

MAIA Policy Implications and Recommendations: a National Level Approach

Executive Summary

Purpose

Drawing on the MAIA project's Policy Roundtables, Policy–Science Dialogues, Assemblies and Workshops, this summary presents the priority actions national governments must take to accelerate climate adaptation and mitigation action. The recommendations are grounded in tested solutions and case studies from across Europe.

The presented findings focus on four national priority themes, widely discussed during those events: Open and accessible climate knowledge, coordinated multi-level governance, sustainable financing and resource mobilization, and integrated, adaptive planning and evaluation. These themes were identified as central levers to strengthen resilience, support inclusive climate action, and foster evidence-based decision-making.

Four Priority Themes

1 Open and Accessible Climate Knowledge

Challenge: *Data fragmentation, limited local-scale information, and weak science–policy links hinder effective decision-making.*

Action Priorities:

- Mandate **national protocols** for data harmonisation and cross-sector interoperability;
- Integrate **citizen science** into official national monitoring frameworks;
- Deploy **knowledge-brokering units** to translate research into actionable guidance;
- Facilitate **multilevel and cross-border data exchange** via collaborative stakeholders.

2 Coordinated Multi-Level Governance

Challenge: *Siloed governance and insufficient integration of subnational priorities delay implementation.*

Action Priorities:

- Institutionalise **vertical coordination platforms** between ministries, regions, and municipalities;
- Formalise **civil society and private sector roles** in national climate governance;
- Strengthen **subnational capacity** to participate in cross-sector and transnational initiatives.

3 Sustainable Financing and Resource Mobilisation

Challenge: *Subnational governments deliver most climate solutions but receive minimal funding.*

Action Priorities:

- Create **dedicated national climate finance windows** with simplified access;
- Establish **technical assistance** for bankable project preparation;
- Promote **blended finance models, climate bonds, and resilience funds**;
- Ensure balanced financing for **adaptation and mitigation**.

4 Integrated, Adaptive Planning and Evaluation

Challenge: *Weak multilevel and sectoral integration and limited adaptive capacity undermine national climate plans.*

Action Priorities:

- Align **local/regional plans with national and EU targets** through standardised procedures;
- Embed **adaptive management** with regular updates based on new evidence;
- Support **multi-disciplinary planning teams** integrating environmental, social, and economic priorities.

Strategic Imperative

National governments must:

- **Open the data** – make it accessible, interoperable, and trusted;
- **Align governance** – connect all levels and sectors under shared accountability;
- **Unlock finance** – innovate, simplify, and target funding where impact is greatest;
- **Plan adaptively** – integrate across sectors and update as knowledge evolves.

National governments should act decisively and cohesively now, or risk locking in vulnerabilities that will cost far more to address later. MAIA evidence shows that national leadership - paired with local empowerment - is the fastest route to a just, **climate-resilient future**.

Introduction

*This Policy Brief distils the most relevant insights and good practices gathered through the **MAIA Policy Roundtables, Policy–Science Dialogues, Assemblies and Workshops**. These events brought together policymakers, researchers, practitioners, community leaders, and a wide variety of climate stakeholders to examine the structural levers needed to accelerate climate action and resilience.*

*Discussions converged on **four national priorities**, each a pillar of an effective climate governance system: inclusive climate action, and foster evidence-based decision-making across the EU:*

**Open and Accessible
Climate Knowledge**

**Coordinated Multi-Level
Governance**

**Sustainable Financing and
Resource Mobilisation**

**Integrated, Adaptive Planning
and Evaluation**

These are not abstract principles - they are operational imperatives, supported by tangible evidence and concrete models tested in real contexts across Europe and beyond.

1 Open and Accessible Climate Knowledge

National governments cannot act decisively if climate information remains fragmented, inaccessible, or disconnected from decision-making. MAIA events repeatedly confirmed that reliable, interoperable, and actionable climate data is the backbone of evidence-based policy.

Current constraints:

- Fragmented datasets and a lack of interoperability between ministries, agencies, and research bodies;
- Inadequate local-scale data, particularly for land use, biodiversity, and socio-economic vulnerability (e.g., Portugal's adaptation bottlenecks);
- Weak institutional mechanisms linking science to policy, with citizen-generated data often excluded.

Good Practices:

- **National climate observatories** and **data hubs** harmonizing information from multiple regions and research centers, enabling consistent climate risk assessment and planning;
- **Develop digital tools** supported at the national level, such as MAIA's Climate Connectivity Hub, which aggregate climate knowledge and make it more accessible to public authorities and practitioners;
- **Citizen science initiatives** supported by national agencies, which enhance public participation in monitoring and help to fill data gaps in environmental and climate indicators.

Strategic national actions:

- **Mandate national data harmonisation protocols** to ensure cross-sector comparability and interoperability;
- **Institutionalise science-policy interfaces** – dedicated knowledge-brokering units translating research into operational policy guidance;
- **Integrate citizen science** into national monitoring frameworks, with formal pathways for validation and use in policymaking;
- **Promote cross-border knowledge exchange** via climate observatories and regional cooperation mechanisms (e.g., Pyrenean Climate Change Observatory);
- **Deploy advanced digital tools** to simplify complex policy and technical frameworks for practitioners and local authorities.

Outcome to aim for: A national climate information architecture that is transparent, interoperable, and trusted by all actors, from central ministries to community organisations.

2 Coordinated Multi-Level Governance

No national climate strategy will succeed without the alignment of regional, municipal, and sectoral policies. Fragmented governance delays implementation, wastes resources, and erodes trust.

Current constraints:

- Siloed governance structures and insufficient vertical coordination;
- Delayed or ineffective integration of subnational priorities into national climate plans;
- Limited institutionalised channels for civil society and private sector participation.

Good Practices:

- **Integrated national and regional adaptation planning**, ensuring coherence and alignment with EU strategies while leaving flexibility for local implementation (e.g. Transborder cooperation between Occitanie and Catalonia on water management and biodiversity protection);
- **Nationally supported Climate City Contracts**, establishing shared commitments between cities, ministries, and EU institutions to accelerate both climate neutrality and adaptation;
- **Multi-sectoral national strategies**, linking climate adaptation with biodiversity protection, sustainable food systems, and circular economy objectives. Such approaches provide comprehensive policy guidance to local actors while encouraging synergies across sectors;
- Elaboration of **National Climate Strategies** that includes a **cocreation** process between ministries, regions, and municipalities (e.g. Scotland's National Adaptation Plan - SNAP3 - embeds climate justice principles through structured multi-stakeholder consultations).

Strategic national actions:

- **Institutionalise permanent vertical coordination platforms** between ministries, regions, and municipalities;
- **Formalise stakeholder inclusion** in policymaking, with civil society and private sector roles clearly defined in climate governance frameworks;
- **Strengthen subnational capacity** to participate in cross-sectoral and cross-border climate initiatives;
- **Facilitate participation in EU and global networks** to enable peer learning and harmonised responses.

Outcome to aim for: A coherent, trust-based governance system where responsibilities are clear, information flows freely, and all actors, from local councils to national ministries, are jointly accountable for delivery.

3 Sustainable Financing and Resource Mobilisation

Without predictable, adequate, and accessible financing, adaptation and mitigation plans remain on paper. MAIA dialogues, particularly at COP29, confirmed the urgency of reforming national climate finance systems to mobilise both public and private resources.

Current constraints:

- Regarding climate adaptation, less than 10% of climate finance reaches subnational governments, despite their implementing 90% of solutions;
- Complex eligibility criteria and administrative burdens exclude smaller municipalities and community initiatives;
- Adaptation finance lags far behind mitigation, leaving critical vulnerabilities unaddressed.

Good Practices:

- **National climate funds that co-finance adaptation and mitigation projects**, leveraging private sector participation to scale up impact;
- **Community-owned renewable energy models** enabled by national legislation, which reduce energy poverty, increase citizen ownership, and support local economies while contributing to national climate goals (e.g. Austria's energy communities channel benefits directly to vulnerable households);
- **Coordination with European financial mechanisms**, such as the Climate City Gap Fund and ADAPT platform, ensuring that projects are investment-ready and aligned with EU climate adaptation priorities.

Strategic national actions:

- **Create dedicated national climate finance windows** with simplified access for subnational actors;
- **Institutionalise technical assistance programs** to support the development of bankable projects;
- **Scale blended finance models and climate bonds** to attract private capital while ensuring public oversight;
- **Support community-led** and locally driven action, reinvesting benefits in local economies.
- **Balance adaptation and mitigation financing**, ensuring resilience measures are integrated into decarbonization strategies.

Outcome to aim for: A climate finance ecosystem that is inclusive, innovation-friendly, and capable of closing the climate investment gap at speed and scale.

4 Integrated, Adaptive Planning and Evaluation

National frameworks must provide a unified strategic direction while allowing flexibility to adapt to new data, technology, and risks. Without integration, climate action risks fragmentation and inefficiency.

Current constraints:

- National climate change plans often lack sectoral integration and robust monitoring systems;
 - Insufficient mechanisms to update plans in response to evolving science and technology.
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Good Practices:

- **Sustainable food systems strategies** at the national level, linking agricultural, biodiversity, and climate goals, often supported by European frameworks such as the Farm to Fork Strategy and CAP reform;
 - **Use of modelling tools**, such as those showcased in agroecological planning exercises, to test scenarios and guide evidence-based policy design (e.g. Agroecological modelling in Western Greece – showing cover crop expansion could reduce emissions and improve soil health – used to inform iterative planning);
 - **Integration of climate change objectives into national legislation**, ensuring that mitigation and adaptation priorities are enshrined in long-term development planning and linked to biodiversity and circular economy strategies.
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Strategic national actions:

- **Align national plans with local and regional, and EU targets** through standardised planning tools;
 - **Support multi-disciplinary teams** to integrate environmental, social, and economic dimensions of resilience;
 - **Institutionalise adaptive management** with periodic reviews triggered by new data or significant events;
 - **Embed robust monitoring and evaluation systems** to track progress, enforce accountability, and enable course correction.
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Outcome to aim for: A national climate governance system that is strategic, coherent, and capable of learning and adapting in real time.

Conclusion

A Strategic Mandate for National Governments

Strengthening climate adaptation and mitigation at the national level requires **deliberate, systemic reform** across knowledge systems, governance structures, financing models, and planning processes.

The evidence from MAIA's diverse policy forums is clear:

Data must be open, interoperable, and embedded in decision-making

Governance must be collaborative, participatory, and vertically integrated

Financing must be innovative, equitable, and accessible to all levels of government

Planning must be adaptive, cross-sectoral, and outcomes-focused

The choice is not whether to act, but how quickly and cohesively national governments can align these levers under a common vision. By doing so, countries will not only accelerate the implementation of climate strategies but also secure a just, resilient, and climate-safe future for all communities.