

Policy recommendations for climate adaptation in the ZEMGALE AREA

Why climate adaptation matters

Europe is already facing the cost of climate inaction. Between 1980 and 2023, climate-related economic losses totalled €738 billion – and that figure could rise to 4% of EU GDP annually by the end of the century without effective adaptation.

The IMPETUS project

IMPETUS is an EU-funded project active across seven biogeographical regions – arctic, atlantic, boreal, coastal, continental, mediterranean and mountain. It aims to turn adaptation commitments into real-world actions that protect people, ecosystems, and infrastructure.

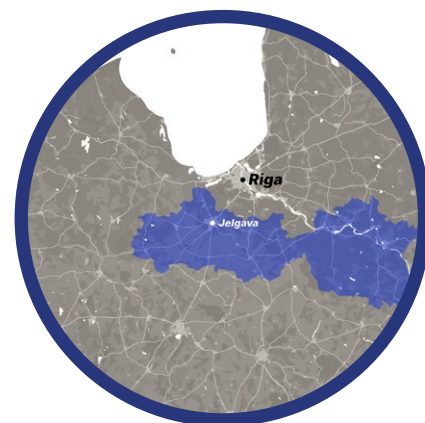
The project develops and tests tailored climate adaptation solutions, combining:

- technological and nature-based innovations,
- financing mechanisms,
- strong stakeholder and policy engagement.

About the region

Zemgale, located in central Latvia, covers nearly 17% of the country and is characterised by intensive agriculture and a dense river network. While cities rely on groundwater for drinking water, agricultural activity has significantly impacted biodiversity, water quality, and ecosystem resilience.

Climate adaptation in the region requires stronger legal frameworks, more inclusive governance, and improved public engagement.



Key recommendations for the Zemgale Area

Integrate mitigation and adaptation into climate legislation

Issue: Current climate laws focus primarily on mitigation, leaving adaptation underdeveloped and reactive. Without legally mandated adaptation strategies, governments struggle to prevent climate-related damages and build long-term resilience.

Actions:

- Develop legal frameworks that require climate risk assessments in land use, infrastructure, and economic planning.
- Introduce binding adaptation targets alongside mitigation goals.
- Ensure sectoral alignment by updating legal requirements for transport, housing, and economic development.

Outcome: A forward-looking, legally mandated approach to climate resilience.

Align national legislation with sectoral climate plans

Issue: Outdated national regulations hinder the integration of adaptation into key sectors.

Actions:

- Revise national legislation to reflect current climate risks and align with sector-specific adaptation plans.

Outcome: More coherent and responsive climate policies across all governance levels.

Strengthen state cooperation mechanisms

Issue: Weak coordination between national, regional, and local authorities leads to fragmented planning and misallocated resources. While strategic documents meet EU requirements, their application remains inconsistent, causing gaps in resilience planning and misallocation of resources.

Actions:

- Establish legally binding coordination mechanisms and intergovernmental task forces.
- Promote cross-regional data sharing and shared decision-making.
- Create structured financial agreements to ensure equitable distribution of national and EU funds.

Outcome: Improved multi-level governance and more effective implementation of climate adaptation strategies, improved resource allocation and minimized policy implementation gaps.

Enhance participatory processes in climate policy development

Issue: Top-down policy development limits local relevance and stakeholder buy-in.

Actions:

- Integrate structured stakeholder engagement during policy formulation.
- Use participatory budgeting and consultation mechanisms with municipalities, businesses, and communities.
- Leverage existing networks (e.g. living labs, thematic working groups, local government associations).

Outcome: More locally accepted and practically grounded adaptation strategies, leading to smoother implementation and broader support.

Improve public perception through media and scientific communication

Issue: Technical language and limited outreach reduce public understanding and support for adaptation.

Actions:

- Simplify scientific communication and clarify the difference between mitigation and adaptation.
- Run targeted awareness campaigns on local climate impacts and adaptation benefits.

Outcome: Increased public awareness and broader engagement with climate action.



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