



Central outcomes

At the dialogue meeting entitled No Regrets – Pre-Acting and Adapting to Climate Change in Cities

Berlin 14 / 15 October 2013

On 14 and 15 October, 54 representatives of cities, NGOs, academia and business came together to discuss municipal adaptation measures to climate change. The participants were from fifteen major and capital cities - mainly in Europe.

The most recent world climate change report emphasises the likelihood that global temperature will increase beyond the 2 degree C limit, and indicates that the rate of sea level rise is more rapid than had hitherto been expected. Against this background, there was unanimity amongst all the meeting participants that cities need to begin now to adapt to climate change.

Background / Context

- Cities, particularly large cities, are heat islands. Their annual average temperature is two to three degrees C above that of the surrounding area, evening temperatures are up to twelve degrees higher. Responsible for this effect are sealing, dense building, waste heat and heat emissions from buildings, power stations and traffic.
- Global warming and heat island effects do not merely add on to one another. As a result of feedback and reciprocal intensification effects, temperature rises will be in excess of the global mean. There will be changes in precipitation amounts and distribution, in particular, heavy rain and storm events will increase in some regions. In addition, the frequency of heat waves will increase. During events such as these the mortality rate doubles.

Central outcomes of the dialogue meeting:

- Mitigation remains a central component in any municipal climate policy. However, it must be supplemented by adaptation measures. Even if the two degree C limit goal can be maintained, environmental conditions will be considerably altered. Furthermore, it is doubtful as to whether this objective can be achieved.
- Climate adaptation is a long drawn-out process, needing time, it needs to be continually progressed, it extends far beyond legislature periods and a start must be made now.
- Any adaptation policy needs to draw on bio weather and on urban water regimes (surface and groundwater). In this context, the most important fields of action are:
 - forested and green areas
 - unsealing and percolation

- construction, buildings and choice of materials
- waste heat in the building sector, due to traffic and in power generation
- air pollution

There is a long list of concrete measures. A number of such concrete measures were presented and discussed in the course of the meeting.

- No regrets measures and a corresponding strategy increase public acceptance and the political enforceability of adaptation measures. Measures and steps carried out in the framework of a strategy of this kind already improve the quality of life here and now in our cities and also mean adaptation to climate change for future generations. All urban planning work should take climate change and climate adaptation into account.
- Climate adaptation is a cross-sectoral task. A variety of planning fields and specialist disciplines need to be included. Where and whenever this is possible, synergetic effects should be achieved and specialised interests in differing planning work should be considered. Thus, for example, by using water basins and artificial ponds and lakes even now attractiveness in public areas and amenities can be increased, and in the future intake capacity during heavy rain can be provided.¹
- Climate adaptation is a task confronting society as a whole. All the relevant players need to be included. Adaptation needs
 - an over-arching strategy and clear objectives,
 - intensive communication (inside and outside public authorities),
 - political responsibility and 'leadership',
 - cooperation with higher-level territorial entities (regional and national governments),
 - continual reviews of the outcome(s) of measures and elaboration of the strategy.

Prospects

- On 10 February 2014, a second dialogue meeting will take place in Brussels. It will be directed primarily to municipal political decision makers, the European Parliament and the European Commission. On this occasion, a position paper produced by all cities and institutions represented at the meeting on the topic of municipal climate adaptation is to be agreed.
- During the interval between the two meetings, the position paper will be discussed by the participants, revised and amplified as required.
- During the first meeting cooperation activities between participating cities were envisaged - for example, delta municipalities. The second meeting will therefore also serve to intensify exchange of ideas and experience amongst those taking part.

¹ In the course of the conference concrete examples for this were put forward. Thus, for example, in several Netherlands municipalities, underground car parks are designed in such a way that they can also serve as run-off and collecting tanks. In other case studies, public squares or places are designed so that in „normal“ conditions they function as places where the public can spend time, however, in the event of heavy rain they can be run-off and collection basins.