

**Special Meeting of the
OECD Task Force on
Climate Change Adaptation:**

The impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on
ongoing and planned adaptation activities

Discussion Highlights

30 June 2020

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■ Objectives of the special meeting

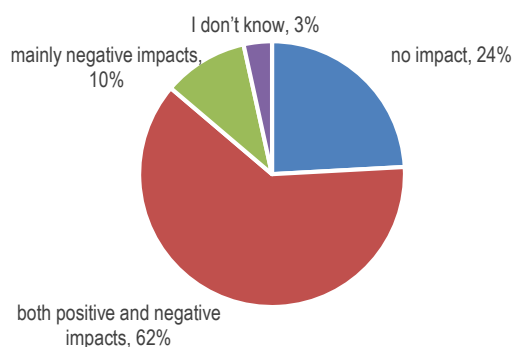
The OECD organised the special meeting of the TFCCA to give its country delegates a dedicated, informal space to share experiences on the impacts that the COVID-19 crisis has had and is expected to have on countries' ongoing and planned adaptation activities. The discussion was organised to also reflect on the potentially more fundamental changes that COVID-19 may have sparked for the adaptation agenda and how the experience of managing the impacts of climate change might have been a source of inspiration for building resilience to similar crises such as COVID-19.

The meeting gathered delegates from 32 countries as well as from the European Union.

■ How has the crisis affected countries' adaptation activities to date?

Many policy areas have been affected by the ongoing health and economic crisis, and climate change adaptation is no exception. While countries urged to recognise that the crisis is still ongoing and that the jury on the final impact is still out, a great number of country delegates (62 percent) reported through a live poll¹ that they have felt both positive and negative impacts from the COVID-19 crisis on their adaptation work. Strictly negative impacts were reported by 10 percent of delegates.

How has your domestic engagement on climate change adaptation been affected by the COVID-19 crisis to date? It has had...



On the positive impacts observed thus far countries highlighted:

- the increased awareness about climate risks;
- the opportunity that is being created by the delay in key international discussions (such as COP26, post-2020 CBD) to strengthen the role for adaptation;
- the stark increase in the recognition of societies' critical dependence on a functioning and well-equipped health sector, not just for dealing with health but also other types of crises, such as climate extreme events;
- the heightened awareness of the importance of supply chain management for securing essential goods and services.

In their community of experts, delegates have observed an acute awareness, but also recognition of the lack of preparation for potentially compounding crises, such as the incidence of extreme wildfires or extreme heatwaves and a major health crisis.

¹ The live poll was undertaken via Zoom during the meeting. Number of answers received: Question 1: 27; Question 2: 28; Questions 3 and 4: 29; Question 5: 28. Please cite as follows: OECD (2020), Results from live poll undertaken during the special meeting of the Task Force on Climate Change Adaptation (30/06/2020). Virtual meeting.

On the negative impacts and the challenging aspects of this crisis for their work, countries highlighted:

- the unprecedented mental health impacts that they observed in communities that had just come out of an extreme weather event and that were directly imposed the restrictions as part of many countries' immediate response to COVID-19;
- that the capacity of local actors in charge of implementing many important adaptation measures has been significantly undermined by the pandemic, which absorbed local resources to address and prevent further virus outbreaks;
- that while the virus may not have had an impact (yet) on longer term adaptation policies, they do expect it to cause considerable delays in implementing agreed upon actions;
- that the crisis has taken an important space in political discussions and media, decreasing the attention for the climate debate in general and adaptation more specifically.

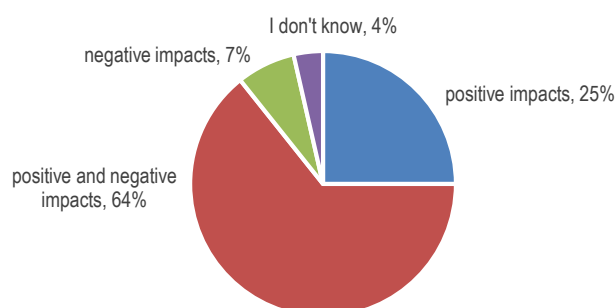
■ What is at stake for adaptation in the near future?

Country delegates had mixed expectations on the future impacts on the adaptation agendas, with some expecting adaptation to rise on the policy agendas, and others not. While public resources may not necessarily increase for adaptation, delegates warn that private sector contributions may decrease in light of the significant economic disruptions. In the absence of an increase in resources dedicated to adaptation, it is suggested to use smart financial and regulatory instruments to encourage adaptation investments, such as the use of tax credits.

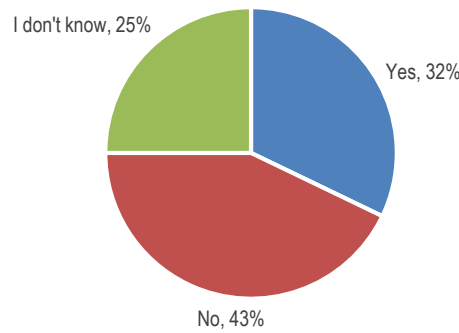
Only few countries have already decided on concrete measures for the economic recovery from COVID-19. Among those only a moderate impact of the recovery measures on adaptation efforts can be observed. While in some countries recovery funding has been earmarked for investments in reducing climate risk exposure, such as for floods, in others adaptation has been mentioned as a more embedded priority, as part of sustainable forest management or support for nature-based solutions, for example.

Nevertheless, many countries see an important opportunity for resilience building against climate risks in light of the COVID-19 recovery. The crisis can help make the case that uncertainty is not an argument for inaction. The increasing recognition of the role of nature to build back better is an important opportunity to strengthen climate resilience and inter-connected health risks. In spite of this, delegates see a need for the adaptation community to make a more convincing case for their arguments, on the basis of evidence and results on what works and how effectively in adapting to a changing climate, echoing discussions held during the inaugural meeting of the TFCCA.

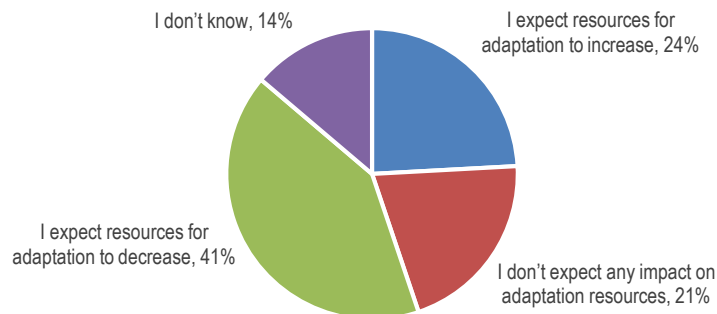
How do you expect the social and economic recovery measures to affect adaptation activities? I expect them to have...



Do you expect the crisis to increase the policy priority given to adaptation?

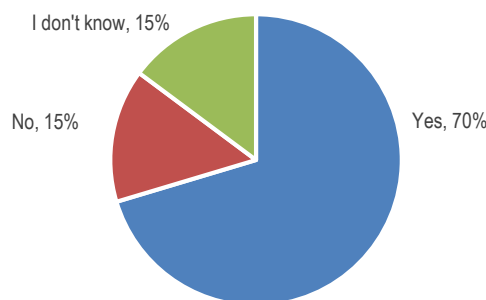


Do you expect the crisis to have an impact on resources available for domestic adaptation work?



Finally, there was an overwhelming sense among countries that COVID-19 will have a positive impact on adaptation as part of international discussions, where they expect a strong focus to be put on tackling transboundary climate risks and the importance of nature to reduce countries' exposure to extreme weather events as well as interlinked health crises. Indeed, 70 percent of respondents expect international engagement on adaptation to increase.

Do you expect international engagement on adaptation to increase?



■ Next steps

The Secretariat took this opportunity to introduce the steering committee that will support the Secretariat in setting the agenda of the task force (Ms. Inke Schauer from Germany, Mr. Alon Zask from Israel and Ms. Candice El-Asmar from Australia). The meeting confirmed that the discussion on the COVID-19 impacts shall be continued in the 23-24 November full meeting of the TFCCA, whose date was announced at the meeting.

■ List of participants

Participants List for VIRTUAL: Special Meeting of the OECD Task Force on Climate Change Adaptation Liste des Participants pour VIRTUAL: Special Meeting of the OECD Task Force on Climate Change Adaptation

30/6/2020 - 30/6/2020

All Sessions

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