



The EU Climate Adaptation Strategy: An Evaluation of its 'Programme Theory'

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ABSTRACT

The European Commission adopted an EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change in April 2013. The Strategy aims to contribute to a more climate-resilient Europe by ensuring that adaptation considerations are addressed in all relevant EU policies. It also promotes greater coordination and information-sharing among Member States and thus complements their own activities. Such coordination of climate change adaptation measures require the vertical integration of different levels of governance (European, national, regional, local) alongside horizontal integration between different sectors of the economy and society. Integration means the EU has to 'mainstream' climate change adaptation by including adaptation measures in its sectoral policies or strengthening already existing ones. This will also offer potential for synergies if adaptation policies are successfully coordinated.

This paper analyses how policy integration is conceptualised in the EU Strategy. What particular integration and coherence does the EU Strategy wish to achieve? What are the stated or implicit rationales for the choice of policy areas that have been included in the strategy for integration of climate change adaptation objectives? Does the strategy aim to radically change the thinking in the target sectors? We are particularly interested in the underlying 'programme theory' of integrating and mainstreaming climate goals into different policy sectors and across governance levels.

The paper develops an analytical framework to assess policy integration and coherence in the EU Strategy. The policy integration perspective appears as a useful starting point as the Strategy is strongly built around the idea that other policy sectors pick up the ball. At the same time this is expected to happen purely through Commission staff interaction as the strategy itself does not include any strong commitments. The paper analyses which institutional mechanisms and processes are contained in the Strategy to promote policy integration, and discusses the feasibility of achieving this goal in light of the literature on policy integration and coordination. Thereby, it goes beyond the Commission's impact assessment of the Strategy.