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Implementing COP22 agreements: River basin adaptation planning through stakeholder engagement

Key messages and European recommendations

- **'Adaptation'** should be understood not merely as a technical approach to build resistance and resilience, but rather as a **wider political and social process** with the potential to deliver a range of additional benefits
- **Small scale, replicable interventions** should be funded and supported by the European Union to achieve wider-reaching adaptation impact
- There is a need to **actively consolidate and mandate the sharing of experiences and information** gained across EU-funded projects to feed more directly into political processes
- **Forms of engagement need to be strategic** about participant selection and the scale/scope of desired involvement
- There is a need to **increase the political will for truer forms of participation** within adaptation decision-making processes, and for a subsequent reform of governance process
- **Defining clear goals** about what 'participation' means in the process is crucial for ensuring legitimacy, political uptake and sustained engagement

■ **'Adaptation'** should be understood not merely as a technical approach to build resistance and resilience, but rather as a **wider political and social process** that, by involving diverse stakeholders, can:

- contribute to societal vision building,
- increase collaboration across and between sectors and societal groups (thereby decreasing prevalent silo approaches), and
- develop more robust and suitable solutions to a range of additional societal challenges.

■ **Increased European funding and support** is necessary to achieve wider-reaching adaptation impact through:

- *Small scale, replicable interventions* – Participation in adaptation entails interventions at different places in decision-making processes with and a targeted approach which can be adapted and applied across stakeholder groups at a broad geographic scale at the local level to achieve more widespread impacts in numerous decision-making processes.
- *Actively consolidating and mandating the sharing of experiences and information gained across funded projects* to feed into political processes (e.g. DG Clima is encouraged to reach out to DG Research and the Structural Funds and integrate the experiences gained in BeWater and other projects into the revision process of the EU Adaptation Strategy).

■ **Forms of engagement need to be strategic about participant selection and the scale/scope of desired involvement.** Given that the number of participants tends to drop off depending on the degree of demands placed on them/their time and level of effort required to participate, it is important to:

- Distinguish between different societal/stakeholder groups and the desired levels and type of involvement throughout the adaptation process;
- Pay particular attention to assessing stakeholder needs, priorities and knowledge levels and developing innovative engagement tools to help stakeholders recognize and believe in the value of participatory processes and develop 'ownership'.

■ **Defining clear goals** about what 'participation' means in the process is crucial for ensuring legitimacy, political uptake and sustained engagement. Participatory processes need to be designed in a transparent way such that outcomes are considered to be legitimate by both:

- decision-makers – e.g. finding solutions to reduce the cost of implementation, increasing the legitimacy of design for interventions, or minimizing conflicts in implementation, and
- stakeholders – e.g. establishing trust and seeing that the products of participation were taken into account to shape the reality of subsequent adaptation decisions.

■ **Increased political will for truer forms of participation** is needed within adaptation decision-making processes and for a subsequent reform of governance process. In cases in which participation has been institutionalised, the approach remains passive and creates difficulties in actually influencing decision-making. In this regard, reformed governance processes and particularly (intersectoral) structures for collaboration and the implementation of adaptation actions are needed to support longer-term, facilitated participation and increase ownership of these processes.



This document results from the event "Implementing COP22 agreements: river basin adaptation planning through stakeholder engagement" held in Brussels, Belgium on 9 February 2017. The event was organized within the framework of the BeWater project, which has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement No. 612385.