



Adapting to Climate Change - Case Studies from the Baltic Sea Region Hamburg, Germany, 31 May 2011



Hamburg Declaration

Man-made climate change and its risks for the well-being of people and societies and for the health of the natural environment are an ongoing significant issue for regional and local decision makers – also, or maybe even more so, after the failure of COP-15 in Copenhagen in 2009. Climate change is happening now and will continue in coming decades. If ambitious climate protection measures are implemented, this change will be slowed to a certain extent, but it will hardly be brought to a standstill within the foreseeable future.

For the **Baltic Sea region**, a regional climate change assessment report (the BACC report), has documented a trend towards warming during the past decades. According to regional climate models, this trend is expected to continue, with consequences for terrestrial and marine ecosystems, but also for the socio-economic sphere.

Options for action

Options of how to deal with these changes need to be worked out for the public debate. Possible and socially acceptable adaptation measures on the regional and local level are required for planning and implementation. Coastal erosion or urban rainwater management are just examples for these challenges, which will become more and more manifest in the coming decades.

Flexible strategies

Simultaneous to climate change, **other significant elements** will influence changes in our societies – such as aging populations or changing trade patterns. Preferences of coming generations may change, and some developments, which are presently favorably judged (e.g. wide-spread installation of wind mills, or the production of bio-fuels), may be considered in some future as mal-adaptations. Thus, **flexible strategies** need to be developed, which allow scope for both presently adequate solutions and for future corrections in cases of problems which are currently unknown, changing public preferences and improved knowledge.

Different roles of scientists and policy makers

In order to meet these demands, we call for a synergistic **cooperation between scientists and policymakers** – a cooperation which recognizes the different role and function of these two societal actors. Sciences are asked to provide factual knowledge about developments, dynamics, links and perspectives, whereas policymaking has to assess options and values, and to draw political conclusions. While the design of policies shall incorporate scientific knowledge, it must be clear that democratic policymaking is foremost a process which balances knowledge with values and preferences of an informed public. Science, on the other hand, is a highly specialized field, which lacks democratic legitimacy and the broad base needed to engage itself in decision processes.

Regional climate services

In order to enable such a synergistic cooperation, we call for the **availability of regional climate services** – with regional climate science offices, assessment reports about scientifically legitimated climate change knowledge and detailed, scientifically valid data sets data describing past, present and possible future climate change.

Any **risk-reducing climate policy** has to be based on the insight that a successful global climate protection policy does not make the need for significant regional and local adaptation obsolete; it must be understood that a successful climate policy needs to be implemented with a long term perspective possibly covering decades, and that communication about this task has to be sustainable to keep the public engaged in dealing with changing environmental conditions.