

# Kennis voor Klimaat

## Knowledge for Climate



Project

### 5.2: Normative principles and transboundary climate adaptation policy

#### Description of research

Despite the fact that effects of climate change do not stop at country borders, adaptation policy is still primarily a domestic affair. By adopting principles like the river basin approach in its water legislation, the European Union has been promoting transboundary policy among its Member States. But does this push also extend to adaptation policy? This research aims to explicate to what extent normative principles in European legislation and policy have influenced the development of transboundary climate adaptation policy between the Netherlands and its neighboring states, initially specifically focusing on the Rhine river basin in the Dutch and the North Rhine-Westphalia regions. The aim is to understand the how and why of recent developments – or lack thereof – as regards transboundary climate adaptation. Moreover, this research aims to gain insight in its possible future developments. Is it likely that such governance will significantly develop within the EU? Or are hampering factors present making further developments unlikely? Should we try to influence these factors? Or should we just ‘go with the flow’?



#### Research question

To what extent have EU normative principles influenced climate adaptation policy in the Rhine River basin in the Netherlands and North Rhine-Westphalia?

#### The most important conclusions

Since climate adaptation policy is still a very recent development, there will be limited, if any transboundary policy and applicable legislation. However, due to this lack of relevant legislation normative principles may prove to be all the more important to bring about development of transboundary policy on this issue. The most important conclusions from the ongoing research are summarized below:

- There is a radical difference in the approach to climate adaptation policy between the Netherlands and North Rhine-Westphalia. Whereas the first focuses on flood risk, the second applies an approach with a trade-off of the different interests involved.
- There are significant differences in the governance structure of the Netherlands and North Rhine-Westphalia.
- There is some cooperation on the issue, primarily through the Arbeitsgruppe Hochwasser and the International Commission for Protection of the Rhine.



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### Bottlenecks of the project

The premier bottleneck of this research lies in its quantitative aspect. It may be difficult to exactly determine the influence of normative principles. For gaining insight in this matter we are dependent upon interviews with representatives from the actors involved. However, the interviewees' vision on the matter is subjected to subjective views and rationalization afterwards. By carefully compiling the questionnaires, and by interviewing representatives from as many actors involved as possible, the impact of this bottleneck on the research will be reduced.



### Opportunities for the project

The opportunities for this project are multitude and include, but are not limited to:

- Gaining insight in actors involved in adaptation policy in the Netherlands and North Rhine-Westphalia.
- Gaining insight in primary normative principles relating to climate adaptation.
- Gaining insight in adaptation policies in both the Netherlands and North Rhine-Westphalia.
- Comparing different adaptation strategies and methods for dealing with climate adaptation.

### Possible applications

In the future cooperation between the Netherlands and other Member States may benefit from this research by:

- Having more insight in pivotal cross border interests allows for more and more effective cooperation.
- In turn, more cooperation on climate adaptation policy can reduce the costs associated with adaptation measures.
- In a broader perspective: gaining insight in the factors and normative principles that drive transboundary policy will be beneficial beyond adaptation policy in other sectors.

### More information

For more information about this subject:

- Driessen, P. P. J. and H. F. M. W. Van Rijswijk (2011). "Normative Aspects of Climate Adaptation Policies." *Climate Law*(2): 559-581.
- Wiering, M. A., J. Verwijmeren, et al. (2010). "Experiences in Regional Cross Border Cooperation in River Management. Comparing Three Cases at the Dutch-German Border." *Water Resour Manage* **24**(11): 2647-2672.
- Knill, C. and D. Lehmkuhl (2002). "The National Impact of European Union Regulatory Policy: Three Europeanization Mechanisms." *European Journal of Political Research* **41**: 255-280.

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