

Clima East: Support to Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation
in ENP East Countries and Russia

**Conference on ecosystem–based adaptation
and lessons for national adaptation planning**
22-23 September, 2015
Chisinau (Moldova), Hotel Codru

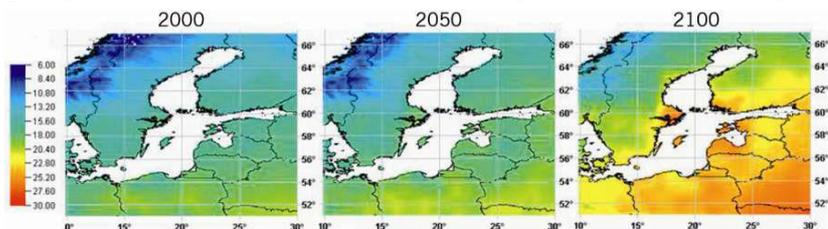
Synopsis of the meeting and key take home messages

Background Climate change is placing pressures on all countries to make progress in adaptation planning. However all countries, including the Clima East Partner Countries and the EU, face challenges and barriers to action at national level, in particular since the task requires cross-sectoral and inter-agency action that may not align with existing governance structures. Clima East is supporting both national adaptation planning through its Policy component and innovative ecosystem-based adaptation approaches through its Pilot Projects which offer novel opportunities to demonstrate the principles of inclusive planning for resilience and adaptation.

This conference aimed to support dialogue to further strengthen understanding and action to address the negative impacts of climate change on landscapes and communities. It brought together diverse stakeholders from the 7 Clima East Partner Countries and representatives and practitioners from the European Commission, EU Member States, UNDP, the Clima East teams, and representatives of other EU-funded projects in the region including Climate Forum East II and FLEG II. Partner Country participants included delegates from 21 different sectoral national ministries and agencies, 7 NGOs, as well as academic institutes and local authorities. The participants discussed key policy obstacles and opportunities facing adaptation planning, and solutions that policymakers and stakeholders can consider.

The participant presentations and discussions highlighted the following key take home messages:

- ***The evidence and understanding of climate impacts in the Eastern Partnership region and the EU continues to grow:*** a presenter from Clima East Policy Project showed recent research from Russia suggesting temperature rise in Eurasia over the last 25 years has been greatest precisely in the Eastern Partnership region and western Russia, while a representative working with Natura 2000 in Latvia showed the fundamental projected climate shift in north eastern Europe to 2100 (see left)



- **Adaptation brings cross-cutting benefits, crucially protecting lives and livelihoods, but also maximizing economic efficiency and bringing new economic opportunities, and itself reducing GHG emissions.**
- **Finding the public investment needed to kick start and support action remains a challenge.** Experience shows that it is necessary to bring together diverse sources of finance from international funding bodies, national budgets, and private and community resources, but mainstreaming and legitimising adaptation expenditure through revised budget codes is key.
- **Adaptation requires action at local, national and international level, and intensive communication between all three.** Adaptation action is rooted in the specifics of the landscapes and communities of each country and locality, but requires dialogue and support through strategic action at national and international level. A clear and compelling high level policy framework (such as provided under EU directives and strategy documents) will be a key driver of accelerated action with deeper impact. Dialogue will need to address regulatory and legal hurdles to action through, for example, more consultative planning processes, and changing and improving economic and fiscal incentives to work with adaptation measures. In particular, new mechanisms need to be built, and existing opportunities used more fully, to overcome manmade boundaries at district and regional level, and between states, to work more effectively with natural systems that function across these borders. Examples were brought from the Clima East Pilot Projects and from the EU where stakeholders were coming together to overcome these barriers, and cross-border funding opportunities such as EU LIFE+ were highlighted.
- **Adaptation requires complex information** on climate change, local ecosystems, and local communities and economies. To work, the science and data must be good. Investment is needed to generate and integrate this data to get the interventions right.
- **Achieving more effective adaptation planning, using ecosystem or similar approaches, is about awareness and changing behaviour – and is an iterative process.** Engagement and awareness-raising both for the public and within government needs to be long-term, and systematic, with a recognition that change in behaviour is the crucial requirement for mainstreaming climate into public policy and public perceptions
- **We are all learning as we go** – the need to share experiences, knowledge, successes and failures is crucial, and facilitating access to this knowledge. Projects such as Clima East, and initiatives like Climate ADAPT, can support this need.



Summary of Proceedings and Key Themes

Introductory Session

Following welcoming addresses from Maria Nagornii, representing the Ministry of Environment, Aneil Singh of the EU Delegation to Moldova, and Dafina Gercheva UN Resident Representative in Moldova, the conference opened with an introductory sessions providing a background of information on adaptation and ecosystem approaches, and the work undertaken by the Clima East Pilots and Policy projects.



Medeia Inashvili, Key Expert 4 of the Policy Project provided an overview of types and approaches of adaptation or response to the effect of climate change, and the framework of conventions and cooperation established to try to support the international community with the task.

Clima East Pilot teams provided a brief on Clima East pilot initiatives for improved, sustainable peatlands, pasturelands and pasture/forest management. Vladimir Koltunov (Belarus, on behalf of projects in Belarus and Ukraine), Eltekin Omarov (Azerbaijan, on behalf of pilots in Azerbaijan and Georgia), Aram Ter-Zakaryan (Armenia, on behalf of pilots in Armenia and Moldova), Andrey Sirin (Russia pilots). Each pilot highlighted the technical processes and surrounding work in consultation, engagement and information gathering that has proved crucial to making progress, as well as key results in supporting ecosystems and communities to cope with the effects of climate change.

Tuukka Castren then introduced experiences under the FLEG programme in mainstreaming climate awareness and resilience into forestry management. He emphasized that the key was to change behaviour – and without this, sustainable results cannot last. Echoing the findings of the pilot teams, Tuukka Castren underlined the important of information (Adaptation needs to be clear on adaptation to what, what are the objectives and future trends that we have to adapt to), mainstreaming climate issues into all management processes, and the synergetic effect of positive adaptation action in a sector such as forestry for building resilience in other sectors.

Mikhail Kozeltsev Key Expert for the Clima East Policy Programme, presented the support provided to date on adaptation policy issues, including support for preparing for adaptation planning, gathering the information base, preparing to access funding, and addressing adaptation issues within the INDC processes. He also presented evidence of the importance of concerted (governmental) action and funding of climate adaptation.

These introductions set the stage for, and already highlighted a number of key issues picked up during, the day's workshop sessions that followed.

Workshop Session 1: Getting Adaptation on to the agenda

This session was aimed at identifying the benefits of ecosystem based adaptation, indeed adaptation action in general, for different stakeholders throughout society, and mechanisms for raising awareness and encouraging or ensuring action. The conference heard short reports from 4 speakers on particular



aspects of the topic, before opening the floor to questions and debate. Maria Nagornii, representing the Ministry of Environment of Moldova, who spoke about the process of developing the recently approved National Adaptation Strategy of Moldova, and reflected on the stakeholder consultation and engagement process that took place. Natalia Gozak of CFE II drew out the particular potential of effective ecosystem-based measures for protecting the lives and livelihoods of communities against disasters, drawing on the natural protection offered by intact landscapes. Andrei Zanevskiy and Victor Melnik, from Belarus' Ministry of Agriculture and Hydromet office, jointly presented the benefits of climate awareness for making smart choices for agriculture, and Malgorzata Siuta reported on the key economic arguments for ecosystem based action.

The presentations and following discussion brought out a number of key observations:

1) Ecosystem based approaches are, by definition, holistic in nature, and their use allows a refocus on the environment and natural world surrounding us as the foundation of all social and economic activities. Accordingly, **many of the benefits** associated with effective care and use of ecosystems in dealing with the effects of climate change **are common to many, indeed often all types of stakeholders.**

A number of key cross-cutting benefits were identified

- **Working with nature makes economic sense**, long term and short term, through:
 - Costs avoided (for instance rebuild after damage)
 - Economic assets and livelihoods defended and sustained
 - Free services that can be provided by natural systems, elements, animals and plants
 - Increase in land and asset values where the physical environment and quality of ecosystem services are maintained or improved
 - New opportunities seized, through switching to new activities suited to altered climate conditions – for example, new crop and planting seasons in Ukraine and Belarus.

At aggregate level, Malgorzata Siuta showed that the economic contribution of activities within the EU Natura 2000 sites has been estimated at some 200-300 bn Euros per year, and argued that the key to getting adaptation onto the agenda is precisely a focus on the economic potential.

- **Ecosystems can save lives and livelihoods** enabling communities to avoid and/or cope better with natural disasters - strong evidence of the power of natural defences was provided, by CFE II - citing instances of plant-cover in securing regions against flood, and, in discussion, in avoiding forest fires.
- **Maximising food security** – through knowing how to produce the right food that thrives in the climate conditions and contributes to a sustainable landscape.

2) Some benefits, though indirectly benefitting all stakeholders, carry **greater weight for certain groups.**



- **Mitigation effect – the sinks and storage effect of peat, forest and other landscapes are of considerable significance** in many European and Partner Countries and successful management of them is in the common interest in the quest to limit net emission levels and temperature rise. However it may be of particular interest to
 - Governments – in understanding and reporting their GHG accounting, and achieving targeted reductions
 - Business or local economic actors - in realising the value of CERs through market or subsidy instruments.
- **Biodiversity and human wellbeing**
 - Supporting governmental CBD commitments
 - Creating more pleasant environments for people to live and work, in both rural and urban areas
- **Sustaining traditional and local livelihoods**
 - Ecosystem approaches can revalorise local knowledge and traditional methods within communities

Discussions already began to touch upon approaches and associated challenges for getting the right engagement – Maria Nagornii in particular highlighted though crucial, awareness-raising on its own, or top down instruction, would not be sufficient to drive new ways of planning across government for sustainable, nature-based development. **More complex and tailored capacity building is key to achieving effective and informed dialogue**, and agreement on a realistic and effective policy-making and action.

Workshop Session 2: Problems facing effective ecosystem-based adaptation, and how to fix them

Session 2 recentred the focus on challenges to introducing or increasing the use of ecosystem-based adaptation principles at local, national and international levels.

Donald Lunan, DAI, commenced the session drawing in LIFE+ experience from the UK to draw out the particular issues associated with applying eco-system based approaches outside of protected areas, where the attention to preservation of natural systems and habitats receives lower priority. Alexandru Rotaru, Project Manager of the Clima East Pilot Project in Georgia, described the difficulties of delivering ecosystem based action on the basis of existing land use, ownership and planning processes in Moldova. Kestutis Navickas, Baltic Environmental Forum, illustrated the need for international coordination cross-border (or even across multiple borders) as natural world works across a range of scales from local



to intercontinental. He showed how activity in one country impacts on the ecosystems of another, taking the example of the aquatic warbler to spark debate.

The sessions and discussion highlighted the following key problems and solutions

- **Need for action at multiple levels.....but connection between all levels**
 - Donald Lunan highlighted that interconnected natural systems and human activity cross the boundaries of protected areas, and that the results of action in one locality will be limited until the impacts of activities in neighbouring places are researched and addressed. Kestutis Navickas demonstrated that, in some instances, the scale gets even larger, connecting countries or continents in the same challenge, and requiring multilateral action, governed by international agreements and founded on education and mobilisation of commitment from grassroots to government. Alexandru Rotaru made clear the limits placed by national or local planning processes on managing changes of practice to promote ecosystems focussed activity. He highlighted that climate and environment issues are not incorporated and therefore are not addressed in spatial planning processes. Further he pointed to the difficulties arising from the fact that certain information requirements needed to manage stakeholders interests in the context of change, for example, clear records of land owners, are not easily accessible – a challenge echoed by other participants in discussions.
- **Need for complex information**
 - Ecosystems have unique properties, and function within complex human activity. **Effective action needs clear understanding at design stage of**
 - **climate impacts**
 - **the technical requirements of rehabilitating that particular landscape, as highlighted in each of the Clima East Pilot project presentations**
 - **and of the socio-economic context - and hard data - of the region being addressed.**

Donald Lunan's presentation showed the importance of comprehensive information to achieving meaningful results in and around protected areas in Wales, and of deploying it effectively through a management system such as that developed by Futurscapes in the cases study presented. This echoed the emphasis placed on planning and effective monitoring systems in the Clima East Pilot Projects. These information requirements have to be detailed and have to be understood against each other, in order to correctly manage the social, political and technical changes required in tandem.

- **Hard and soft incentives**



- **Awareness raising of the long term benefits of change**, and dangers of inaction, remains crucial. **However, the ability to provide compensation to some actors**, particularly those facing immediate financial losses in the short term, may often be key to securing change, and maintaining community engagement.
- Alongside incentives, **penalties for damaging activity** should be enacted and applied.
- **Funding**
 - **The ‘elephant in the room’** of who will pay for the investment costs of ecosystem based adaptation action should be addressed up front, and potentially a range of sources of finance established, to share the load
 - **National and local budget, international agencies and funds, as well as private and community funds could all play a part.** (and here the medium to long term economic arguments for using and managing ecosystems effectively, discussed in Session 1, should be recalled)
 - **The prospects for national funding of ecosystem-based action in the PCs are not clear**, especially in the absence of a top down policy directive that facilitates, or directly frustrates this.
 - **International funding is available.** In addition to GEF, AF and GCF funds, Kestutis Navickas highlighted that new LIFE+ funding from the EU can be utilised outside of the EU where it can be demonstrated that action will impact the EU – a promising recognition of the trans-border nature of the many climate and environment problems, and their solutions

Relating to national legal and regulatory frameworks

- **Need for Climate, biodiversity and conservation aware planning frameworks**
 - Alexandru Rotaru highlighted the **need for changes to legislation and planning processes to mainstream climate and environment impacts** into decisions.
 - Discussion highlighted the **difficulties that could be faced within protected areas** too, in particular that the **protections in place may prevent innovation and sustainable and balanced use of key assets.** This situation is exacerbated where the administration of protected areas is under-resourced or not prioritised, and decisions for action not easily obtained.
- **Mobilising popular pressure and building movements for change**



- The first step to legislative change will often require the creation of sufficient momentum, through civil society mobilisation and branding efforts, to raise the visibility of the issue.

Workshop Session 3: Next steps – using ecosystem approaches in national planning

The discussions on Day 1 of the conference highlighted that a system that can engage, coordinate and draw on the strengths of all stakeholders will be required in order to maximise the benefits and effectiveness of ecosystem based action. For governments the challenge is to create a policy and planning environment that understands, and enables bottom-up responses in dialogue with national priorities and programmes.

The final session sought to identify key issues and solutions for creating an enabling environment at national level, to draw the best from ecosystem based approaches to adaptation. Brief presentations by Mariam Mrevshvili, of NACRES NGO based in Tbilisi, Georgia, and from Andris Viesturs Urtans, Expert for the EU Life+ Project "National Conservation Management Programme for Natura 2000 sites in Latvia", both provided practical examples of how to bridge the gap between an approach to action that is rooted in local conditions, and a higher level policy and regulatory framework.

Lara Sargsyan, Senior Specialist of the Climate Change and Air Protection Policy Division, Ministry of Nature Protection, Armenia, also provided an overview of adopted climate policy in Armenia, including action on adaptation.

The following recommendations arose from the presentation and discussion:

- **Create simple and robust mechanisms to capture and use the knowledge and commitment of local stakeholders**
 - Mariam Mrevshvili described how simple methodologies had been created under the Clima East Pilot project in Georgia to enable the herders who used the pasturelands being restored under the project to become active participants in planning and implementation. These methodologies not only enabled the project to draw on herders knowledge of pastures and local practices at design stage, but also equipped the herders to act as monitors of progress, as pasture ‘watchers’, delivering on a key aspect of sustainable and systematic implementation of the ecosystem approach: effective and affordable monitoring and evaluation. The project has also introduced a special governing body consisting of representative of herder and Agency for Protected Areas to formalise their involvement in governance and planning.
 - Andris Urtans showed the importance of ‘explaining, training and involving’ local stakeholders, increasing awareness of the environment around them, what can be done to increase climate resilience and bio-diversity, and mobilising popular pressure to make a change in governmental planning processes.



- Discussion highlighted growing opportunities to encourage ‘volunteer’ involvement to anchor local climate change adaptation activity in community life and make action by government more affordable.
- **Facilitate the involvement of scientists**
 - As highlighted during Session 2, effective ecosystem based action requires cutting edge scientific knowledge and research on the ecosystems being supported, combined with detailed data concerning the activity and needs of communities living and working there. Andris Urtans reconfirmed the need to involve scientist closely in the development and monitoring of activities, to ‘get the science right’ and to ensure new learning is extracted and disseminated.
- **Mainstreaming climate and environment across all policy sectors**
 - Andris Urtans recalled the points raised by Mikhail Kozeltsev in the introductory session regarding the crucial importance of high level policy directives and legislation in legitimising and pushing ‘joined up’ and sustainable adaptation action. The requirement under EU and Latvian legislation on authorities to ensure the ‘good ecological status of territories was shown as a key driver of action.
- **Create a stir**
 - Foster and harness stakeholder enthusiasm and utilise publicity techniques to build recognition and momentum for the movement for change, to facilitate.
- **Engage and involve the policy-makers**
 - Nature 2000 projects have secured activities involvement of both local and regional officials leading on planning activities, providing annual training of ‘key’ local planners in implementation-level activities, and involving national policy-makers up to the level of the President. Such engagement simultaneously serves to increase understanding of the power of ecosystem and community approaches within government, and increase visibility through the interest attracted by the involvement of senior politicians. By linking people in action, a deep shared understanding can be developed for improved planning using the ecosystem-based approach.
- **Funding**
 - Discussion highlighted once more the significance of securing funding. Echoing the discussion of on Day 1, the significance of bringing coalitions of organisations together providing a range of resources, was emphasised, such as the incentivization of private funding or volunteer labour through tax measures, though the framework for this may be distant as yet. Mainstreaming of environmental and climate action into budget codes, and knowledge of international funding and how to access it remain a further important part of the picture, both within the EU and beyond.
- **Start anyway**
 - The presentations and discussions highlighted the importance of engaged stakeholders making a start, even when the facilitating regulatory environment and state support are not yet in place. Civil society groups can begin the work by creating working groups and self-organising to agree voluntary planning documents, ahead of the government organise pro. In so doing they can generate interest in climate change issues and adaptation solutions, demonstrate benefits, and lay the ground work for activities which the authorities can engage with and link together as local and national strategies are put in place. Bottom-up and top-down approaches are not mutually exclusive and should start in parallel,



with purposeful dialogue to build and iteratively improve strategic and effective national responses to climate change. As highlighted in the presentation of the process of engaging ministries in Moldova's National Adaptation Strategy, the need and legitimacy of iterative engagement, building knowledge and understanding between diverse stakeholders, is key.

Closing remarks from the participants emphasized the **central importance of learning by doing and learning from each other**, with events such as this conference an important part of making contacts and sharing knowledge and experiences to build capacity for action at local, national and international levels.

Photo credits: Andris Urtans, UNDP, D Lunan, Clima East



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