarian Meteorological Service

The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, Hungary

Autonomous Province of Trento, Italy

Department of Environment, Territory and Sustainability Policies, Basilicata Region, Italy

Hydrometeorological Service, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism, Montenegro

Environmental Protection Agency of Covasna, Romania

National Meteorological Administration, Romania

Republic Hydrometeorological Service of Serbia

Odessa State Environmental University, Ukraine

Associated partners

Regional Council of Shkodra, Albania

Forest Service of the Federal State Government of Upper Austria

Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, Greece

Municipality of Komotini, Greece

13th District of Budapest, Hungary

Municipality of Veszprem, Hungary

Region of Puglia, Mediterranean Department, Italy

General Department of Foreign Economic Activity and European Integration, Odessa Regional State Administration, Ukraine

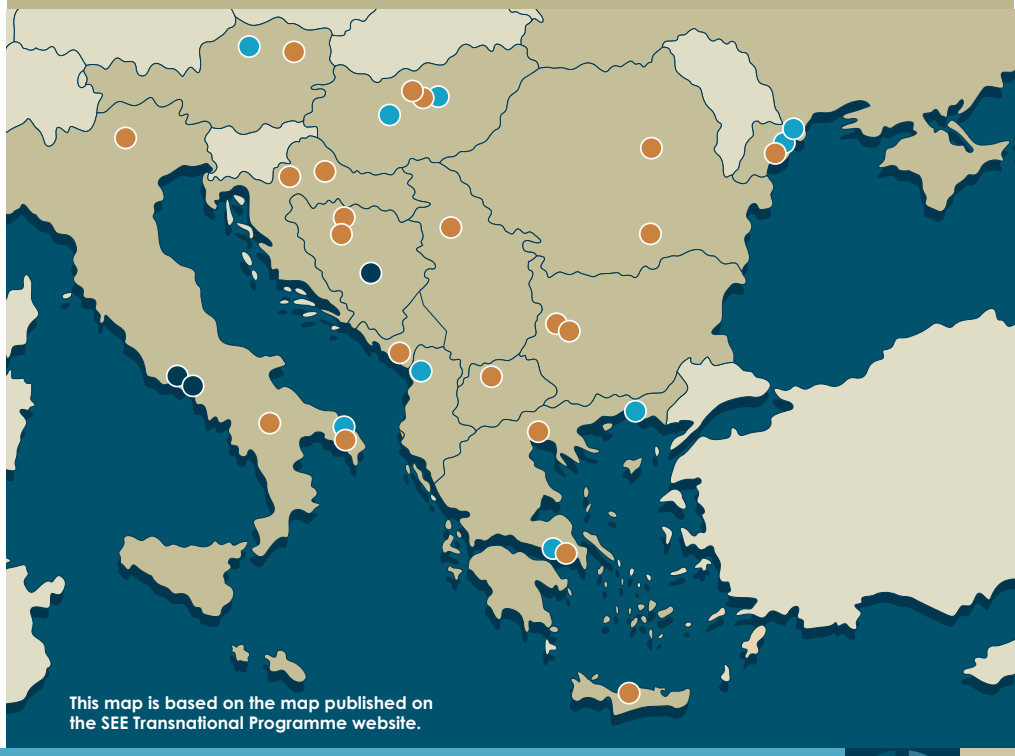
Vilkovo City Council, Ukraine

Observing partners

Federal Hydrometeorological Institute, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea

Union of Italian Provinces



This map is based on the map published on the SEE Transnational Programme website.

Ready for action: partners at the launch event
Photo: Daniel Biro

Launch event

The project kick-off meeting was held at the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) in Szentendre, Hungary, on September 17-18, 2012. The two-day event attracted more than 60 participants from 10 countries and was an opportunity for project partners to meet, learn about and discuss the activities planned under the project's seven work packages as well as the implementation of the six pilot studies. Much of the discussion focused on the work package that will map the variety of methodologies, tools and indicators used by hydrometeorological services across the SEE region, and the policy-related work package that aims to boost the uptake of scientific knowledge in the policy-making process. Particular attention was given to ways and means of communicating project outputs and results to stakeholder groups. Parallel working group meetings were held to enable further discussion of the work packages. The kick-off meeting was followed by the first meeting of the project's Steering Committee and Scientific Committee.

GLOSSARY

Climate adaptation The adjustment of ecological, social and economic systems in response to the current or expected impacts of climate change and in order to moderate or offset possible damage and exploit beneficial opportunities.

Climate variability Variations in climate statistics on all temporal and spatial scales beyond that of individual weather events.

Climate vulnerability The sensitivity of a system to climate changes; the ability to sustain damage caused by climate change; lack of resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Resilience The ability of a system to recover from the impacts of a disaster by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure.

Vulnerability assessment The identification of who and what is exposed and sensitive to climate changes, taking into consideration factors that make human beings or the environment susceptible to harm.

Flooding on the river Bodrog, Hungary, April 2011
Photo: Reuters

Contacts

Lead partner, project coordinator
Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change (CMCC)
Martino Bacile di Castiglione • Email: martino.bacile@cmcc.it • www.cmcc.it
Giulia Galluccio • Email: giulia.galluccio@cmcc.it • www.cmcc.it

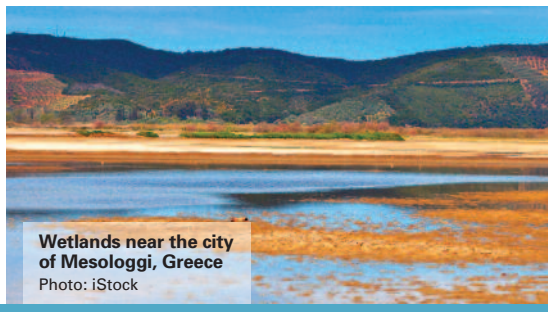
Work Package: Communication activities
Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)
Venelina Varbova • Email: vvarbova@rec.org • www.rec.org

If you would like to subscribe to the project newsletter *Climate Gateway*, please write to Venelina Varbova.

In order to enhance the impact of the project, the OrientGate partners would be happy to get in touch with other similar initiatives, individual regions with good practice in the field, as well as companies and/or organisations carrying out research on the topic. If you have relevant experience to share, please write to Martino Bacile di Castiglione or Venelina Varbova.

www.orientgateproject.org

Editors: Reka Prokai, Venelina Varbova
Contributors: Martino Bacile di Castiglione
Design and layout: Tricia Barna
Copyediting and proofreading: Rachel Hideg
Publisher: The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe



Wetlands near the city of Mesologgi, Greece
Photo: iStock