

Abstract for the ADAPTtoCLIMATE 2019 Conference

Development of Urban Adaptation Plans for cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants in Poland – best practice from Poland

Piotr Czarnocki

Department of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, Ministry of Environment, Warsaw,
Wawelska 52/54, 00-922, Poland

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Presenting author email: piotr.czarnocki@mos.gov.pl

We would like to present the Polish Project “Developing plans for adaptation to climate change in cities with a population above 100,000 inhabitants” (hereinafter also referred to as “MPA Project”). The Project is financed at 85% by the Cohesion Fund under the Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment 2014-2020. The Ministry of Environment is responsible for project development in close cooperation with 44 cities which are partners of the project.

Project cost: 7 000 000 EUR.

The MPA Project was launched in January 2017 and it ends in June 2019.

This Project covering 44 cities inhabited by 30% of the Polish population is a very important step in preparing Poland for challenges related to climate risks. It is an example of a well-coordinated initiative, shaping modern urban policies and serves as an example of best practice for other local authorities.

We would like to share with you efforts which have been made in Poland to adapt to climate change impacts and build climate change resilience at both national and local level. Poland, the host of COP24 which took place last year in Katowice, is aspiring to become a front liner in urban adaptation to climate change with its unique, both in European and Global scale - Urban Adaptation Plans Project (MPA Project).

Climate change is a global trend and requires response from the international community as well as the governments of individual countries and local authorities. In Poland, climate protection and adaptation to climate change are high on the Government's agenda. Our country is actively involved in climate policy development at many levels - global negotiations, in relations within the EU as well as in cooperation with authorities at the local level.

Polish Government promotes climate adaptation by developing the MPA Project. The main goal of the Project is to assess the cities' sensitivity and vulnerability to climate change and to plan adaptation measures tailored for the local conditions. We implement Project jointly with 44 biggest cities as our partners and what is also very important, local actors are involved deeply at each step of the project. In a nutshell we do not develop documents in the Ministry for local governments, but we work jointly and develop the best possible plans together. To see the scale of this initiative, over 30% of the Polish population are inhabitants of our project partners.

What is crucial, all Urban Adaptation Plans are being developed in accordance with one methodology by one consortium. As a result, during the implementation phase, cities will be able to easily cooperate and work together on the measures. Final plans will have dynamic and open character, so it will be easy to update or reshape some assumptions after an evaluation.

Project is the first step aimed at strengthening resilience and adaptation to changing climate conditions among Polish cities. In the future Ministry of Environment would like to switch from the role of initiator and coordinator to the role of supporting partner for implementation and development of similar initiatives with other local governments that will decide to take an action. The result of the project and implementation of plans will improve cities' resilience to climate change, and consequently, the entire country. Combining identified local needs with global solutions is a key to success.

The implementation of the MPA Project will be particularly important as well as building cooperation networks between cities. Cities that are project partners will accept final documents in the form of resolutions or in a different way provided for strategic documents by law. Therefore, ready-made urban adaptation plans will contain a

framework for the implementation of specific activities and adaptation projects for which the procedure for Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA) has been carried out during the project development.

The preparation of the project was divided into 6 phases, and currently, the project is in the last phase VI. Phases of the project are the following:

- 1) Current and Future Vulnerability assessment
- 2) Estimation of Future Vulnerability and Risks
- 3) Risk Assessment
- 4) Development of Adaptation Options
- 5) Assessment and Selection of Adaptation Options/Strategic Impact Assessment
- 6) Description of Adaptation Measures.

It should be emphasized that the MPA Project is innovative, pilot project. There are no examples of implementing such projects in Poland, while adaptation activities are often fragmentary in nature and do not result from earlier adaptive planning.

It is important that the plans and project are being developed based on recognized methodology and high quality. However, the necessary condition for the implementation of the plans is the provision of appropriate financial instruments, such as grants, credits, loans or insurance. The Polish Ministry of the Environment will contribute to create appropriate financial instruments to finance the implementation of the MPA Project, including subsidies (funds) and repayable instruments, including EU sources.

Adaptation plans should be linked and coordinated with other strategies for socio-economic development and with spatial development plans at all levels of management. In the analysed context, one cannot overestimate the component on building social awareness, including through information and promotion activities, which is a crucial part of the MPA Project.