

Coping with climate change

“ Our common vision of the next four years allows us to move forward into the integration of our national climate impact and adaptation research agendas. ”

While climate change is now widely acknowledged to be a global problem, research into its impact tends to be undertaken at a national level. CIRCLE – Climate Impact Research Coordination for a Larger Europe – is an ERA-NET to coordinate Europe’s national research programmes on the impact of climate change. By evaluating specific issues, the ERA-NET will enable the research programmes to be aligned, leading to various options for collaborative research and increasing their impact.

It is vital to predict the possible impact of climate change. Rising temperatures are melting glacier and polar ice, diverting ocean currents, and shifting climatic zones. Weather patterns are changing, and extreme events like hurricanes, floods and droughts, ignoring national frontiers, become more frequent and intense. Agricultural land-use and residential patterns will change, and energy consumption for heating or cooling buildings will increase. Every European is likely to be affected in some way or another. The EU needs information on a Europe-wide scale to formulate policy on adapting to the impacts of changing climatic conditions. CIRCLE is gathering information in these areas for all the EU Member States. Its main aim is to coordinate European research on the impact of, and adaptation to climate change, to help decision-makers at national and European levels to design effective and economic strategies. This clear focus excludes any attempt to mitigate the effects of climate change, like the Kyoto Protocol, as adaptation is needed regardless of developments on greenhouse gases. CIRCLE will interact on impact and adaptation issues with key institutions such as the IPCC (International Panel for Climate Change) and the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change).

Choosing the way

Different regions face different problems: in a low-lying coastal area, researchers are looking at the effect of rising sea levels, while in high mountain areas, melting glaciers that increase the risk of mass movements will attract attention. Some institutes are carrying out numerical modelling of climate patterns, while others are looking at the social and economic impact of change. Coordinated information about these national research programmes will enable each partner to learn from the others, to avoid duplication. CIRCLE is organised into four activities to integrate what is already being done at the national level and to take it forward as a unified effort. The first is learning from each other – CIRCLE requires an interdisciplinary approach to integrate indicators of climate change. Indeed, the study of environmental impacts on human health do not only concern climatology. For example, as far as the effects of heat waves and possible spread of vector-borne diseases are concerned, meteorology, hydrology, biology, soil sciences, marine sciences and forestry, building technologies, sociology and medicine also come into play. Learning will involve the exchange of knowledge and experiences on national programmes, their areas of focus, and their scientific and management practices. This leads to planning – defining tangible ways for the national programmes to support each other on specific issues. It should then be possible



Coordination Action CIRCLE

Full title:

Climate Impact Research
Coordination for a Larger Europe

Research field:

Impact of and adaptation to
climate change

Co-ordinator:

Austria: Federal Environment Agency

Partners:

- Austria: Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture
- Belgium: Federal Public Planning Service for Science Policy
- Finland: Academy of Finland
- Finland: Finnish Environment Institute
- France: Agence de l'Environnement et de Maîtrise de l'Énergie
- France: Ministère de l'Écologie et du Développement Durable
- Germany: German Aerospace Centre- Projektträger (DLR-PJT)
- Germany: Federal Ministry of Education and Research
- Hungary: Ministry for Environment and Water Management
- Israel: Ministry of the Environment
- Italy: Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Tutela del Territorio
- The Netherlands: Foundation for Climate Change and Spatial Planning
- Norway: Research Council of Norway
- Portugal: Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT)
- Sweden: Swedish Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning
- Sweden: Swedish Environment Protection Agency

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“ A dynamic field of research like global change needs permanent feedbacks and updates as well as a trusting partnership to create a long- and far-ranging co-operation. ”

to set up working links by connecting the national programmes for their mutual benefit. The fourth and major strand is to fulfil the means of an ERA-NET by establishing transnational research programmes and joint calls for proposals.

Four down, four across

These strands will be complemented by four cross-sectional activities – project coordination, establishing a platform for continued coordination after CIRCLE has ended, and supporting the establishment of groups within the consortium which want to address similar issues, such as Mediterranean countries, Nordic countries, Continental central and eastern Europe, mountainous countries and Atlantic coastal

countries. Finally, CIRCLE will develop an active, targeted approach to disseminating its information and experience.

When the ERA-NET ends in 2009, ideally all the relevant national research programmes of the EU, Associated States and any future new Member States will be part of the forum set up by CIRCLE. The facility for systematic assessment and adaptation to climate change in Europe will complement FP7 and subsequent EU research Framework Programmes. This may lead to a larger-scale Article 169 initiative, contributing substantially to the European Research Area, and supplementing international initiatives like the IPCC and UNFCCC regimes. From 2013, CIRCLE envisages becoming the key European platform in this area.