



capitalising climate change knowledge for adaptation in the alpine space



## Climate Adaptation Policies, Governance and the Science-Policy Interface in Alpine Countries and Regions

### Country Report Piedmont, Italy.

Deliverable of WP4 in the C3-Alps project

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## Table of contents

1	Executive Summary .....	4
2	Goals and Methods.....	5
3	Description of the situation (status quo).....	6
4	Rationales for not having a policy document.....	7
5	Characteristics of the external factors .....	8
6	Characteristics of the science-policy interface.....	9
7	Impacts of CCA related activities .....	10
8	Strengths and weaknesses .....	11
9	Conclusions, recommendations, policy options.....	12

## 1 Executive Summary

This report represents the analysis of the current situation about CCA policies, actions and strategies, in a administrative region of Italy, the Piedmont Region. This study has been done by means of interviews with some privileged stakeholders (scientific researchers and administrative officials) and it is part of the C3Alps (Capitalising Climate Change Knowledge for Adaptation in Alpine Space) project's WP4 that looks into adaptation policy and governance.

After choosing carefully potential participant to interview, the questionnaires have been submitted with no further help to compile them. This was important in order to understand the knowledge baseline of our interviewees to CCA dynamics. Afterwards an in-depth interview has been conducted with those who demonstrated to be interested in the process.

Even with a large uncertainty, based on the poor number of interviewees, it could be noticed as the scientific community is very aware of the distinction between mitigation and adaptation as well as the need to act toward CCA. Nevertheless managers of the territory do not have the same awareness.

The reluctance of most part of the potential interviewees to conduct this interview (more than 10 persons, including scientists, politicians and territory managers, have been contacted to have the interview) shows us as CCA is not perceived as necessary at political and territorial level. A lack of knowledge at these levels about CCA shines through the continuously postponed date to conduct the proposed interview.



## 2 Goals and Methods

This report is based on the analysis of the information obtained through three in-depth individual interviews with some experts from the area of climate change adaptation in Piedmont. A lot of stakeholders, involved in different aspects of Climate Change activities (i.e. scientific researchers, administrative officials, politicians) were contacted, but, unfortunately only few of them decided to answer the questions, producing a critical point of view about local state-of-art.

It has to be clear that the local administrative officials have a limited range of action outside the national framework, particularly in the framework of legislative inputs. Considering that the very first draft of Italian National Strategy of CCA is dated February 22, 2013, it was difficult for this kind of experts both to identify current CCA actions involving regional territory both to express a clear awareness of CCA importance.

For the methods, the interviews consisted of a wide analysis of the current and the expected situation regarding CCA policy and actions on local scale, using a common framework provided by the C3-WP4 coordinators.

It has to be noticed that such a process, focused on this specific topic, is the first carried out in our Region, so the whole approach could sound a little bit “unorthodox” or, better, definitely new for stakeholders.

Finally, after a review of the answers, a qualitative analysis of the interviews was done by the interviewers.

The sample size of interviews is very small and not significant from a statistic point of view, so be careful in deducing general conclusions.



### 3 Description of the situation (status quo)

The CCA policy is just underway at national level in Italy. As mentioned in the previous chapter of this report, a first draft document of the Italian National Strategy of CCA has been shared recently with regional governances.

The underlying idea is that the 20 Italian regions have to contribute to the national strategy plan by sharpening the general framework providing both their specific knowledge of local territory vulnerability and their governance duties on specific as delegated by the central government.

At the moment Italian Regions, including Piedmont, have not designed an organic and specific CCA policy, and according to our participants, they should not, at least without a strong central coordination.

It is clear that some actions regarding Environmental defence and preservation can fall in the category of CCA, such as regional plan on water management or natural hazard risk management.

Anyway these are individual initiatives and, according to participants, people that are driving these actions seem not recognize them as part of a CCA strategy.



## 4 Rationales for not having a policy document

The main idea emerging from the interviews about the lack of a clear policy document on the issues of the CCA, is essentially the incomplete awareness of the issue at political level, accompanied by an excessive administrative fragmentation that avoids a unitary strategic guideline.

In addition there is the perception that adaptation actions are more a cost than a benefit, always in a short-term timescale, the long-term scale is never considered.

It seems, for many of the participants, that much of the effort is made about mitigation (contingent problems are much more considered), while a more complex and long range concept as adaptation is confused or, at least, misleading.

At political level there is still the illusion of having unlimited economical resources. As a consequence, people do not have sufficient information about the reasons to adapt to climate change under a cost/benefit balance.

Anyway the participants think that having an official document addressing CCA explicitly is of crucial importance but this has necessary to be a sort of top-bottom process.

## 5 Characteristics of the external factors

Extreme weather events, with an increasing frequency due to climate change, may influence the need of having a CCA policy process.

If you consider that these more frequent events were emphasized more and more by media during the last years, you realize as they could represent a positive leverage to raise awareness and speed up the process-in making of a national strategy plan.

But the real pitfall to avoid is the idea that a CCA Strategy is more a cost than a benefit.

Or better, the idea that inaction is cheaper than action for the CCA.

Most of the participants had underlined as the primitive equation “action equals costs” is still a sort of instinctive reaction without a deep and detailed cost/benefits balance.

Since benefits of a CCA strategy are scheduled to realize on a medium to long time scale, politicians could be slowed in taking the initiative.



## 6 Characteristics of the science-policy interface

The answers about science-policy interface can be spitted in two main categories:

- a) **non-scientific participants**, direct the whole relationship science-policy on a unique issue: scientist has to better understand phenomena underlying climate change in order to allow politicians to define an adequate law governance. According to the few answers collected, no critical approach on how the inner structure of communication between scientist and politician is or what the natural difference between their languages is, can be detected.
- b) **natural scientists** think that they have necessarily to be involved, as well as economists and social scientists and that their relation with politicians and other stakeholders is crucial. They have to talk together to develop a common language, to understand the respective difficulties and to develop a coordinated strategy.

Scientists have communicated uncertainties, but this communication seems not to have reached the scope, maybe because of gaps in the communication strategy adopted by scientists themselves.

In other words, scientists think that, up to now, they adopted a too technical language and/or wrong communication channels (i.e. scientific papers) in order to reach effectively the politician sphere.

At the very end, a strong cross-correlation between different functions (policy, science and law) based on a common and integrated language platform seems to be the basis to set up a successful CCA strategy.



## 7 Impacts of CCA related activities

Only one of our interviewee (a climate researcher) has answered with regard to impacts of CCA activities.

This give clearly the sense of how low is the CCA strategy, in the agenda of priorities of climate stakeholders.

On the other hand, this gives an idea of how poorly CCA actions was performed until today.

However the sectors identified as already active in CCA are the following:

- Energy production (policies for green/renewable energy and a batter strategy focused on energy efficiency)
- Health (heat wave protection - National Plan for the Prevention of the Effects of Heat on Human Health.);
- Water availability (a regional water management plan and hydro –geological risk management)
- Agriculture (introducing more efficient irrigation systems, a change in species more adapted to current climate change experimented in Piedmont Region)
- Extreme events (Early Warning systems to forecast floods or drought and to manage them).

One could notice that these are actions/impacts common to other Italian regions and all of them are at a very first stage.

Recently Piedmont Region has developed (in an European Framework) a more efficient Early Warning System to forecast and prevent forestall fires. Unfortunately no one of the participants were aware of such an initiative. Here one can argue on a lack of communications between stakeholders or, at least, a slowdown in spreading innovative actions on CCA.

## 8 Strengths and weaknesses

The development of political strategies has to be based on the knowledge and the availability of scientists to realize the complexity of political decisions.

The motor of the process has to be the willingness to dialogue between all the stakeholders, specially the academic community and the policy makers. Failing that, there is the concrete widespread perception that a positive CCA strategy cannot be established in Italy.

Scientists have to figure out the information to the policymaker, and later, in dialogue with economists and legal experts must look for the best way to implement policies of CCA.

The participants (mostly scientists) identified a potential point of failure or better, a general weakness, in the whole process as their not full ability to communicate the importance of CCA actions to policy makers and law makers.



## 9 Conclusions, recommendations, policy options

First of all, there are 3 important *caveats* to pound before to infer general conclusions:

1. the sample size of our interviewed is really poor and unbalanced toward Academic Community;
2. Piedmont is one of the 20 Italian administrative regions, so its legislative mandatory is at least bounded and, for some aspects, fully attendant by national level organisms;
3. A first draft of a National Strategy for CCA has been recently shared with local policy makers and scientist: so the overall scenario could change suddenly.

However, some interesting ideas and insights can be carried out by the participants to this questionnaire. The strongest suggestion is the widespread perception that the trivial equation “actions with benefits in a far future have only costs in the near present” seems to overcome a detailed planning of CCA based on a long term cost/benefits balance evaluation.

On the other hand, local policy makers seem to be slowed in their initiative with regard to CCA, by the multilevel fragmentation of administrative governance in Italy. The local administrators (Region, Province and Municipality) prefer to follow a up-to-bottom process (i.e. from central governance to local municipality) rather than implementing individual actions. This, of course, is a good option to avoid potential entropy and supplementary costs, but, at the same time, cannot feed any positive feedback from the “Downtown” to the “Centre”.

Moreover, the scientists think that is absolutely necessary to work together with policy and law makers in order to design an efficient National Strategy for CCA but, at the same time, they seem to recognize that in the last few year they weren’t able to convey the sense and the need of urgency for CCA to the other stockholders, using the necessary emphasis. In this communication process, they identified their “faults” in both in the use of a too technical language and in the use of not well suited communication strategies/techniques.

Taking into account the third *caveat* stated in this paragraph (remember: our interviews were collected before the first draft of Italian National Strategy for CCA), the sense lack of foresight in policy makers seem to pool all the participants.

This can be sum up by an answer to a climate change scientist coming out from an unknown local administrator (not reported by our respondents or directly related to Piedmont Region):

“You are forecasting now a sea level rise in the next 50 years, but my administrative mandatory is scheduled to end in 5 years!”.

The good news here is that something is going to change in the next few months.