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Held for the first time in southern Europe, the [4th European Climate Change Adaptation conference](#) (ECCA 2019) took place in Lisbon from 28 to 31 May, 2019. The conference brought together researchers, policymakers and practitioners to discuss recent advances in climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) research, policy and practice, and aimed to inspire collective climate action.

While this was a scientific and technical rather than a political conference, we believe the discussions that took place in Lisbon are of critical importance to inform the current efforts and future challenges of climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Governments, public agencies, research funders, researchers, non-governmental and private sector actors must see their climate action efforts and ambitions backed up by solid evidence and, of course, intense collaboration between all those involved.

This short overview of ECCA 2019 key messages has been developed by the conference organisers as a summary of those discussions. They do not represent a consensus view of all the 1,200 participants, nor do they represent the official view of the organisations involved. The ECCA 2019 organisers invite readers to consider these messages and share them widely across their networks.

## ECCA 2019 – Working together to prepare for change



## Time to act...

The consistent theme across the ECCA 2019 plenary sessions was acceptance that the time to act on climate change is now: taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in tandem with adapting to the potential impacts of the climate crisis is paramount. This includes making changes to our lifestyle, in the way we do business, and how our industry and transportation operates.

**Increasing pressure from society to implement change**, highlighted by movements and networks, for example, is a reminder that nobody will be completely isolated from the effects of the climate crisis. Because of this growing notion, young people are challenging governments to make that change happen quickly.

**News in the media must be based on robust and grounded arguments based on solid knowledge and evidence** – we have the evidence from science and research, now we need to empower and inform science journalism and advocates to provide clear and factual commentaries and news. Scientists can help by using language that can be understood by citizens.

**Leadership and political commitment to action are needed across all levels of governance**; with the European Union continuing to invest in climate-related research and preparation for dealing with weather and climate-related hazards, it is crucial that sharing experiences, understanding the knowledge produced and taking action is a reality across all levels of governance; it is only by actively working together that we can limit the progress and impacts of climate change.

The **financial sector can play an important role** and investors are slowly beginning to better understand climate issues, for example, damage to supply chains or source materials caused by weather and climate-related hazards. In addition, financial institutions are becoming aware that risk reduction and adaptation actions save money in the long-term and that restoring services and infrastructure is costly both fiscally and in lost time.

Finally, the **increasingly frequent impacts of climate change on health** through heat stress, vector borne diseases, food security, the aftermath of extreme events and the long-term effects on mental health cannot be overstated.

## Time to act... is now!

ECCA 2019 featured [96 Science-Practice and Science parallel sessions](#). These were organised by the scientific and practice communities to present the current state-of-the-art and to inspire action along the six identified [ECCA themes](#).

Act now – communicate better, do more – and the need to “move from common concepts to actions” was clearly a hot topic across science-practice sessions. The nine key main messages are:

### Be inclusive

Climate risks are unevenly distributed, and are generally greater for poor, disadvantaged or vulnerable people and communities in countries at all levels of development. For example, the specific needs of vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly and frail are frequently overlooked, yet they are often those who may be most in need of support. On the one hand, advanced economies have a higher capacity to adapt as they have better access to data, knowledge, technology and finance. On the other hand, they have different types of limits to contend with, for example, biophysical, economic, ecological and imagination. Efforts to deal with climate change, health and human well-being are important, and rely on thriving (urban) communities – communities which may need help to improve their resilience.



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## Focus on integrated approaches and solutions

Adaptation challenges and solutions are often embedded in large and complex systems – a better understanding of these systems increases our chances of developing effective adaptation and risk reduction action, and helps to avoid unintended maladaptation elsewhere in the system.

Co-production or co-creation of knowledge for adaptation and risk reduction requires a trans-disciplinary approach that recognises values, and integrates different types of knowledge in the adaptation process. Collaborative approaches and engagement must include diverse actors such as individuals, local citizens, private sector and boundary organisations, with government also playing a crucial role.

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## Better linking CCA and DRR

Climate change is a global phenomenon – CCA and DRR can play an important role in bringing together and enhancing cooperation between different regions, sectors, decision-levels and researchers so contributing to a more global and cooperative world. CCA and DRR can also be a source of conflict through differing understanding of climate risks in different sectors, and different political or economic views from decision-makers.

If we are to develop a more holistic, systems thinking approach, the current climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction governance and structures are no longer suitable and are only slowly, partly transforming. Better links and coherence between the CCA and DRR communities play an important role in bringing together and enhancing cooperation and collaboration between diverse levels of governance.

A debate about where adaptation might end – adapting to what kind of future world? – and loss and damage begin is essential when considering the impacts of high-end climate change.

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## Make data more accessible

High-quality data, and accurate and easy-to-use methods and approaches are crucial to understanding the past, present and the future, and how we can take action in order to reduce climate risks in the best way possible. Open and user-friendly access to data and information is essential to further improve risk awareness and reduction, and to enable mutual learning and good policy design.

Research projects generate knowledge and data, develop innovative adaptation and risk reduction tools and methods, and have triggered adaptation actions at regional and local level.

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## Keep improving communication and a common language

Climate change-related communications have improved over time, taking into account the differing needs of a range of audiences and using a broader range of information types – visualisation, images and arts which help a non-technical audience to engage with the subject. References to vulnerable groups, such as children or the elderly, can help to heighten the emotions needed for a moving narrative. However, data-focused communication may not be enough to inspire and mobilise action, as emotion also plays an important role in making things happen.

Serious gaming has proved to be an effective and stimulating tool to explain complex adaptation and risk reduction concepts to a non-technical audience. Deeper engagement will strengthen action at an individual level, as well as improving the role of citizens in policies.

It is essential that we continue to learn from past and ongoing actions and solutions in order to keep improving portfolios of good practice, particularly taking into account failures as well as successes and innovations.



We need a consistent and flexible approach to common language and concepts in order to ensure knowledge is used appropriately. The jargon and terms used in both climate adaptation and DRR can be similar with slightly different meanings – this can be difficult for decision-makers and practitioners to decode, and potentially undermine messages and action.

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### Metrics and indicators – but realistic

The development and improvement of metrics and indicators for CCA and DRR is important, and must be developed in collaboration with diverse actors and data-holders. The involvement of key stakeholders and end-users is of paramount importance in order to seize cross-cutting synergies related to, for example, creating robust and win-win strategies and funding.

Accurate assessments of climate risks, and tools for adaptation and risk reduction measures will activate and support improved coherence between National Adaptation policy and global systemic approaches arising from different global agreements – the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for DRR and the Sustainable Development Goals.

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### Adaptation, risk reduction & mitigation are urgent

Taking into account all the actors and potential solutions will be critical in identifying win-win solutions. That is, solutions that can address adaptation, risk reduction and mitigation needs. These solutions should consider working with natural systems as an essential part of the solution rather than working against them.

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### Societal engagement, young people, climate change and disasters

There is a lack of youth participation in public decisions around climate change. These same young people will be disproportionately affected by climate-related hazards in the future, and have limited voices in the decisions and policies related to CCA, DRR and community resilience, despite calls for their empowerment as crucial stakeholders in these issues. Engaging young people as stakeholders has implications for human rights, as those that are most marginalised and least likely to have their voices heard are also those at risk from the adverse impacts of climate change and disasters. In addition, young people will soon be moving into leadership roles in decision-making spaces, and inheriting the consequences of climate change, and policies and actions that are being co-constructed today – their voices must be heard. Although there has been an increase in formal education programmes that engage children and young people in DRR and CCA, few of these initiatives include information on policy-oriented action to address these complex problems, or the underlying systemic issues. **Actively engaging and empowering the society, including children and young people in addressing these complex issues is a critical step to achieving resilience at local, regional, and national levels.**

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### Arts and climate change

Art has the capacity not only to raise awareness, but also enable creative ways to address sensitive issues, support reflexivity and act as a conduit for cultural renewal. Artists can contribute with novel ways of addressing problems, free from disciplinary constraints. Arts-based methodologies have the potential to challenge current thinking on climate change, presenting new ways of approaching complex problems and engaging people. Creative ways of integrating the practical, personal and political dimensions of climate change contribute to more successful social transformation and adaptation to climate change.

**We have the knowledge and understanding, now we need to act in unison and work on integrated solutions...**

This report should be referenced as:

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