

CIRCLE NETWORK LINKS 34 ORGANIZATIONS IN 24 COUNTRIES

Bridging the gap to adaptation policy



Floating bridge in the Po delta, Italy. Although the bridge will accommodate rising water levels, the low-lying land at either side is vulnerable. Rising sea levels and increasing river discharges could make the bridge obsolete. Europe has many delta areas that share similar adaptation challenges.



Bridging the gap

More specific and coordinated research is required before the seven-headed monster of climate change will allow itself to be tamed by effective political decisions: research that goes beyond national borders and meets questions posed by policy-makers.

MICHEL VERSCHOOR

Europe can't afford to have cross-border climatic influences or comparable natural and social systems analysed separately by each of its countries or regions. Both research and response action must be well coordinated.

Since 2004, such research has been stimulated, financed and made mutually compatible by the European Research Area network CIRCLE. CIRCLE is a bridge between research and adaptation policy. Circle, which stands for 'Climate Impact Research Coordination for a Larger Europe', was initiated in 2004 with partners from 7 countries. As a science funding network, CIRCLE coordinates research on climate change and adaptation throughout Europe by networking and aligning national and regional research programmes. Now at the end of its first phase, 34 organizations from 24 countries

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND ADAPTATION

Connecting laggards to early adopters

Gregor Laumann and Rob Swart both work with CIRCLE partner organizations. In an interview with CHANGE Magazine they reflect on Europe's research network, CIRCLE's initiation and its ambitions for the future. "It's a knowledge market in the specific new area of climate adaptation in Europe."

BAUD SCHOENMAECKERS

CHANGE: What's the status of most research programmes from a European perspective?

Gregor Laumann, who works at the CIRCLE partner German Aerospace Centre: "Research programmes are not organized internationally, or only barely so. They are predominantly national in character. The EU seeks to facilitate exchange across borders and has money available, otherwise there would be much less exchange or none at all. This has to do with the question of where the national Euro is supposed to be most profitably invested – in the national scientific community or in some ingenious EU system. Some critics believe the latter option leaves less for real research."

How can this status quo be improved?

Laumann: "CIRCLE is setting up a structure to widen the availability of adaptation knowledge – which is often gained in national programmes – across national boundaries. Wider in this sense means interdisciplinary, so along less obvious lines of enquiry; like researchers from the social and economic sciences also becoming involved in adaptation research. It means crossing national boundaries, so European countries can learn from each other and exchange their adaptation knowledge.

It also means that this research will have to be useful for policy-makers, both in business and government. Implementing adaptation measures is a matter of policy, so it's important that you link your knowledge

have agreed to continue CIRCLE activities in a second generation network to be launched early 2010. The ultimate goal is to contribute to a climate-proof Europe; a Europe that will be able to overcome the impact of climate change on the whole community.

Reliable foundation

CIRCLE has, with the support of the European Commission, set up an extensive research funding and managing network across Europe. The CIRCLE regional subgroups, Mediterranean, Eastern Europe, Mountain and Nordic, address issues of common interest. CIRCLE-MED with funding agencies from France, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Israel is currently funding projects on Integrated Coastal Zone and Water Management. A recent CIRCLE-MOUNTAIN call is dedicated to Climate

The CIRCLE network is now preparing for maturity in phase 2

Change Impacts and Response Options in Mountainous Areas. CIRCLE-NORDIC, including funding organizations from Finland, Norway and Sweden, chose to fund research on a more generic theme: 'The Consequences of Climate Change for Policy Making in Nordic Countries'.

Research data and analysis from those geographically-based research areas will

create a reliable foundation for regional, national and European adaptation policies.

Listening to policy

Between 2004 and 2009 the CIRCLE Coordination in Vienna has, with its partners, been building the foundations for improved coordinated adaptation research. It has also identified opportunities to give added value to the European collaboration on climate impact research. The network is now preparing for maturity in phase 2. Under a new coordination, based in Portugal, it aims to expand transnational collaboration and create a platform that allows countries to share knowledge and good practices on climate research. It will also bridge the gap between academic science and science-based adaptation policy.

to policy, listen to policy-makers' questions."

Knowledge bazaar

Rob Swart of Wageningen University and Research Centre is to represent the Dutch research programme Knowledge for Climate in CIRCLE 2. He views the network as a 'bazaar', where people not only find what they want – relevant and up-to-date information on adaptation –, but where they can also have contact with people with similar questions and priorities to forge new research alliances. Swart: "It's a knowledge bazaar, the caravanserai where demand and supply meet."

Swart is the leading author of the recent publication Europe Adapts to Climate Change – comparing national adaptation



Rob Swart: It's a knowledge bazaar, the caravanserai where demand and supply meet

strategies (see www.peer.eu). Based on the results of this project, CIRCLE organized a workshop in Budapest. Its goal was to acquaint countries that were lagging in planning for adaptation, such as Belgium, Ireland and parts of Southern Europe, with the experiences of frontrunners, such as the UK and Finland. "This workshop in Budapest was one of the CIRCLE meetings that Ireland used to translate information from the frontrunners to its own situation and to draft an adaptation plan", says Swart. "This illustrates what I mean by 'a bazaar'."

New creative ideas

Swart distinguishes two groups of 'customers': "Scientists and policy-makers. The relevant product for them is the opportunity to gain wider knowledge about what's going on in other countries. Scientists and programme managers should also return from the bazaar with concrete agreements on collaboration. Policy-makers working on national adaptation programmes can supply internationally relevant information to the CIRCLE bazaar, such as practical experience gained in the country's water safety efforts. They should return with new ideas obtained from research in other countries. Moreover, policy-makers from countries that aren't that far ahead with adaptation should return home with new



Gregor Laumann: CIRCLE will help us to build a bridge between academic climate science and adaptation

information, creative ideas and collaborative partners. This helps them set up or expand adaptation programmes in their own country. This is our ambition. We're not there yet, there's a lot of work still to be done. But the timing is just right and CIRCLE 2 is about to start up."

Laumann acknowledges this, adding, I'm in CIRCLE as an employee of a German re-

search funding organization. There's a lot of useful information for my day-to-day work, a new network, which I use selectively but which I'm certain I couldn't have built up myself. Without CIRCLE I would have done other things, which would have had more of a national character."

CIRCLE has attracted some criticism about lack of effectiveness. Why?

Laumann: "CIRCLE was a start: many lessons were learned but it never fully matured. I expect the second phase to focus more on the value CIRCLE can add to adaptation policy. Partly thanks to CIRCLE it has become clear where all the participants stand and what they need. Now we will have to see which topics and activities CIRCLE can supply to benefit communal added value for policy integration in Europe."

Swart: "CIRCLE was very scientific, with little attention to the relevance to policy-makers. If CIRCLE 2 is to succeed, it is crucial that all the European programmes that are relevant to adaptation are represented, and that they work actively on their relationship with policy makers in Europe."

CIRCLE operates among other 'markets', 'bazaars', and 'networks'. What's the added value?

Swart: "There are a lot of knowledge markets, but not in this specific new area of climate adaptation in Europe. One often



CIRCLE 2 ERA-Net: What does it mean?

CIRCLE 2 (Climate Impact Research and Response Coordination for a Larger Europe) will establish a second generation European Research Area (ERA) Network of 34 science funding and managing organizations across 24 European countries.

The goal:

To create a unified collaboration platform for climate change impacts and adaptation research funding.

The spotlight:

The European need for knowledge about the climate change threats and response options.

The work programme:

Joint foresight and programming activities will help deliver a common vision on climate research funding across a larger Europe.

Shared initiatives such as staff exchange, workshop organizations and joint participation in conferences and meetings will develop this vision into a tangible learning process.

A common agenda will serve as basis to joint funding initiatives allowing countries and organizations to translate their knowledge needs into state-of-the-art transnational research projects.

Active dissemination of results within and outside the network will make the outcomes of those initiatives and projects available to both national and European stakeholders.



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hears ‘I’ll find my colleagues abroad anyway’, but that just doesn’t happen often enough without a structured framework like CIRCLE. If it didn’t exist, it would have to be created.”

A bridge to policy

Laumann: The great challenge remains: how can we make scientific knowledge about climate change and adaptation relevant to decision making? You have to involve the decision makers early on. It’s a stakeholder dialogue. Research in the area of climate change and adaptation is giving us a new kind of information about how we as a society may be able to deal with complex, integrated and long-term socio-ecological issues. CIRCLE will help us to build a bridge between highly academic climate science on the one hand and adaptation on the other. Adaptation needs decisions, planning and investment: a bridge to policy.”

What other challenges do you see for CIRCLE?

Swart: “We seriously need a shift within CIRCLE from ‘impact’ to ‘adaptation’. Some people in CIRCLE haven’t yet taken that step. They represent countries that are mainly carrying out scientific impact studies or atmospheric research: we can see the climate is changing; how is that happening? If CIRCLE 2 is to be relevant to policy, we need people who can take the next step. What are we to do with the information? What can a policy-maker do with it? Impact studies are necessary (or they were, at least) to get the topic on the agenda and indicate its urgency. The next step is more practical. Adaptation cuts into policy, affects society; it is much more a political matter than studying im-

pacts is. We need people who can link the information on physical climate impact to economics, physical planning and social issues. Helping to develop a group of such people across Europe is the great challenge for CIRCLE 2”

Joint funding structures

Laumann: “It’s also a challenge to develop a customer orientation. The decision makers will have to know what sort of information is available, how they should interpret it, how it links up with their own data, despite specific assumptions and uncertainties. To do that you will need some sort of scientific consultancy structure. CIRCLE 2 can be instrumental in creating a strong scientific basis for such a structure.”

And those, says Swart, aren’t the only challenges. “The funding mechanisms in the participant countries are pretty rigid. They make transnational research difficult. National research programmes will not throw money into a common jar just like that: they fund their research in different ways, the timing is different, as are the conditions. There’s not much communality yet. CIRCLE took a very significant step on this road with the funding of a number of transnational projects; this will have to be extended. One of the bazaar’s major products should be a joint funding structure that works.”

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Adaptation needs decisions, planning and investment

CIRCLE Mediterranean Call

The first CIRCLE joint pilot call was dedicated to “Integrated Coastal Zone and Water Management” in the Mediterranean region. Launched in 2007 by the CIRCLE-MED sub-network it was funded by France, Italy, Galicia (Spain), Portugal and Israel. Eight transnational research projects comprising 35 research teams from 9 different Mediterranean countries are currently being funded for a total of €1.65 m.

CIRCLE Nordic call

A second CIRCLE joint pilot call for research projects was launched in 2007 by the CIRCLE-NORDic sub-group. Funding organizations from Finland, Norway and Sweden chose “The Consequences of Climate Change for Policy Making in Nordic Countries” as the research theme for this call. Three collaborative projects with 13 research teams from three countries were selected with a combined funding budget of around € 300,000.

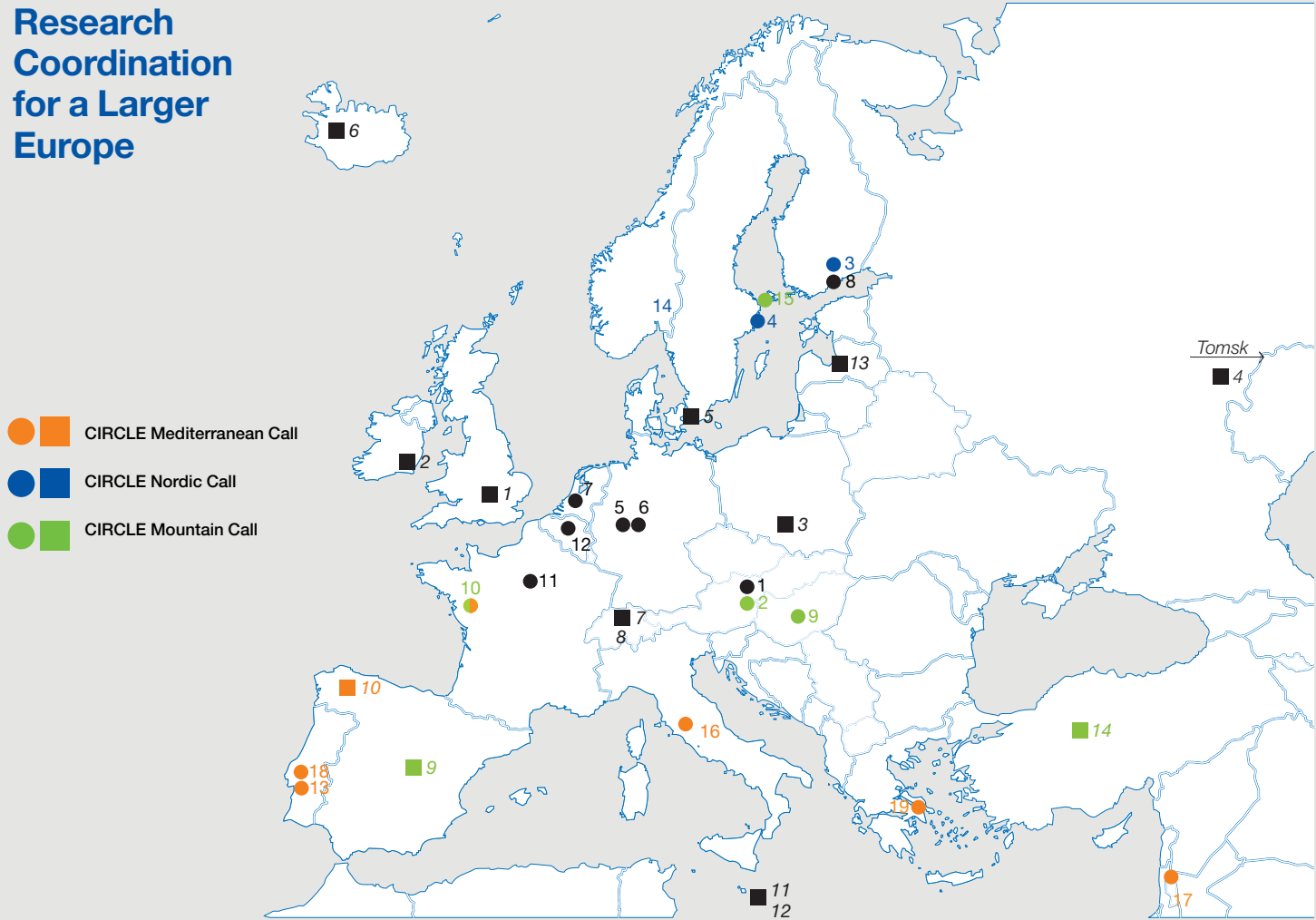
CIRCLE Mountain Call

The first CIRCLE-MOUNTAIN call is dedicated to “Climate Change Impacts and Response Options in Mountainous Areas”. The call is open until January 2010, with a total budget of €2.1 m, made available by research funding organisations from Austria, France, Greece, Hungary, Spain, Sweden and Turkey. Mountains are an important part of the global system, because of their vertical extent. Their climates change with elevation, which generates habitat and species diversity over short horizontal distances.

CIRCLE Eastern Europe

The Central and Central-Eastern European States sub-group (CEES group) was created to meet requirements of the new EU member states. Transnational activities on adaptation research issues, like a workshop on CEES research programmes and projects and a workshop on national adaptation strategies, were successfully held in Budapest.

CIRCLE Climate Impact Research Coordination for a Larger Europe



- CIRCLE Mediterranean Call
- CIRCLE Nordic Call
- CIRCLE Mountain Call

partners and observers

● Partners

- 1 Federal Environment Agency, Austria
- 2 Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture, Austria
- 3 The Academy of Finland
- 4 Swedish Environmental Protection Agency,
- 5 German Aerospace Center – Project Management Agency
- 6 Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany
- 7 Foundation Climate changes Spatial Planning, The Netherlands
- 8 Finnish Environment Institute
- 9 Ministry of Environment and Water, Hungary
- 10 Agence de l'Environnement et de Maîtrise de l'Energie, France
- 11 French Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Sea
- 12 Federal Public Planning Service Science Policy, Belgium
- 13 Foundation for Science and Technology, Portugal
- 14 The Research Council of Norway
- 15 The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning
- 16 Italian Ministry for the Environment and Land and Sea
- 17 Ministry of the Environment, Israel
- 18 Foundation of the Faculty of Science/ University of Lisbon, Portugal
- 19 Mariolopoulos-Kanaginis Foundation, Greece

■ Observers

- 1 UK Climate Impact Programme (UKCIP)
- 2 Environment Protection Agency, Ireland
- 3 The Institute for Ecology of Industrial Areas, Poland

- 4 Center for Environmental Research and Training, Institute of Monitoring of Climatic and Ecological Systems, Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Science
- 5 Danish Meteorological Institute
- 6 RANNIS – The Icelandic Centre for Research
- 7 Swiss Federal Office for the Environment
- 8 ProClim – Forum for Climate and Global Change, Switzerland
- 9 Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation
- 10 Galician Ministry of Innovation and Industry, Spain
- 11 Malta Environment & Planning Authority
- 12 Department of Physics, University of Malta
- 13 Ministry of the Environment of the Republic of Latvia
- 14 The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK),