



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

**White Paper
Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action
[COM (2009) 147]**

SUMMARY

Most climate scientists agree that the world is going to get warmer. The effects, including increased temperatures, changing precipitation, rising sea levels, more intense and frequent extreme weather events and melting glaciers, ice and Arctic sea ice are expected to intensify in the coming decades.

Particularly vulnerable regions in Europe have been identified. These are the Southern Europe and Mediterranean basin (due to heat and droughts); the Alps (due to rapid melting of snow and ice); coastal zones, deltas and floodplains (due to sea level rises, intense rainfall, floods and storms) and Europe's far north, the Arctic and Outermost regions (due to increased global warming).

Economic sectors that rely strongly on certain temperatures and precipitation – from tourism to agriculture, fisheries and energy will be affected. Same can be said about water resources. Vulnerable sections of the population (such as the elderly, disabled and low-income households) are more susceptible to climate impacts. Climate change is also expected to exacerbate negative factors, such as pollution, on the planet.

The White Paper has established a framework for action based on four key elements: building a stronger knowledge base to allow a better understanding of the socio-economic aspects, the costs and the benefits of different adaptation options; integrating climate considerations into all relevant policy interventions; utilizing various financing options (ranging from the EU budget to insurance and financial services products and revenue from the emission trading scheme), and; supporting international efforts aimed at adaptation.

The emphasis on adaptation must be seen in the context of a call for man to act so as to be more resilient to the current climate, less susceptible to the impacts of future climate change and in a position to exploit opportunities. An impact assessment accompanying the White Paper provides further information on the estimated costs/benefits of adaptation by sector.

The White Paper concretely proposes a Clearing House Mechanism to establish a platform that would allow the exchange of information as well as make it widely available to potential users across Europe. It is expected to be able to provide information on the impact of various sectors, regional vulnerability and good practice adaptation measures.

The grounds for an EU approach are particularly relevant when factors transcend boundaries or require solidarity between Member States. Certain sectors such as agriculture, water and such are already quite integrated at a political level within the EU. It inevitably cannot replace, but must complement measures taken by Member States. The European Commission has indicated that it will regularly review progress in implementing the first phase of the framework for action identified in this White Paper, aiming at developing a comprehensive adaptation strategy from 2013.

Environment Ministers have discussed the issue of adaptation to the impacts of climate change at their informal meeting held in mid-April, mainly outlining their welcome to the recent White Paper and looking forward to more cooperation in this field. The Czech Presidency is expected to prepare draft Council Conclusions for the Environment Council meeting being held on 25th June, and come up with concrete decisions on this matter.