

GGBP Case Study Series

French Regional Climate, Air, and Energy Plans

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Country: [France](#)

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France's regional climate, air, and energy plans seek to guide climate and energy policy in the 26 French regions through 2020 and 2050.

Context

The European Union (EU) "20-20-20" targets set three key objectives for 2020 – a 20 percent reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from 1990 levels, raising the share of energy from renewables to 20 percent, and a 20 percent improvement in the EU's energy efficiency.

The French government has also set guidelines for energy policy for 2050 and an overall environmental strategy and law (Grenelle II). The Regional Climate, Air, and Energy Action Plan (Schémas Régional du Climat, de l'Air et de l'Energie, SRCAEs) is an important pillar of the approach, and reflect the need to involve

elected representatives and civil servants, citizens, and local industry in developing plans that reflect the priorities and different needs of each region.

Approach

Local authorities in each of the 26 regions of France are requested to develop energy, climate, and air quality plans together with the central government, and to update them every five years. The SRCAEs are broad strategic documents which present guidelines rather than targets. They do not identify measures for

implementation and funding (de Charentenay et al., 2012).

To support the development of SRCAEs, the national government has developed an analysis methodology, and provides inputs and proposals for the plan. It also assesses whether the plan meets national standards and is in line with national targets for 2050.

Regional councils in each area organize consultations with local stakeholders and evaluate evidence, options and proposals from central government and other stakeholders. Different areas have taken different approaches to consultation. For example, Île-de-France held debates and round tables to discuss suggestions for policies and actions, while Rhône-Alpes used a lottery to select citizens for participation in an in-depth consultation, where they met with experts and elected officials and were trained in climate change issues in order to identify specific policy priorities.

The implementation of SRCAEs is through Territorial Climate-Energy Plans (PCET). All territories of more than 50,000 inhabitants are required to develop and submit a PCET that is compatible with the SRCAE, which will then enable monitoring/evaluation of the SRCAE plan.

Outcomes

Each region's plan reflects its particular priorities.

For example, the Île-de-France is the most populated region of France, centered on the Paris metropolitan area. Old energy-inefficient buildings and a large commuting population mean that the greatest sources of GHG

emissions are from the building sector and vehicles.

Authorities organized debates and round-table discussions between citizens, elected officials, and industry and prioritized measures focused on building standards, renewable energy, and public transport. The plan sets numeric guidelines for increasing the installation of renewable energy systems, reducing transport-related and energy consumption, and increasing energy efficiency in the housing sector. However, implementation of some of these plans has proved difficult. For example, two of the proposed locations for wind turbine construction did not gain approval from the national government, which could prevent 125 to 220 wind turbines being built (Ile de France, 2012).

Midi-Pyrénées is a largely rural area. Its plan aims to cut buildings and transport emissions and increase the use of renewables. It also recognizes that agricultural emissions are important, but currently it lacks data on these emissions and does not have quantified targets for 2020. The SRCAE indicates that a better understanding of the situation is needed to reduce GHG emissions and assess carbon stored in grasslands and forests.

The SRCAE methodology allows flexibility in the design of GHG emission inventories and scenarios, which makes comparisons between regions and with national targets difficult (Charentenay et al., 2012). A study found that emission targets vary and can be lower than, equal to, and sometimes greater than the targets of the EU climate and energy package. Such differences are linked to the constraints that the regions have imposed on their forecasting exercises as well as the widely differing potential for GHG emission reductions and the development of renewable energy in the different regions (de Charentenay et al., 2012).

The main impact of the SRCAE thus far has been increased awareness of the pertinent issues and their interdependence, and participatory and inclusive stakeholder engagement during the debates and discussions mentioned above. These debates served as a platform for the discussion and sharing of information and concerns, with the aim of addressing priority issues in the implementation phase of the plan.¹ In addition to identifying the raised awareness of stakeholders at all levels, a study on the SRCAEs by a French think-tank, CDC Climat Recherche, has revealed that the SRCAEs inform decision makers on actions to be taken and the region's needs; and they inform businesses, municipalities and citizens on what they can do to mitigate climate change and reduce their carbon footprints (de Charentenay et al., 2012). Furthermore, the report highlights policies common to all regions and those which rely on the local context, and points out that some guidelines could be adopted by others. It also demonstrates that some SRCAEs go beyond the competencies of the regions by showing how the role of each decision-making level is important to the success of the regional plans.

For example, the SRCAEs of the Ile-de-France and Rhone-Alpes regions have developed several guidelines on passenger and freight transport, and have placed importance on renovations of inefficient buildings and energy efficiency in the industrial sector. Both regions' targets for the development of renewable electricity are higher than the national target of 20 percent (de Charentenay et al., 2012).

These two regions have also emphasized the development of public transport and improvement of engine efficiency – more so than other regions of France (de Charentenay et al., 2012).

¹ Based on e-mail questionnaire responses by Philippe Robert and Joëlle Colosio (Regional Director for Île-de-

Lessons

The Île-de-France SRCAE is an excellent example of how a regional government can proactively develop a holistic climate change adaptation plan. However, the scenario also underlines some of the challenges still facing the new trend towards the regional orientation of climate change policy. Regarding SRCAEs in general, significant limits appear. As the purpose of these schemes is to give territorial guidelines, SRCAEs do not present specific measures or implementation or financing objectives. Furthermore, the methodologies used differ from region to region, hence comparisons with the national targets are difficult to perform (de Charentenay et al., 2012). More specifically, the regional wind power plan of the Île-de-France Regional Council (contained in an annex to the SRCAE) was challenged by the national government. Two of the proposed locations for wind turbine construction did not gain approval from the national government. This could lead to the prevention of 125 to 220 wind turbines being built (Ile de France, 2012). This example shows the difficulties regional initiatives can face in green economy policy execution.

Similar to the Île-de-France case study, the Midi-Pyrénées SRCAE is a good illustration of the importance of regional government contribution to work on the climate change issue.

In its SRCAE, Midi-Pyrénées has identified major sectors in which work has to be done in order to reduce emissions and increase energy efficiency. In contrast to Ile-de-France, for Midi-Pyrénées one of the major targets is the agriculture sector as this has been recognized as a major emitter. However, efforts have to be

France) of French Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME) (June 2013).

made in this field in order to develop indicators to measure, for instance, GHG emissions. Currently, it is impossible to know how much this sector emits, thus targets for 2020 cannot be quantified. Indicators still have to be developed in this sector. Furthermore, the SRCAE indicates that a better understanding of the situation is needed to reduce GHG emissions, as well as to recognize the value of grasslands and forests for storing carbon.

This process has been developed in a collaborative way; developing the SRCAE has brought together stakeholders from diverse economic sectors and political levels, as well as civil society. This attests to a democratic stakeholder engagement process.

In summary:

- Regional ownership of GHG inventories and scenarios: The responsibility of conducting regional GHG emission inventories falls on the regional authorities, thereby allowing them to identify sectors that generate the most GHG emissions;
- Flexibility vs. comparability: The flexibility in the design of the methodologies used prevents cross-regional comparisons being made with central government. Developing a standardized methodology would enable cross-regional comparison and analysis;
- Engaging stakeholders: Active and democratic stakeholder engagement ensured that voices from diverse backgrounds and fields were heard and taken into account.
- There are some key context variables that make the French SRCAEs successful. This

includes open dialogue with stakeholders, democracy, and a strong central government. In addition, the strength of France's statistical and scientific institutions was a key contributor.

Further Information

Ile de France SCRAE: <http://www.driee.ile-de-france.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/schema-regional-du-climat-de-l-air-r507.html>

Midi Pyrenees SCRAE: <http://www.midipyrenees.fr/Le-Schema-Regional-Climat-Air-Energie>

References

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September 2014

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