

Climategateway

Integrating science into planning policy



Celebrating success!



Looking back at the two and a half years since the start of the OrientGate project, we can happily say that we have fully met, and in some cases even surpassed, our original expectations.

It was both challenging and rewarding to work with such a diverse partnership involving 13 countries and a wide range of institutions: national hydrometeorological services, responsible for monitoring climate variability and risk; territorial development policy organisations, responsible for translating climate variability and climate risk assessment information into territorial development planning instruments; and scientific research institutions that have provided climate data, ensuring scientific integrity and quality. The project has successfully promoted enduring working relationships between partners at all levels from local to international and

has therefore created a solid network that will be ready for future challenges and activities related to climate change.

OrientGate has been able to connect climate change policy planners and decision makers with the communities that produce climate knowledge. The project has explored climate risks faced by coastal, rural and urban communities and has contributed to a better understanding of the impacts of climate variability and change on water regimes, forests and agro-ecosystems. Project partners have analysed specific adaptation needs in the hydroelectricity, agro-alimentary and health sectors. This has resulted in up-to-date climate knowledge for use by policy makers, such as urban planners, nature protection authorities, regional and local development agencies, and territorial and public works authorities.

The project has successfully fostered a better understanding of climate risks and has identified concrete adaptation measures that will be integrated, or that have already been integrated, into policy: in Austria, partners have developed information on the adaptation of forest management strategies under climate change to optimise water supply; in Romania, the relationship between changes in climate, irrigation requirements and crop yields has been investigated and reported; in Greece, scientific research carried out by project partners on the processing of geospatial data and data on climatic parameters and wetland features has already been integrated into policy in the Strategy for Wetlands in Attica Region; in

Italy, useful criteria for the sustainable development of hydropower in the Autonomous Province of Trento, as well as hazard and risk maps for Puglia's coastal area, have been made available for policy makers and planners; and in Hungary the most vulnerable urban systems of two municipalities have been identified and a number of appropriate adaptation options for small and medium-sized cities have been suggested.

In all countries, local communities and stakeholders have been involved and informed, as scientific knowledge has been made more accessible through a series of training seminars, workshops and dissemination events. These meetings have generated strong interest among stakeholders and in some cases the techniques proposed have been tested successfully, as for example in the agricultural sector by local Romanian farmers. Furthermore, in order for the knowledge gained during the project to be available in years to come, a web-based data platform has been created. To make sure that the scientific data will have the widest possible reach, it has been connected to the EU Clearinghouse on Climate Adaptation.

For CMCC it has been an honour and a pleasure to lead the OrientGate partnership and to have been able to achieve so much together. We are working hard to capitalise on the experience gained and to promote new synergies and future initiatives. ○

Antonio Navarra • CMCC

Wrapping up pilot study results

Hungary, Italy and Romania hosted five awareness-raising and learning events towards the end of 2014.

On September 23, the Autonomous Province of Trento, Italy, organised a final seminar related to Pilot Study 5. The event was aimed at project partners and explored guidelines, methodologies and indicators for analysing the impacts of climate change on the hydroelectric sector. The following day, an open dissemination event focused on the effects of climate change on the management of water resources for hydroelectric use.

In October, Bucharest hosted the two-day event "Climate Change Adaptation Measures in Agriculture", focusing on the results of Pilot Study 2. Participants explored how project results can be applied in sectors other than agriculture that are also vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change, including water resources in the Danube region. On November 10, a final dissemination event on Pilot Study 2 results was organised in Sfântu Gheorghe, Romania, by EPA Covasna and the National Meteorological Administration. The event attracted farmers,

representatives of agricultural authorities and students.

On November 11–12, Bari, Italy, hosted a stakeholder workshop and study day. The workshop focused on planning for the management of Puglia Region's inland and coastal waters. OrientGate produced valuable climate change scenarios for the region, using drought indicators that can help to communicate scientific results. During the study session participants demonstrated to local policy makers and institutions various tools and methods for analysing climate change impacts on water resources and coastal areas.

An international workshop was held on November 12–13 at the Regional Environmental Center in Szentendre, Hungary. Participants discussed the outputs of the project's Thematic Centre on Urban Adaptation and Health, including case studies; field studies; and the published results of stakeholder consultations. The first day was dedicated to discussions on climate change adaptation in urban areas, while the second day explored links between climate change and public health. The event included a training session on measuring public health. Experiences from Hungary, Montenegro and Ukraine on raising awareness for responsive action and communication on climate change and health topics were also presented. ○

Nathan Johnson • REC



Seminar participants get set to visit a hydropower plant in Trento, Italy
Photo: Paulo Lima

Strategy for Attica's Wetlands

The 60-page Strategy for Wetlands in Attica Region is one of the outputs of OrientGate activities in Greece. The strategy was prepared drawing on scientific research carried out by OrientGate partners, including the processing of geospatial data and data on climatic parameters and wetland features, as well as information from programmes and activities currently being implemented. The strategy incorporates elements from the National Strategy and Action Programme on Biodiversity, the Master Plan of Athens/Attica 2021, the River Basin Management Plan for Attica Water District, and the operational plans of municipalities in Attica Region. It also calls for enhanced research on climate change impacts, the development of flood forecasting and early warning systems, and the legal designation of wetlands. The network of wetland areas is considered an important element of green infrastructure. The strategy was presented at a dissemination event organised in Athens in November by Attica Region. The event was also an opportunity to present the results of Pilot Study 4, with a focus on the impacts of climate change on Attica's wetland ecosystems. ○

Eleni Mougiakou • Attica Region



Partners gather for a final line-up in Lecce, Italy
Photo: OrientGate Partnership

CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREEN GROWTH PROGRAMME IN ROMANIA

Between 2013 and 2015, the Government of Romania, through the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MECC), and the World Bank are developing the climate change and low-carbon green growth programme OPERA-CLIMA. The main objective is to achieve national targets and meet EU requirements in the field of climate change. The top six priority sectors are agriculture, water resources, forests, biodiversity, energy and transport, and the main goals of funding applications to the Climate Change Reimbursable Advisory Service (RAS) will cover the most important climate change impacts that have to be managed by each sector.

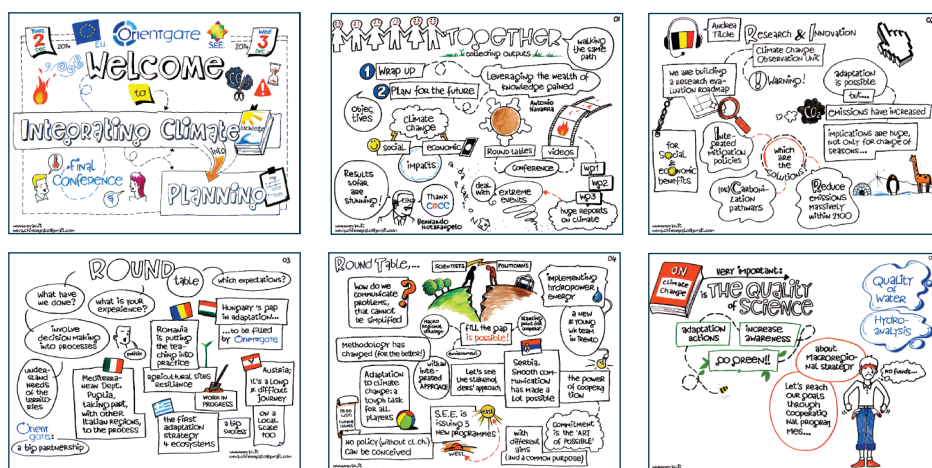
Members of the working group approved by the MECC will set out the most important responses, including cross-cutting measures, for each of the priority sectors. The results of adaptation measures in the context of climate change impacts on the agricultural sector, as analysed under the OrientGate project, provide one of the most relevant case studies for other regions affected by drought and other extreme events. Also, given the fact that at the end of 2014 a new revision of the environmental action plan for Covasna County was initiated, the Environmental Protection Agency of Covasna will have an opportunity to incorporate the results of OrientGate Pilot Study 2 into actions at regional level. The municipality of Caracal shares a similar goal. This approach will help to build bridges between the scientific community and stakeholders such as local/regional authorities and farmers.

Elena Mateescu • NMA

Building bridges for the future

Hosted by the Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change, the OrientGate final conference took place on December 2 and 3 in Lecce, Italy. The meeting venue, Officine Cantelmo, an example of the adaptive reuse of an old industrial structure, was an inspirational background for the discussions and knowledge sharing. The event provided an opportunity to review the activities, results and achievements of the OrientGate work packages. The conference began with a roundtable discussion on addressing climate change through regional cooperation. Partners shared lessons learned, experiences and challenges, and discussed opportunities for cooperation in the future. Several partners pointed out that one of the main challenges was to connect scientific information with the needs of practitioners and policy makers. This often means reaching out to a wide range of stakeholders, many of whom may not be familiar with the challenges of climate change, and framing scientific information in a manner that will lead to policy action. At the same time, it was emphasised that the project served as a bridge between the scientific community and practitioners from several sectors. Partners agreed that many of the challenges remain and expressed their willingness to continue working together and build on the results. Areas of potential future cooperation were also highlighted, and Alessandra Pala, representing the SEE Programme's Joint Technical Secretariat, explained the possibilities in the context of the new programmes for the SEE geographical area. The second day was dedicated to presenting the OrientGate data platform, which can be regarded as one of the most significant project outputs. Three workshops, chaired by the three thematic centre leaders, provided an opportunity to present and discuss the results of the six pilot studies undertaken during project implementation.

Venelina Varbova • REC



On a lighter note: Illustrator Neva Chierigato captures the essence of OrientGate during the final conference discussions

OrientGate outputs

The *Guidelines on Integrating Climate Change Knowledge into Planning* is one of the key project outputs. The opening chapter outlines adaptation policies and the adaptation context at EU and national level. The publication describes steps towards integrating science into planning and also covers the building of climate scenarios; assessments of the past and future projections; stakeholder involvement; and the development of indicators and tools for planning. It analyses vulnerabilities via the six pilot studies carried out under

OrientGate. The guidelines summarise lessons learned as well as key constraints in terms of climate change adaptation, drawing on pilot study results. Future challenges and opportunities are outlined, and the publication ends with findings and recommendations relevant to European institutions and national and regional policy makers. The guidebook will be available on the project website.

The use of climate scenarios and impact indicators is an important aspect of cooperation between researchers and decision makers. A leaflet was produced to explain how OrientGate mapped the various methodologies, tools and indicators used by SEE meteorological services. The results were used to create the OrientGate Data Platform, which provides a single entry point for users such as scientists, external experts and policy makers. The platform, which is accessible via the OrientGate

website, ensures the efficient and transparent management of large volumes of scientific data; an integrated view of data and indicators; and user-friendly data access, browsing and downloading capabilities. ●

Giulia Galluccio ● CMCC

Thousands of government officials, representatives of UN bodies, agencies and intergovernmental and civil society organisations and media met in Lima, Peru, for the 20th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the 10th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. In the first two weeks of December, delegations from 195 countries discussed the next international climate agreement, due to be finalised and signed at the 2015 COP in Paris.

This year's COP followed a landmark deal between the world's two biggest emitters — the US and China — which many believed would boost the Lima talks. With the new Green Climate Fund, which already has contributions of USD 9.7 billion from over 20 countries, many believe that momentum for global climate action is building up.

The Lima talks aimed to lay the groundwork for a new climate agreement, a goal underscored by COP20 president, Peruvian Minister of the Environment Manuel Pulgar Vidal, who stated that "COP20 needs to provide a solid basis for a strong agreement in Paris".

The talks ended with unanimous agreement on the "Lima Call for Climate Action", which brings forward countries' intended nationally determined contributions to the Paris agreement. The deal is non-binding and each country has until March to announce the quantity of emissions it is willing to cut. This kicks off what is anticipated to be a difficult negotiation process leading to the Paris COP. ●

Tomas Rehacek ● REC

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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 Giulia Galluccio or Venelina Varbova.

www.orientgateproject.org

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