

Adapting to Climate Change in Eastern and Central Asia

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Climate change exposes Eastern Europe and Central Asia's weaknesses while exacerbating their costs and risk implications. To address these issues, the region should heed the advice of adaptation experts: focus on areas and sectors already vulnerable to today's climate conditions and on actions that have immediate positive impacts for the population. In other words, the region should take a series of "no-regret" actions—actions that are beneficial, whatever the climate scenario.

The next decade offers a window of opportunity for ECA countries. Many of the region's climate change adaptation needs – improved water resource management, better performing water utilities and energy systems, and upgraded housing and transport infrastructure – are crucially needed independent of climate change. The potential gains from improved agricultural practices are much more significant than the benefits expected from climate change. Regardless of climate change, the region must also clean up environmental hotspots, accelerate disaster management, and expand hydromet services but in the process the region will build resilience.

ECA countries need to act. They can learn from other countries how to manage uncertainty and assemble the right information to guide climate-resilient practices. Uncertainty should be a catalyst for action instead of an excuse for inaction. Marianne Fay will present a vision for overcoming paralyzing uncertainty through a focus on both "robust strategies," which are effective in the face of an unpredictable future, and stakeholder engagement, which and increases the chances for effective implementation of adaptation policies. Fixing ECA's current weaknesses and tackling its dismal environmental legacy will have immediate and substantial benefits for the welfare of individuals and for future economic growth, regardless of climate change.