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Climate Change: Final White Paper on Adaptation Published

Summary

On 1 April 2009 the White Paper on adaptation to climate change (COM(2009)147)¹ was published, along with three working papers on water, coasts and marine issues³; agriculture⁴, and health⁵. For the most part, the White Paper closely resembles the earlier draft² but a few variances are worth highlighting: less is required of the CAP; more is expected in the way of social policies; and forests have been added to the list of sectors requiring policy action.

Recap of key message

The White Paper sets out a two-phase framework to increase the EU's resilience to climate change. The first phase, running 2009-2012, is devoted to further research and analysis to lay the groundwork for the implementation of a comprehensive adaptation strategy in the second phase, which is to begin in 2013. The EU sees its role as a facilitator and coordinator of integrated action.

Revisions

The main revisions since the draft paper are as follows:

- The White Paper no longer states that **the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** should 'actively discourage unsustainable farming practices' but instead, more vaguely states that consideration should be given to the CAP as an agent to provide 'an adequate framework for sustainable production'.
- Greater emphasis is placed on increasing the resilience of **social policies**, particularly to assess the impacts of climate change and adaptation policies on employment and on the well-being of vulnerable social groups.
- The White Paper includes a proposal to update the EU **forest** strategy to cover climate-related impacts and to assess options for an EU approach to forest protection and forest information systems.
- More emphasis is given to **water issues** and guidelines are to be developed on adaptation in **coastal and marine areas**, particularly under the framework of the Integrated Maritime Policy and in the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.
- Since the 2007 Green Paper on which this White Paper builds; measures regarding **biodiversity** have been considerably watered down. The Green Paper emphasised the *quality* of ecosystems, stating that healthy ecosystems lie at the heart of any adaptation policy and underlined the need for conservation and restoration, as well as interconnectivity between sites. Whereas the White Paper focuses on the connectivity between natural areas to allow for movements in

response to climate change, e.g. through the creation of a 'permeable landscape'.

Next steps

The White Paper features several deadlines for action:

- By September 2009: the establishment of an Impact and Adaptation Steering Group (IASG), composed of Member State representatives
- By 2011: the establishment of the Clearing House Mechanism, development of vulnerability indicators for each sector and assessment of the costs and benefits of EU adaptation options.
- By 2012: Member States are encouraged to develop national and regional adaptation strategies.

References

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