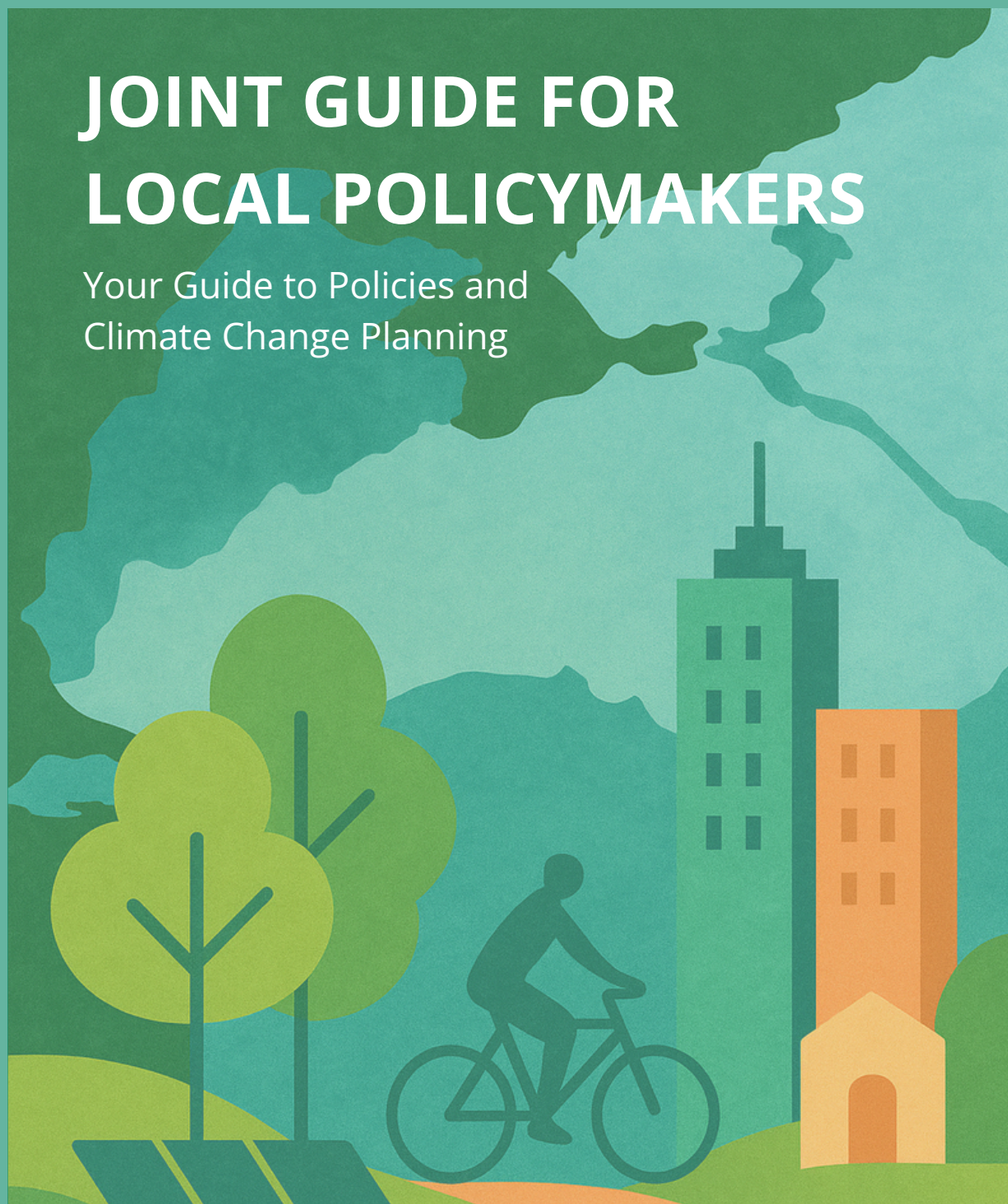


JOINT GUIDE FOR LOCAL POLICYMAKERS

Your Guide to Policies and
Climate Change Planning



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01

INTRODUCTION



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1.1. CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE AND UNDERSTANDING CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGES IN THE BLACK SEA BASIN

The Black Sea Basin region faces critical climate challenges, including increasing temperatures, unpredictable precipitation patterns, rising sea levels, and an increased frequency of extreme weather events. These risks threaten urban infrastructure, agriculture, energy production, and biodiversity.

For local policymakers, addressing these challenges requires integrated climate governance that combines mitigation (reducing emissions) and adaptation (managing climate impacts). However, many municipalities lack the technical capacity, financial resources, and inter-institutional coordination to develop effective climate policies.



This guide provides structured, practical solutions based on European best practices, local experiences in Türkiye, Greece and Bulgaria, and international climate policies to help municipalities navigate climate action planning.

The **‘COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY & CLIMATE ACTIONS’ PLANNING AND MONITORING**” guide, elaborated within the Step2CleanPlan project, funded under the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Program, is designed to improve the planning and monitoring capacity of Black Sea municipalities for sustainable energy and climate actions.

This **JOINT GUIDE FOR LOCAL POLICYMAKERS** serves as a practical reference document, consolidating key lessons, tools, and instruments from local and European experiences and recommendations from diverse stakeholders.

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By integrating local expertise with EU-level strategies and tools, the guide aims to:

- Strengthen the climate resilience and energy planning capacities of municipalities.
- Provide structured methodologies to enhance adaptation and mitigation measures.
- Promote cross-border cooperation in sustainable urban planning and governance.
- Ensure alignment with EU Green Deal objectives, REPowerEU, and Covenant of Mayors initiatives.



02

TOOLS, INSTRUMENTS, AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM LOCAL AND EUROPEAN EXPERIENCES



2.1. Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies

The successful implementation of climate adaptation and mitigation strategies at the local level depends on access to the right tools, instruments, and proven methodologies. Across Europe and within the Black Sea Basin, municipalities have developed and tested various planning frameworks, decision-support tools, and funding mechanisms to address the growing challenges of climate change.



This section highlights key policy instruments, financial tools, and governance mechanisms that local policymakers can leverage to strengthen climate resilience and reduce emissions. Drawing on lessons from the EU's Green Deal, Covenant of Mayors, and national climate adaptation strategies in Türkiye, Greece, and Bulgaria, the following insights provide practical guidance for integrating climate action into municipal planning.

By understanding these tools and instruments, local governments can enhance their technical capacity, secure funding, and implement evidence-based climate strategies while aligning their policies with national and European standards. To ensure effective climate governance, local authorities should align their policies with key EU and international climate frameworks:

- The European Green Deal – Aims for carbon neutrality by 2050, guiding investments in clean energy, sustainable transport, and green industries.
- The Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy – A key initiative supporting municipalities in developing Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs).
- REPowerEU Plan – Focuses on energy efficiency, renewable energy expansion, and reducing fossil fuel dependency.
- EU Adaptation Strategy – Provides guidance for building climate-resilient cities through nature-based solutions, urban planning, and water resource management

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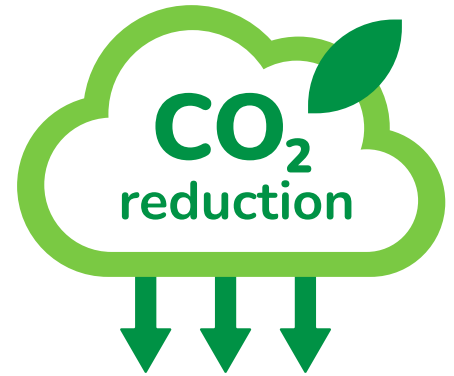
2.2. Local-Level Planning Frameworks

Local authorities play a pivotal role in implementing climate and energy strategies. Across the Black Sea Basin, municipalities have developed different strategies to reduce carbon emissions, increase energy efficiency, and enhance urban resilience. Some of the most widely used planning tools include:

2.2.1. Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs)

SECAPs are core policy instruments under the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, requiring signatory municipalities to:

- Conduct baseline emissions inventories.
- Develop action plans to reduce CO₂ emissions in order to reach climate neutrality by 2050, setting 2030 emission reduction targets consistent with the EU objective.
- Integrate climate adaptation strategies into municipal planning.



Example: Kalamaria Municipality (Greece) has joined the Covenant of Mayors and developed its first SECAP in 2013. So far, Kalamaria Municipality achieved 24.9% emission reduction in 2019 compared to 2010 levels..

2.2.2. Urban Resilience Plans

Urban resilience plans are strategies designed to help cities withstand and recover from various challenges, such as natural disasters, climate change, and social or economic disruptions. These plans focus on enhancing the capacity of urban systems, communities, and institutions to adapt, survive, and thrive despite these challenges. Usually they:

- Address local climate vulnerabilities such as flooding, heatwaves, and air pollution.
- Aim to increase adaptive capacity by incorporating green infrastructure, energy-efficient buildings, and nature-based solutions.

STEP2CleanPlan**Key components of urban resilience plans include:**

- Risk Assessment: Identifying and understanding the risks and vulnerabilities that a city faces, such as earthquakes, floods, or economic downturns.
- Infrastructure Improvement: Strengthening and upgrading critical infrastructure, like transportation, water supply, and energy systems, to withstand shocks and stresses.
- Community Engagement: Involving local communities in the planning process to ensure their needs and perspectives are considered, and to build social cohesion and trust.
- Emergency Preparedness: Developing and implementing emergency response plans, including early warning systems, evacuation routes, and disaster recovery strategies.
- Sustainable Development: Promoting sustainable land use, green spaces, and eco-friendly practices to reduce environmental impact and enhance overall urban resilience.
- Policy and Governance: Establishing policies and governance structures that support resilience-building efforts and ensure coordination among various stakeholders.

Example: Uzunköprü Municipality (Türkiye) launched a Green Urban Resilience Plan to combat heat islands and urban air pollution.

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2.2.3. Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP)

They are strategic plans designed to create a more sustainable and efficient transportation system in urban areas. Their overall aim is to improve the quality of life for residents and reduce the environmental impact of transportation. Usually SUMP promote low-emission transport solutions such as:

- Public transit electrification.
- Cycling and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.
- Low-emission vehicle incentives.



Example: Burgas and Varna (Bulgaria) have implemented green transport corridors with expanded cycling networks.

2.2.4. REPowerEU in the national Recovery and Resilience Plans

REPowerEU is an initiative under the European Union's Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) aimed at addressing energy security challenges following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It seeks to reduce the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels by improving energy efficiency, diversifying energy supplies, and accelerating the clean energy transition. To implement REPowerEU, Member States have integrated dedicated REPowerEU chapters into their existing national Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs).



These chapters outline additional reforms and investments in key areas such as:

- Expanding renewable energy capacity (solar, wind, hydrogen).
- Improving energy efficiency in buildings and industries.
- Enhancing climate-smart urban planning and infrastructure.

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2.3. EU-Level Climate Adaptation Strategies and Support Tools

Several EU-wide initiatives provide financial, technical, and strategic support for municipalities engaging in climate resilience and energy transition efforts.

2.3.1. Climate-Adapt Platform's Adaptation Support Tool

- Developed by the European Environment Agency (EEA).
- Provides step-by-step guidance on:
 - i. Risk and vulnerability assessments.
 - ii. Policy integration methodologies.
 - iii. Performance monitoring frameworks.



2.3.2. Covenant of Mayors' Adaptation Tools

They support municipalities with:

- Climate risk modelling.
- Mitigation and adaptation project templates.
- Financial access guidance (EU grants, national funding mechanisms).

Example: Kalamaria Municipality has successfully used Covenant of Mayors support for urban resilience planning.

2.3.3. Green Deal Transitional Instruments and Tools

The Green Deal Transitional Instruments and Tools are part of the European Green Deal, which aims to make the EU's economy and society more sustainable and climate-neutral. These instruments and tools are designed to support sustainability transitions by providing a framework and methodologies for national and regional decision-makers. The toolkit consists of a set of instruments and questions to guide strategic reflection and help deliver the increased ambition of the European Green Deal. It includes measures to support innovation and the deployment of new technologies that contribute to sustainability transitions. Furthermore, it advocates for territorial approaches that consider local strategies, actions, and conditions to achieve sustainability goals.

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Here are some key aspects:

- **Cohesion Policy:** The toolkit focuses on how cohesion policy can support sustainability transitions in the planning and delivery of Partnership Agreements and Programs. It prioritizes available support for the 2021-2027 funding period to facilitate a transition to a climate-neutral, green, and circular economy.



- **Just Transition:** The toolkit emphasizes the importance of a just transition, ensuring that the benefits of the Green Deal are shared equitably and that no one is left behind.
- **Innovation Fund** – investments in low-carbon technologies and renewable energy.
- **Modernization Fund** – targeted support for energy sector transformation. These tools and methodologies are aimed at helping decision-makers implement the European Green Deal effectively and achieve long-term sustainability goals.

03

LESSONS LEARNED FROM LOCAL AND EUROPEAN EXPERIENCES



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3.1. Key Insights from Local Authorities in the Black Sea Basin

A joint analysis of climate planning efforts in Türkiye, Greece, and Bulgaria done by the four partners has identified common strengths, challenges, and opportunities.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Local Capacities

Factor	Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities	Threats
Uzunköprü (Türkiye)	EU-funded climate projects, new Climate Change Department	Low SECAP awareness, limited engagement	Stakeholder engagement, green energy investments	Vulnerability to floods, heatwaves
Kalamaria (Greece)	Comprehensive climate action plans (SEAP, SUMP, SEAK)	Bureaucratic delays, limited policy integration	Alignment with EU Green Deal, expanding clean mobility	Increased flood risks
Burgas & Varna (Bulgaria)	High climate awareness, strong policy backing	Limited municipal technical capacity	Expansion of renewable energy and green transport	Extreme weather events



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Common challenges faced by all partners

1. Inconsistent climate data monitoring

- Many municipalities lack standardized tools to track energy consumption, emissions, and climate risks.
- Possible solution: Implement unified data collection and analysis frameworks.



2. Limited access to climate project funding

- Smaller municipalities struggle to secure EU and national funding.
- Solution: Strengthen access to EU grants and investment platforms.

3. Need for stronger regional cooperation

- Climate policies remain fragmented across different administrative levels.
- Solution: Establish cross-border collaboration mechanisms for knowledge exchange.



Concluding Remarks

The experiences shared in this section underscore the importance of structured planning, stakeholder engagement, and knowledge-sharing in driving local climate action. The case studies from Uzunköprü (Türkiye), Kalamaria (Greece), and Burgas & Varna (Bulgaria) illustrate how municipalities can effectively utilize existing EU frameworks, financial instruments, and technical resources to implement sustainable policies.

As cities and regions continue to face evolving climate risks, local policymakers must remain adaptive, collaborative, and forward-thinking. The lessons learned from successful municipal projects in Europe emphasize that investing in capacity-building, leveraging digital tools for monitoring, and fostering public-private partnerships are essential for long-term climate resilience.



Moving forward, local authorities should focus on replicating best practices, strengthening cross-border cooperation, and continuously updating their strategies to align with international climate objectives.

By doing so, municipalities can transform climate challenges into opportunities for sustainable urban development and economic growth.

04

BEST PRACTICES FOR PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION



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Mitigating climate change requires comprehensive planning, innovative solutions, and coordinated action across different levels of governance.

Local governments play a crucial role in implementing effective strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote sustainable energy use, and enhance climate resilience.



This section presents proven best practices from both local and European experiences, showcasing successful climate mitigation policies, renewable energy initiatives, sustainable urban mobility solutions, and circular economy models. Drawing from the experiences of municipalities in Türkiye, Greece, and Bulgaria, these case studies provide practical insights into effective planning, financing, and stakeholder engagement for climate action.

By analyzing these best practices, policymakers can identify scalable solutions, adopt innovative policy instruments, and integrate climate mitigation strategies into urban and regional development plans. These real-world examples highlight the importance of public-private partnerships, community engagement, and cross-border cooperation in achieving long-term sustainability goals.



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4.1. The Role of Climate Mitigation

Climate mitigation aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and minimize the impact of climate change by transitioning to renewable energy, sustainable transport, and circular economy practices. Below, we highlight effective best practices from municipalities and organizations across Türkiye, Greece, and Bulgaria.

4.2. Best Practices from Türkiye, Greece, and Bulgaria

The following best practices were shared by municipal partners and experts engaged in the Step2CleanPlan project, including:

Anatoliki SA (Greece)

A public-private body supporting municipalities in developing Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs).

Uzunköprü Municipality (Türkiye)

Leading initiatives in waste management and renewable energy integration.

District government Burgas (Bulgaria)

Supporting pioneering initiatives in urban adaptation strategies, flood protection, and green transport initiatives.

Association BIO NETWORK (Bulgaria)

A flagship NGO in the rural municipalities sector, adding value to healthy lifestyle and environmental protection



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4.3. Best Practices for Planning and Implementing Climate Change Mitigation

This chapter presents field-tested mitigation practices implemented by municipalities and organizations.

4.3.1. Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

Best Practice 1: Municipal Solar Energy Programs

Example: Uzunköprü Municipality, Türkiye

WHAT WAS DONE?	LESSONS LEARNED
Installed solar panels (600 polycrystalline, 250W each) at the municipal water treatment facility Expanded capacity to 1,600 kWp in 2024. Achieved 40% reduction in municipal electricity costs.	Required EU and national funding to cover installation costs. High public approval due to reduced municipal expenses

Best Practice 2: Energy-Efficient Public Buildings

Example: Kalamaria Municipality, Greece
 Partner Contribution: Anatoliki SA

WHAT WAS DONE?	LESSONS LEARNED
Developed a Building Energy Efficiency Plan (SEAK) Set a specific plan for the energy upgrade of selected Municipal Buildings The estimated energy savings, of the proposed energy upgrades are 1.850.800 kWh, reducing Kalamaria's carbon footprint by 372 tn CO ₂ eq	SEAK provided a comprehensive mapping of the buildings and their characteristics in the Municipality of Kalamaria and clarified the actions that need to be taken in order for the Municipality to reduce its energy consumption

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4.3.1. Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

Best Practice 3: Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP)

Example: Municipality of Kalamaria, Greece

WHAT WAS DONE?	LESSONS LEARNED
Developed a SUMP, creating scenarios and proposing solutions towards a more sustainable transportation in the Municipality	There is a great need to focus on the upgrade of public transport and the dynamic increase of alternative means of mobility (eg bicycle)

4.4. Practical Examples and Recommendations for Local Adaptation Plans

This chapter focuses on adapting urban infrastructure, water management, and public health systems.

4.4.1. Flood and Water Management

Best Practice 4: Urban Wetlands for Flood Prevention

Example: Burgas Municipality, Bulgaria

Partner Contribution: Local Unit for Sustainability and Climate Adaptation

WHAT WAS DONE?	LESSONS LEARNED
Restored wetlands to reduce urban flooding. Integrated smart water management sensors.	EU funding covered 60% of project costs. Public-private partnerships improved project sustainability.

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4.4.2. Urban Heat Stress Reduction

Best Practice 6: Green Urban Resilience Solutions

Example: Uzunköprü Municipality, Türkiye

WHAT WAS DONE?	LESSONS LEARNED
An urban heat map of the city will be created, and green interventions will be implemented to promote urban cooling. A park area will be developed as part of the Green Urban Resilience project.	EU funding covered 90% of project costs. Urban cooling can be achieved through green interventions guided by data-driven insights like urban heat maps.

4.4.3. Circular Economy and Waste Management

Best Practice 6: Zero Waste and Circular Economy Model

Example: Uzunköprü Municipality, Türkiye

WHAT WAS DONE?	LESSONS LEARNED
Achieved Basic Level Zero Waste Certification. Established waste battery recycling points in schools and workplaces.	High public participation due to awareness campaigns. Required ongoing financial incentives for businesses.

Concluding Remarks

The best practices outlined in this section demonstrate that local climate mitigation efforts can be both impactful and economically viable when guided by strategic planning, technological innovation, and strong governance. Experiences from Kalamaria (Greece), Uzunköprü (Türkiye), and District Government Burgas & Varna Region (Bulgaria) presented by the Association BIO NETWORK illustrate how municipalities can successfully implement energy efficiency projects, green infrastructure initiatives, and sustainable transport policies with measurable results.

A key takeaway from these case studies is that climate mitigation is not a one-size-fits-all approach—strategies must be tailored to local needs, resources, and socio-economic contexts. Successful municipalities have leveraged EU funding programs, national policies, and local partnerships to drive their climate action agendas forward.

Looking ahead, scaling up these best practices, fostering knowledge exchange, and ensuring consistent monitoring and evaluation will be critical in sustaining progress. Local governments must continue to collaborate across borders, invest in innovative climate solutions, and engage communities in co-creating sustainable urban environments.

By learning from these experiences, policymakers can strengthen their climate mitigation frameworks and contribute to the global transition toward a low-carbon and resilient future.

05

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL ADAPTATIONS PLANS



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As climate change impacts become more severe and unpredictable, local adaptation planning is essential to enhance urban resilience, protect communities, and safeguard critical infrastructure. Municipalities must develop tailored adaptation plans that address specific climate risks, such as flooding, heatwaves, droughts, and coastal erosion, while ensuring long-term sustainability and economic stability.

While the previous section provides practical examples of successful adaptation strategies from municipalities in Türkiye, Greece, and Bulgaria, demonstrating how local governments have integrated climate risk assessments, stakeholder engagement, and innovative infrastructure solutions into their policies with case studies highlighting the importance of nature-based solutions, water management initiatives, urban heat reduction techniques, and disaster preparedness measures, key recommendations are of utmost significance for sustainable progress.

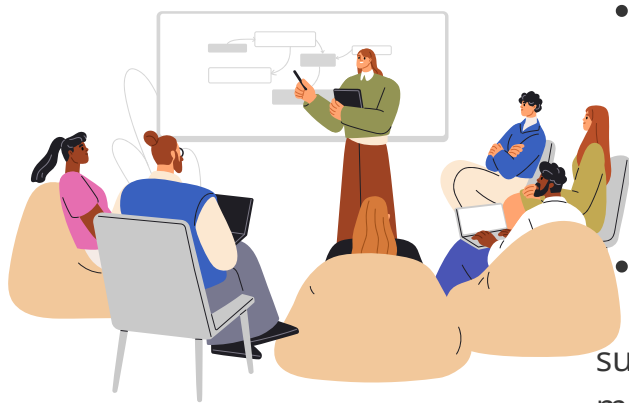
This section outlines key recommendations for policymakers to improve the design, funding, and implementation of local adaptation plans. By leveraging scientific data, regional cooperation, and multi-stakeholder engagement, municipalities can build effective adaptation strategies that protect vulnerable populations, ensure environmental sustainability, and support economic growth.



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5.1. Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Knowledge Sharing

5.1.1. Training and Capacity Building for Experts



- Conduct periodic training for experts from responsible institutions to familiarize them with regulatory frameworks and actions related to climate policies and sustainability.
- Organize exchange programs and workshops to share experiences from successful municipal climate adaptation and mitigation projects.
- Encourage public officials and municipal employees to participate in international training programs on climate risk assessment, sustainable urban planning, and energy efficiency.

5.1.2. Public Awareness and Community Engagement

- Conduct information campaigns to educate the public on existing climate policies, sustainability initiatives, and legal regulations.
- Use digital tools, social media, and public platforms to share climate-related updates, success stories, and policy developments.
- Organize community forums and workshops to engage citizens in discussions about local climate challenges and solutions.



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5.2. Enhancing Policy and Planning Processes

5.2.1. Stakeholder Involvement in Climate Planning

- Ensure the active involvement of specialists in the creation of climate action plans, regulatory documents, and municipal policies.
- Encourage municipalities to establish climate advisory committees that include representatives from academia, businesses, NGOs, and local communities.
- Foster collaboration between public institutions and private sector stakeholders to design innovative solutions for climate adaptation.



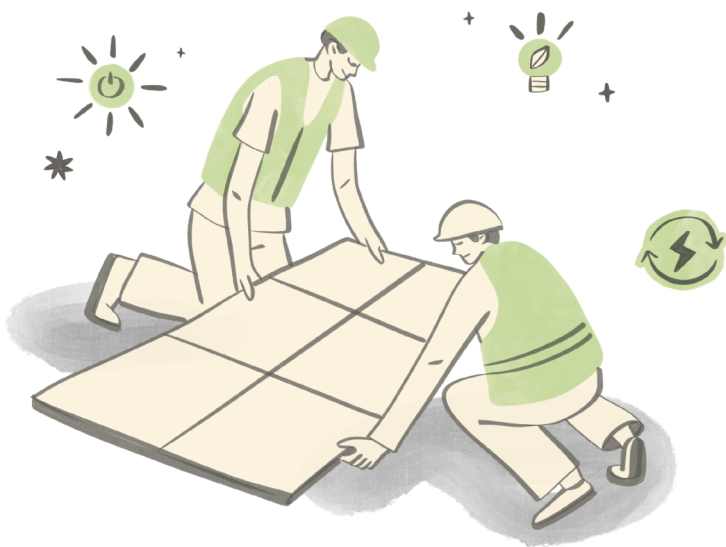
5.2.3. Mainstreaming Climate Considerations in Local Policies

- Integrate climate adaptation and mitigation strategies into urban planning, transport development, and municipal service delivery.
- Prioritize climate resilience in land-use policies, building regulations, and public procurement processes.
- Align local action plans with national and EU policies, ensuring consistency in sustainable energy and environmental protection.

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5.3. Implementing Practical Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Measures

5.3.1. Sustainable Urban Planning and Energy Efficiency



- Promote the adoption of energy-efficient technologies in municipal buildings, public infrastructure, and residential areas.
- Support the implementation of smart energy solutions such as solar energy systems, energy storage, and LED street lighting.
- Evaluate and control the effectiveness of green building standards, passive design strategies, and sustainable construction materials.

5.3.2. Air Quality and Pollution Control

- Introduce and evaluate the impact of sustainable practices and innovative technologies aimed at reducing atmospheric pollution.
- Implement preventive and sanctioning control measures to address violations contributing to air quality deterioration.
- Encourage the use of clean fuels, high-efficiency heating systems, and chimney filters to reduce particulate emissions in urban areas.



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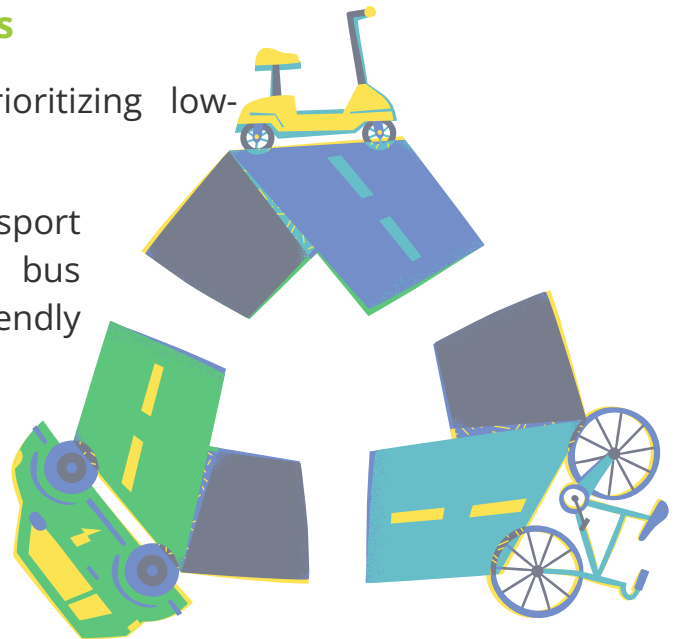
5.3.3. Sustainable Waste Management and Circular Economy

- Develop comprehensive waste reduction strategies, promoting recycling, composting, and waste-to-energy technologies.
- Encourage municipal partnerships with businesses to establish circular economy models that minimize waste generation.
- Strengthen regulatory enforcement to ensure the proper disposal of industrial and hazardous waste.



5.3.4. Sustainable Transport Solutions

- Modernize municipal fleets by prioritizing low-emission and electric vehicles.
- Implement public transport improvements, including expanded bus and tram networks, pedestrian-friendly urban spaces, and cycling lanes.
- Introduce low-emission zones (LEZs) to limit vehicular pollution in densely populated areas.



5.4. Securing Financial and Human Resources for Climate Action

5.4.1. Accessing National and International Funding



- Actively seek financial support from EU Green Deal programs, Horizon Europe, and local development grants.
- Encourage municipalities to leverage public-private partnerships (PPPs) to finance large-scale sustainability projects.
- Facilitate access to climate finance mechanisms, including carbon credit programs and green bonds.

5.4.2. Building Strong Public-Private Partnerships

- Establish partnerships with businesses, research institutions, and civil society organizations to co-develop climate solutions.
- Encourage corporate participation in local climate initiatives through incentives, tax benefits, and certification programs.
- Develop climate innovation hubs where municipalities, businesses, and researchers can collaborate on pilot projects.



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5.5. Facilitating Regional and International Collaboration

5.5.1. Knowledge Exchange and Regional Cooperation

- Strengthen cross-border cooperation on climate-related challenges, particularly within the Black Sea Basin region.
- Encourage municipalities to join international networks, such as the Covenant of Mayors, to access technical assistance and funding opportunities.
- Organize joint initiatives with neighboring regions to tackle shared climate risks, such as flood management, coastal erosion, and energy security.



5.5.2. Partnerships with Research Institutions

- Collaborate with universities and climate research centers to develop scientific-based policy recommendations.
- Collaborate with universities and climate research centers to develop scientific-based policy recommendations.
- Promote data-driven decision-making through climate vulnerability assessments and scenario modelling.
- Encourage internship and research opportunities for young professionals in climate-related fields.



Concluding Remarks

One of the key takeaways from the research and analytical work of Step2CleanPlan project is that local adaptation plans must be data-driven, community-centered, and financially sustainable.

Successful municipalities have utilized climate risk assessments, early warning systems, and green infrastructure projects to address their most pressing environmental challenges.

Moving forward, strengthening inter-municipal cooperation, securing access to climate finance, and fostering stakeholder collaboration will be essential to scaling up adaptation efforts.



Adaptation is not just a response to climate change—it is an opportunity to build more sustainable, livable, and climate-resilient cities. By taking decisive action today, municipalities can prepare for future climate uncertainties while ensuring a safer and more prosperous future for their communities.

The current jointly developed guide provides a roadmap for local policymakers to strengthen their climate governance, adaptation planning, and mitigation efforts. By adopting evidence-based strategies and cross-sectoral collaborations, municipalities can enhance climate resilience, secure funding, and engage communities in sustainability initiatives.

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