WHITE PAPER

Multi-level governance policy white paper including comparative and transferability analysis of local policy solutions, multi-level policy improvement recommendations

Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE

Co-funded by the European Union

LOCALIENCE

Final Version
03/2026

Strengthening Cooperation between Professional and Non-Professional Actors

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation / term	Meaning in this White Paper
CB-DRR	Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction: local-level risk reduction involving citizens, communities and local organisations.
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction: preventing new disaster risk, reducing existing risk and managing residual risk.
LAG	Local Action Group: a local partnership structure often used for territorial development and community-based cooperation.
National DRR Platform	A national coordination mechanism connecting public authorities, experts and stakeholders involved in disaster risk reduction.
OSU	University of Ostrava.
Sendai approach	The prevention-oriented, multi-hazard, multi-stakeholder and risk-informed policy logic promoted by the Sendai Framework.
Sendai Framework	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the main global UN framework guiding DRR policy.
Sendai/DRR policy unit	The competent authority, department or expert team responsible for coordinating Sendai Framework implementation, national DRR reporting and related policy coordination.
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

1 INTRODUCTION - Purpose, Scope, and Approach

Climate change is no longer a distant or abstract challenge for disaster risk reduction. Across Central Europe, local authorities increasingly face floods, droughts, heatwaves, windstorms, and wildfires that occur more frequently, last longer, and interact in complex ways. These hazards no longer appear as isolated events but often materialise as compound and cascading risks, placing sustained pressure on crisis management systems and public administrations.

Over the past decade, significant progress has been made at the strategic level. Most European countries have adopted national strategies for climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and civil protection, aligned with international and European policy frameworks. These strategies demonstrate a growing awareness of climate risks and articulate long-term objectives for resilience and preparedness.

However, repeated disaster events across the region reveal a persistent gap between **strategic ambition and operational reality**. This gap is particularly visible at the local level, where responsibilities for preparedness, prevention, and coordination are increasingly decentralised, but not always accompanied by sufficient resources, guidance, or institutional support. This White Paper responds directly to that gap.

Rather than proposing new strategies or frameworks, it focuses on **how existing policies can be implemented more effectively in practice**, especially in municipalities and regions with limited administrative capacity. It approaches disaster risk reduction not as a purely technical or sectoral task, but as a **governance and cooperation challenge** that requires coordination across levels of government and systematic engagement of non-professional actors.

1.1 Disaster Risk Reduction as an Implementation Challenge

Disaster risk reduction policies often fail. It is not because of insufficient knowledge, weak scientific evidence, or lack of political commitment, but because of challenges related to implementation. These challenges typically emerge at the interfaces between governance levels, sectors, and actor groups.

In many cases, national strategies provide high-level objectives but leave considerable discretion to regional and local authorities regarding how these objectives should be operationalised. While flexibility can be beneficial, it can also result in fragmented approaches, uneven territorial coverage, and reliance on ad hoc initiatives driven by individual leadership rather than institutionalised processes.

From an implementation perspective, local authorities face several recurring constraints:

- limited staff and financial resources;
- overlapping or unclear mandates across policy domains;
- insufficient access to risk and climate data;
- weak coordination mechanisms with non-professional actors.

These constraints are further exacerbated by climate change, which increases uncertainty, accelerates the pace of decision-making, and challenges planning based solely on historical experience.

Based on evidence generated by the LOCALIENCE project, this White Paper adopts the position that the most critical barriers to effective disaster risk reduction are not technical in nature, but relate to **multi-level governance arrangements**, particularly at the interface between national frameworks and local implementation.

1.2 An Implementation-Oriented Policy Guidance

This document is explicitly designed as an **implementation-oriented policy guidance**. It does not aim to replace existing strategies, action plans, or legal frameworks. It focuses on the governance mechanisms, cooperation models, and enabling conditions required to make them work in everyday practice.

The White Paper differs from strategic or analytical documents in several important ways:

- it prioritises **operational relevance** over conceptual completeness;
- it focuses on **how cooperation works in practice**, not only on formal mandates;
- it explicitly addresses **local-level character**, including limited capacity, fragmented responsibilities, and reliance on informal networks.

The document does not seek to rank or compare national disaster management systems. Rather, it identifies **recurring governance patterns** across Central Europe that hinder effective implementation and proposes practical, adaptable mechanisms to address them.

A key element of this approach is the recognition that disaster risk reduction increasingly depends on the ability of local authorities to

- coordinate across sectors and institutional boundaries;
- integrate climate adaptation measures into routine decision-making;
- mobilise societal capacities beyond professional emergency services.

1.3 Target Audience and Use

The primary target audience of this White Paper consists of:

- **local authorities and practitioners**, including municipal administrations, crisis coordinators, spatial planners, and local resilience officers;
- **national authorities and policymakers**, particularly those responsible for civil protection, climate adaptation, public administration, and territorial development.

Secondary audiences include regional authorities, civil society organisations, and European-level actors involved in enabling, financing, or coordinating disaster risk reduction initiatives.

The language and structure of the document are intentionally designed to remain **accessible to local-level readers**, while retaining sufficient policy depth and analytical clarity to be credible for national decision-makers.

The White Paper can be used as:

- a reference document for designing or strengthening local cooperation mechanisms;
- an input to national policy reviews and capacity-building programmes;
- a shared framework for transnational learning and exchange.

1.4 Scope and Geographic Focus

The analysis focuses on Central Europe, drawing primarily on evidence generated within the LOCALIENCE project and related initiatives. Rather than providing detailed country profiles, the document highlights **shared governance challenges** that cut across different institutional systems, including both centralised and federal governance arrangements.

Comparative references are used illustratively, to demonstrate how similar problems manifest in different contexts and how solutions can be **adapted rather than replicated**.

Thematically, the White Paper addresses:

- disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change;
- multi-hazard and cascading risks;
- cooperation between professional and non-professional actors;
- multi-level governance from local to national and European levels.

The document is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 examines how climate change is transforming disaster risk and what this implies for local governance and implementation.
- Chapter 3 outlines the multi-level policy landscape and highlights gaps between formal frameworks and local practice.
- Chapter 4 analyses recurring policy and governance gaps identified through the LOCALIENCE project.
- Chapter 5 focuses on the role of non-professional actors in disaster risk reduction.
- Chapter 6 introduces local multi-stakeholder platforms as a core implementation mechanism.
- Chapter 7 presents comparative case snapshots and transferable lessons from Central Europe.
- Chapter 8 analyses barriers, risks, and enabling conditions for scaling local cooperation.
- Chapter 9 provides a transferability framework and a prioritised catalogue of policy recommendations.
- Chapter 10 presents a practical uptake action plan through the example of Czechia, showing how project findings can be transferred to policy actors, integrated into existing

policy processes, tested through coordination mechanisms, and formalised for transfer to other LOCALIENCE countries. Chapter 11 concludes with implementation-oriented reflections and a forward-looking perspective.

2 CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE EVOLUTION OF DISASTER RISK

Climate change fundamentally alters the nature of disaster risk. Rather than creating entirely new hazards, it **amplifies existing risks**, increases their frequency and intensity, and alters their spatial and temporal distribution. For local authorities, this means that historical experience alone is no longer a reliable basis for preparedness and planning.

Scientific evidence confirms that Europe is warming faster than the global average, with Central Europe experiencing rising average temperatures, longer heatwaves, more frequent drought periods, and increasingly intense precipitation events. These trends translate into higher stress on water management systems, infrastructure, public health services, and emergency response capacities.

From a governance perspective, climate change serves as a **risk multiplier**. It interacts with demographic trends, land-use patterns, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and institutional capacities. As a result, relatively moderate weather events can trigger disproportionately large impacts when they intersect with existing vulnerabilities.

For municipalities, this changing risk profile requires a shift from reactive crisis management towards **anticipatory and adaptive governance**, capable of operating under uncertainty and incomplete information.

2.1 Multi-Hazard and Cascading Risks

A defining feature of climate-related disasters is the growing relevance of **multi-hazard and cascading risk scenarios**. Hazards rarely occur in isolation. Instead, they interact and reinforce one another, often producing secondary and tertiary impacts that exceed the damage caused by the initial event.

Typical examples include:

- prolonged drought followed by intense rainfall, leading to flash floods due to reduced soil infiltration;
- heatwaves increasing the likelihood of wildfires, which in turn damage energy infrastructure and disrupt transport systems;
- extreme precipitation triggering landslides or industrial accidents with environmental and health consequences.

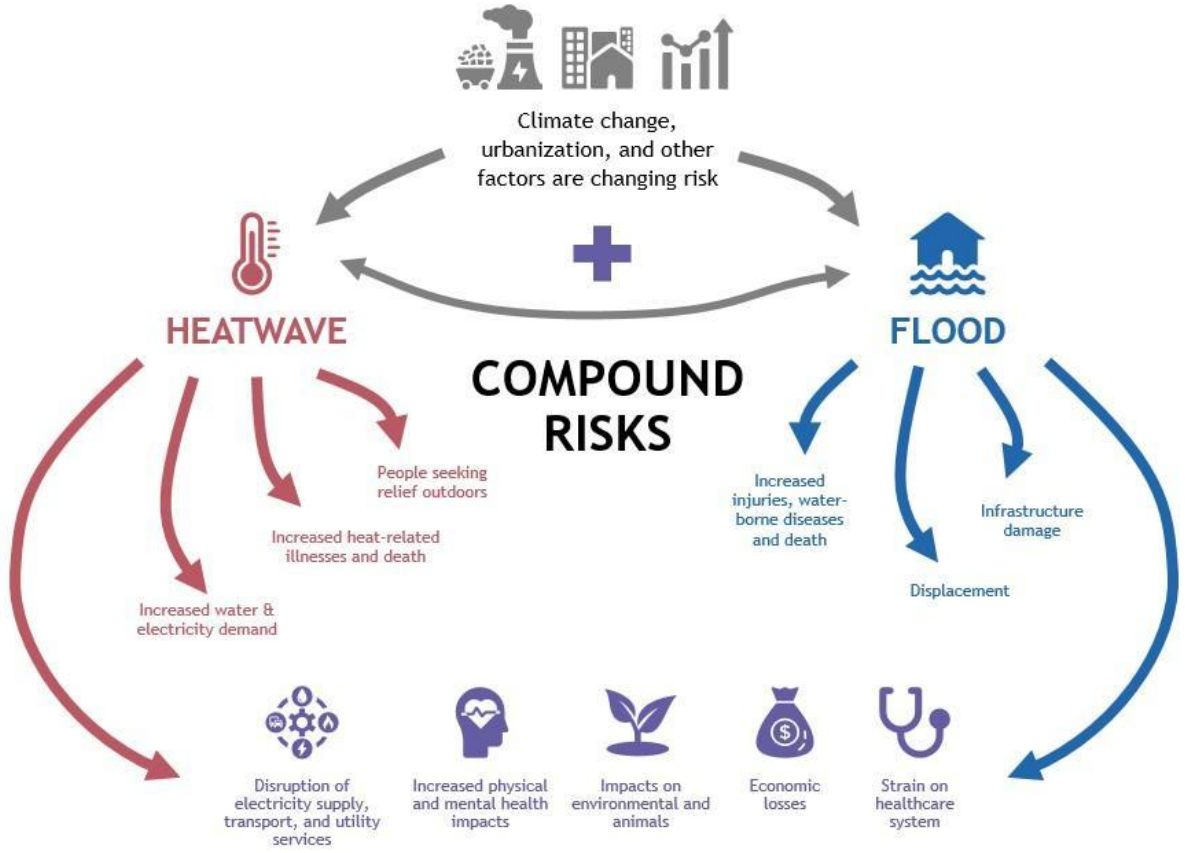

Figure 1: Compound climate events are on the rise (source: Climate Resilience Alliance, 2025)

Despite this reality, disaster risk reduction policies and plans often remain **hazard-specific**, organised around separate flood, drought, heatwave, or wildfire strategies. These plans are frequently developed by different departments, using different data sources and planning horizons, which limits their effectiveness in addressing compound risks.

For local authorities, multi-hazard dynamics complicate decision-making:

- thresholds for action become harder to define;
- responsibilities overlap across sectors;
- coordination requirements increase significantly.

This underscores the need for governance arrangements that support **cross-sectoral coordination and shared risk understanding**, rather than siloed planning.

2.2 Central European Risk Patterns and Local Exposure

While climate impacts vary across regions, Central Europe shares several characteristic risk patterns that are particularly relevant for local disaster risk reduction.

These include:

- **riverine and flash floods**, increasingly driven by short-duration, high-intensity rainfall events;
- **long-term droughts**, affecting drinking water supply, agriculture, ecosystems, and energy production;
- **heatwaves**, with pronounced impacts in urban areas and vulnerable population groups;
- **strong winds and storms**, causing infrastructure damage and power outages;
- **vegetation and forest fires**, increasingly linked to prolonged dry and hot periods.

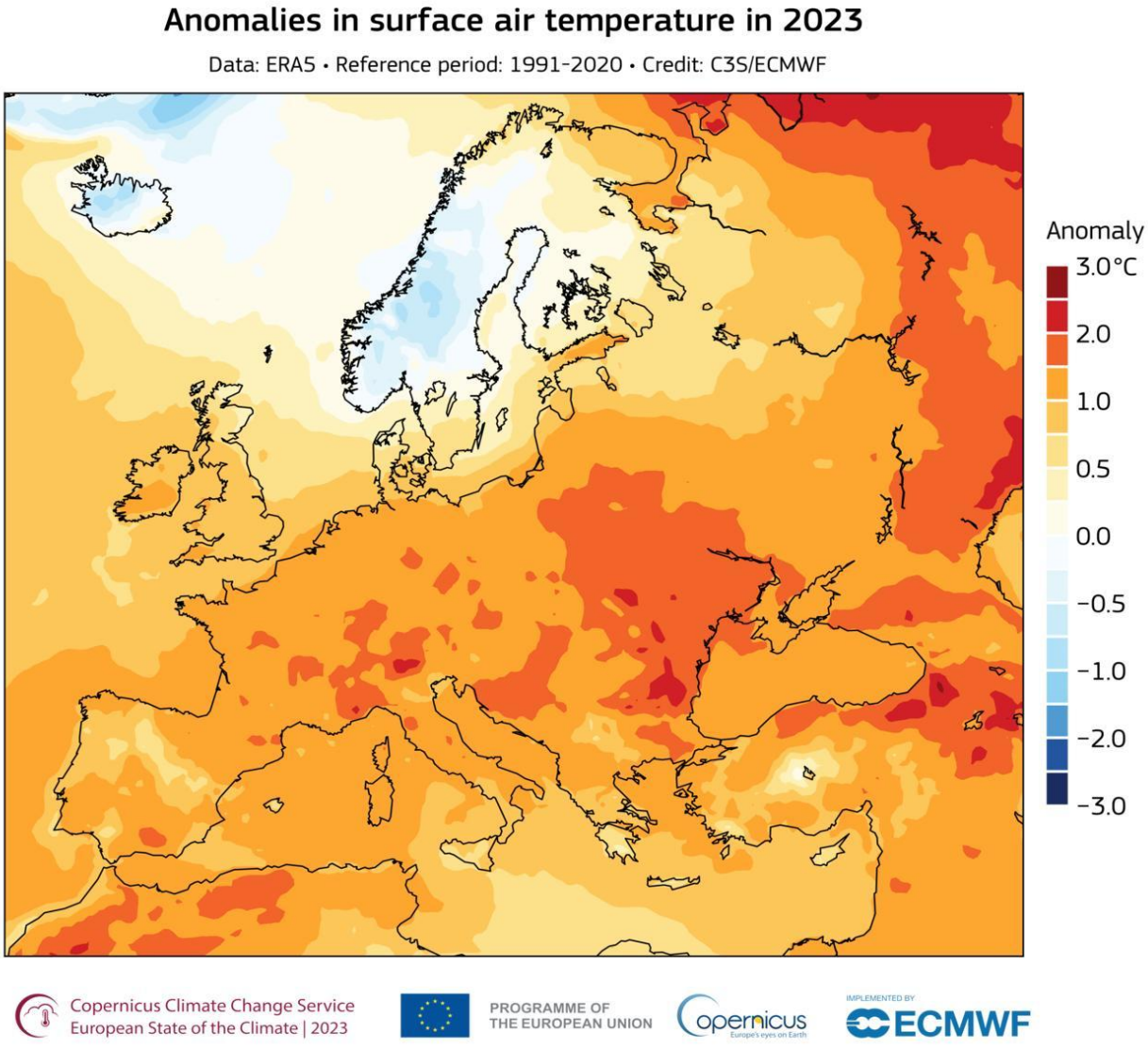

Figure 2: From widespread floods to severe heatwaves, ESOTC 2023 puts Europe's climate in focus (Climate Copernicus, 2024)

These hazards often affect the same territories repeatedly, creating cumulative impacts that strain local administrative capacity and financial resources. Smaller municipalities are particularly vulnerable, as they typically operate with limited staff and rely heavily on external support during emergencies.

At the same time, local exposure and vulnerability are highly uneven. Geographic conditions, settlement patterns, infrastructure quality, and socio-economic factors all influence how hazards translate into impacts. This variability reinforces the importance of **locally tailored risk governance approaches**.

2.3 Implications for Governance and Implementation

Climate change introduces uncertainty that cannot be fully resolved through improved data or forecasting alone. While climate projections and risk models are essential, they do not eliminate ambiguity regarding timing, location, or magnitude of impacts. For local authorities, uncertainty shows up in several ways:

- difficulty in prioritising;
- challenges in communicating risk to the public;
- tension between short-term needs and long-term resilience goals.

Governance systems that rely exclusively on precise predictions are therefore likely to struggle. Instead, disaster risk reduction requires **adaptive governance arrangements** that can adjust as conditions evolve, incorporate new information, and learn from experience.

- Local multi-stakeholder cooperation plays an essential role in this context by:
  - pooling diverse forms of knowledge;
  - enhancing situational awareness;
  - building trust prior to crises occur.

Climate change introduces a level of uncertainty that cannot be fully addressed through incremental adjustments to existing disaster management plans. While improvements in forecasting, modelling, and early warning systems are essential, they are insufficient on their own. The decisive factor increasingly lies in how institutions and actors coordinate, share information, and make decisions under conditions of incomplete knowledge.

For local authorities, uncertainty can appear in several ways:

- planning horizons shorten while consequences become longer-lasting;
- thresholds for action are harder to define using historical data alone;
- responsibilities overlap as impacts cut across sectors and administrative boundaries.

These dynamics favour governance arrangements that are flexible, adaptive, and inclusive. Rigid, hierarchical systems may perform well in clearly defined emergency situations but often struggle in prolonged or ambiguous crises, such as droughts or compound events.

And locally… Although climate change is a global phenomenon, its impacts are experienced locally. Exposure, vulnerability, and adaptive capacity vary significantly between municipalities, depending on geographic conditions, socio-economic factors, infrastructure quality, and institutional capacity. As a result, local authorities become the primary interface between abstract risk assessments and specific protective actions.

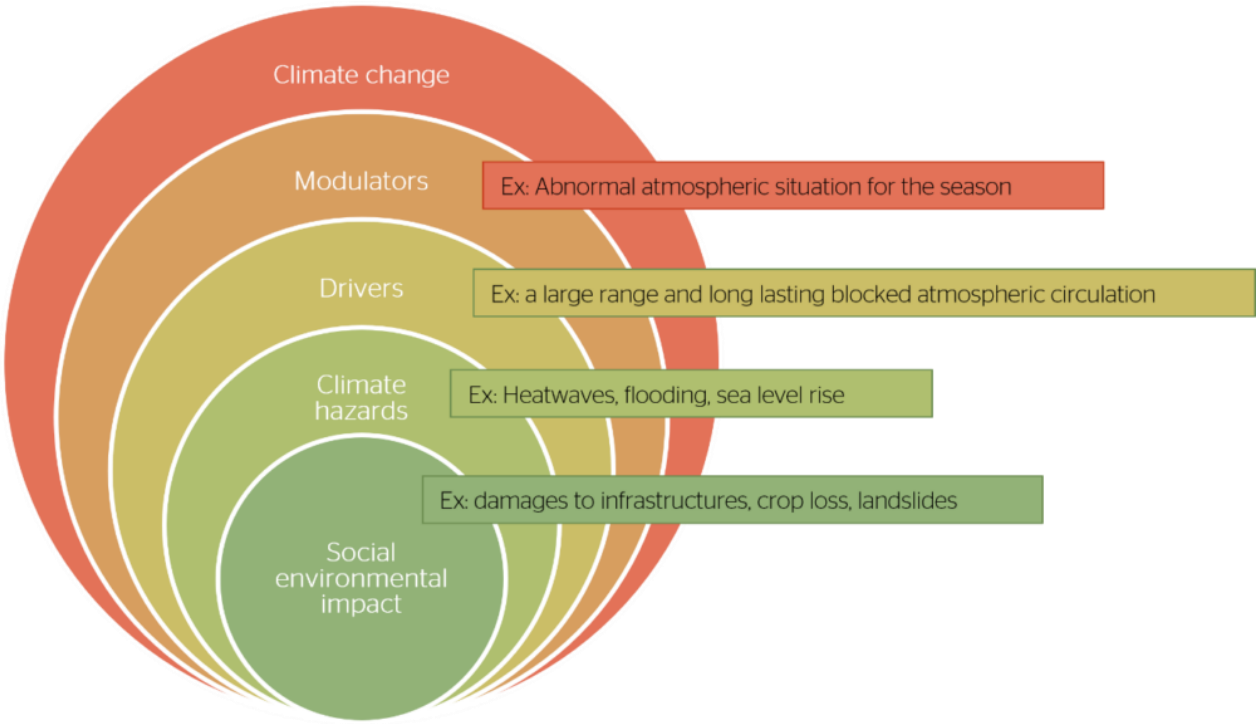

Figure 3: What are compound climate risks (SE Advisory Services, 2023)

However, local administrations are rarely designed or resourced to function as risk governance hubs. Many municipalities operate with limited staff, fragmented competencies, and strong reliance on external support during crises. This reality underscores the need for governance models that:

- extend beyond formal administrative structures;
- mobilise societal capacities at the local level;
- connect local experience with national policy learning.

3 MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

From Strategic Frameworks to Local Implementation

Disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change operates across multiple levels of governance. Hazards materialise locally, yet the policies, legal frameworks, funding mechanisms, and strategic priorities that shape disaster risk management are largely defined at national and European levels. This creates an inherent tension between **where risks occur** and **where decisions are taken**.

Multi-level governance provides a conceptual and practical framework for addressing this tension. It emphasises coordination across governance levels (local, regional, national, and European) as well as across sectors and actor groups. In disaster risk reduction, effective multi-level governance is not a theoretical ideal but a **prerequisite for implementation**.

Without coherent multi-level arrangements:

- national strategies remain declarative;
- local authorities struggle to operationalise preparedness and prevention measures;
- responsibilities overlap or fall between institutional mandates.

Climate change amplifies these challenges by increasing uncertainty, accelerating decision cycles, and demanding long-term, coordinated action beyond traditional administrative boundaries.

3.1 International and European Policy Context

At the international level, disaster risk reduction is guided primarily by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. The framework establishes shared priorities for understanding disaster risk, strengthening governance, investing in resilience, and enhancing preparedness for recovery.

While the Sendai Framework is non-binding, it strongly influences European and national policy development. Its emphasis on risk governance, prevention, and preparedness aligns closely with climate adaptation objectives.

At the European level, disaster risk reduction is embedded in a broader policy ecosystem that includes:

- the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change;
- the Union Civil Protection Mechanism;
- sectoral policies related to water management, spatial planning, public health, and infrastructure;
- macro-regional strategies and transnational cooperation programmes.

European frameworks play a critical **enabling role**. They set strategic direction, promote policy coherence, and provide funding and coordination instruments. However, they do not directly implement disaster risk reduction measures at the local level.

This creates a structural feature of the European policy landscape: **implementation responsibility rests primarily with national and local authorities**, while European institutions act as facilitators rather than executors.

3.2 National Disaster Risk Governance: Strengths and Limitations

Across Central Europe, national governments typically maintain strong formal authority over disaster risk management. Legal frameworks for civil protection and crisis management are generally well established, and national institutions play a central role in coordinating emergency response.

At the same time, climate adaptation responsibilities are often distributed across multiple ministries and agencies, creating potential for fragmentation. While national adaptation strategies increasingly acknowledge disaster risks, the operational integration of adaptation and DRR remains uneven.

National governments occupy a central position in disaster risk governance. They define legal mandates, coordinate civil protection systems, manage large-scale emergencies, and represent countries in European and international frameworks.

Across Central Europe, national disaster risk governance systems typically exhibit several strengths:

- well-established civil protection and emergency response structures;
- increasing integration of climate risk considerations into national strategies;
- access to scientific expertise, risk assessments, and modelling capacities.

Evidence from the LOCALIENCE project suggests that the main limitation of national frameworks is not their absence, but their **insufficient translation into clear, actionable guidance and support for subnational levels**. At the same time, national systems face limitations that directly affect local implementation:

- disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation responsibilities are often distributed across multiple ministries and agencies;
- strategic documents may lack clear operational guidance for subnational levels;
- funding mechanisms frequently prioritise response and recovery over preparedness and prevention.

As a result, national frameworks often succeed in **responding to disasters** but struggle to systematically reduce risk over time.

3.3 Local Authorities in the Governance Chain

Local authorities represent the **front line of disaster risk reduction**. They are closest to exposed populations, critical infrastructure, and local vulnerabilities. Municipalities are responsible for spatial planning, local preparedness, risk communication, and coordination with emergency services and community actors.

Despite this central role, local authorities frequently operate under constrained conditions:

- limited administrative and technical capacity;

- dependence on higher-level funding and guidance;
- fragmented responsibilities across municipal departments.

In many cases, local disaster risk reduction relies heavily on informal cooperation and personal networks, particularly with volunteer organisations and community groups. While such arrangements can be effective in the short term, they are vulnerable to staff turnover, political change, and increasing risk complexity.

Figure 4: Global targets to be achieved between 2015 and 2030 (Sendai Framework, 2015)

Climate change further raises expectations placed on local authorities, without always providing corresponding support. This creates a mismatch across **responsibility and capacity**, which is a recurring theme across Central Europe.

3.4 Subnational and Local Levels: The Implementation Bottleneck

Regional and local authorities are expected to operationalise national strategies through spatial planning, preparedness measures, risk communication, and coordination with local actors. In practice, this expectation is often not matched by binding mandates, stable funding, or technical support.

Common features across countries include:

- voluntary regional and local adaptation planning;
- uneven uptake of local risk reduction initiatives;
- reliance on project-based funding rather than institutionalised mechanisms.

This results in a pattern where implementation depends heavily on local leadership, informal networks, and temporary initiatives, rather than systematic governance arrangements.

3.5 Vertical Coordination: Bridging National and Local Levels

Vertical coordination refers to the alignment of policies, responsibilities, resources, and information across governance levels. In disaster risk reduction, weak vertical coordination is a major barrier to effective implementation.

Common challenges include:

- unclear division of responsibilities between national and local levels;
- insufficient translation of national strategies into practical guidance;
- limited feedback from local experience to national policy revision.

Effective vertical coordination requires more than formal reporting lines. It depends on:

- shared understanding of roles and expectations;
- accessible data and tools tailored to local needs;
- stable funding mechanisms that support preparedness and prevention.

Evidence from the LOCALIENCE project indicates that national authorities play a decisive role as **enablers of local action**, particularly by creating legal clarity, providing guidance, and supporting coordination capacity.

3.6 Horizontal Coordination and Sectoral Integration

In addition to vertical coordination, disaster risk reduction requires horizontal coordination across sectors. Climate-related risks intersect with spatial planning, water management, health services, social care, transport, and energy systems.

However, governance structures often remain sectorally fragmented. This fragmentation limits the ability of local authorities to address multi-hazard and cascading risks, as actions taken in one sector may increase vulnerability in another.

Examples include:

- land-use decisions that increase flood exposure;
- infrastructure investments that do not consider for future climate stress;
- health systems insufficiently prepared for prolonged heatwaves.

Strengthening horizontal coordination is therefore essential for translating strategic objectives into integrated local action.

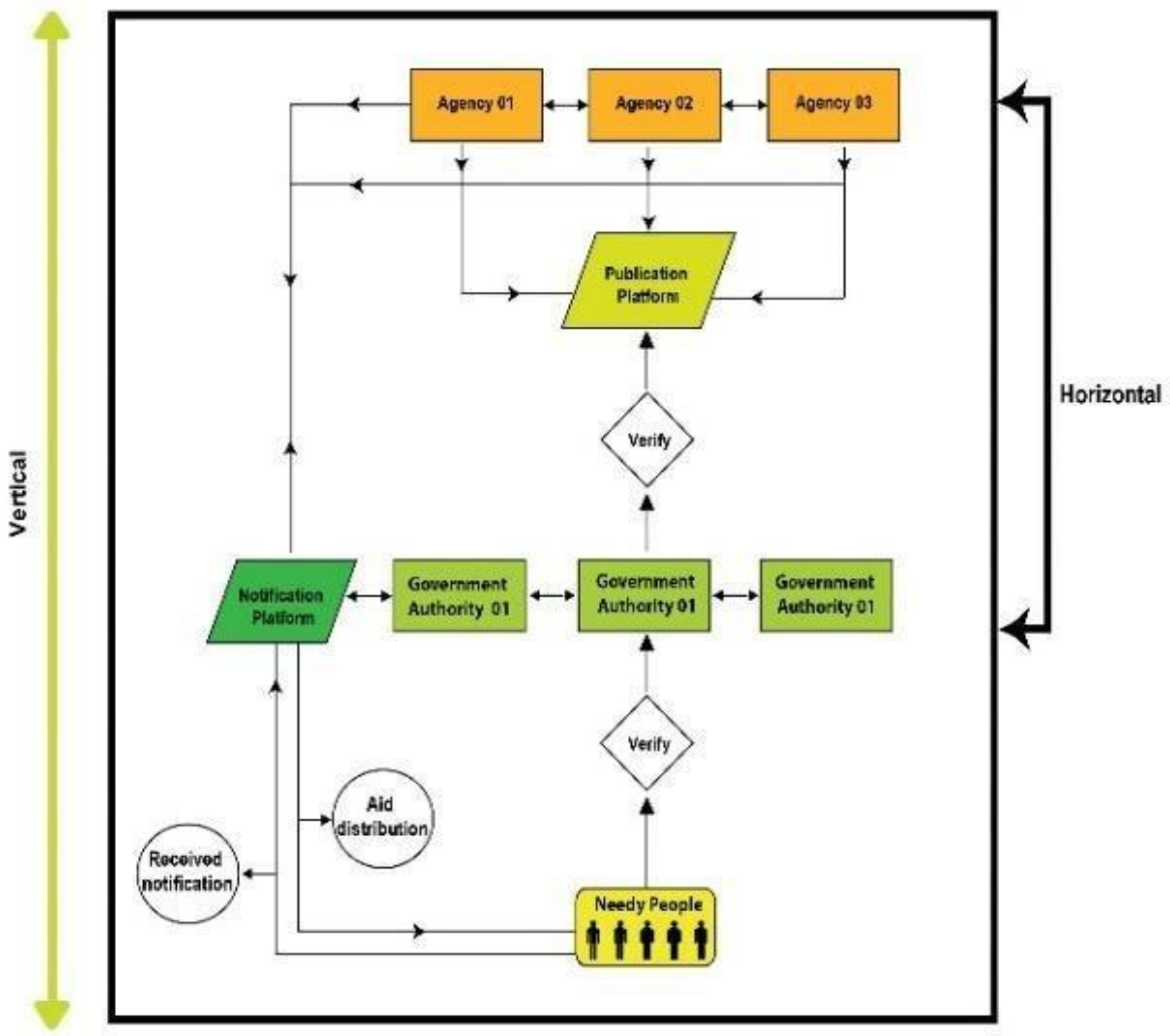

Figure 5: Multilevel governance structure and disaster relief information flow (DOI:38/bhumi.v7i1.51)

3.7 From Government to Governance

Traditional disaster management systems are based on hierarchical command-and-control models designed for emergency response. These models remain indispensable during acute crises. However, they are insufficient for managing long-term, climate-driven risk.

Disaster risk reduction increasingly requires a shift from **government** to **governance**:

- from hierarchical control to collaborative coordination;
- from sectoral silos to integrated approaches;
- from response-focused action to anticipation and learning.

This shift does not weaken professional emergency services. Instead, it expands the governance space to include non-professional actors, local knowledge, and societal capacities that are critical for resilience.

The multi-level policy landscape for disaster risk reduction is characterised by strong strategic frameworks and weak implementation pathways. Bridging this gap requires governance mechanisms that connect policy intent with local practice through cooperation, facilitation, and learning.

4 POLICY GAPS IN MULTI-LEVEL DISASTER GOVERNANCE

Evidence from Multi-Level Implementation Practice

Despite the existence of comprehensive international, European, and national strategies, disaster risk reduction continues to face persistent implementation challenges. These challenges are neither isolated failures, nor limited to specific countries or governance systems. Instead, they represent **structural governance gaps** that emerge at the intersection of policy design, institutional arrangements, and local practice.

Climate change intensifies these gaps by increasing the complexity, uncertainty, and temporal scope of disaster risks. Policies that were designed for relatively stable risk patterns struggle to adapt to rapidly evolving hazard profiles. As a result, governance systems often remain reactive, focusing on emergency response rather than proactive risk reduction.

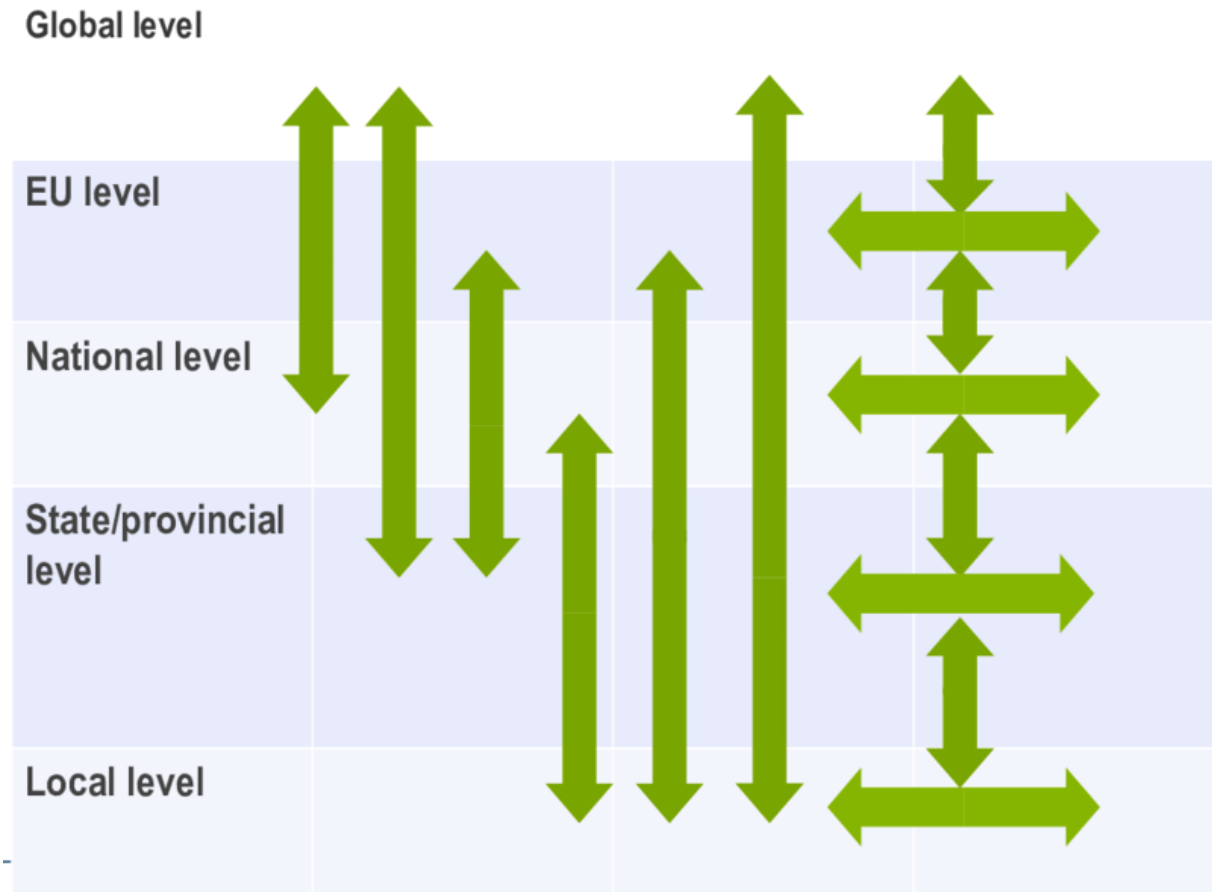

Figure 6: Horizontal and Vertical Reinforcement in Global Climate Governance (DOI: 10.3390/en8065782)

The LOCALIENCE project confirms that policy gaps are not primarily caused by missing strategies or insufficient political attention. Rather, they stem from the **misalignment between responsibilities, capacities, and enabling conditions across governance levels**.

4.1 Vertical Governance Gaps: National–Local Disconnects

Vertical governance gaps arise when responsibilities for disaster risk reduction are decentralised without corresponding support mechanisms. Local authorities are increasingly expected to address preparedness, prevention, and coordination tasks, yet they often lack the legal clarity, financial resources, and technical capacity required to fulfil these roles effectively.

Common examples of vertical gaps include:

- ambiguous mandates regarding prevention and preparedness responsibilities;
- limited access to national risk assessments and climate projections in locally usable formats;
- short-term or project-based funding that undermines continuity.

In many cases, national strategies articulate ambitious objectives for resilience but provide limited guidance on how these objectives should be operationalised at the local level. This results in uneven implementation, where proactive municipalities advance preparedness measures while others remain largely reactive.

Vertical gaps are further reinforced by weak feedback mechanisms. Local experience, including lessons learned from disaster events, is not systematically integrated into national policy updates, reducing the capacity of governance systems to learn and adapt.

4.2 Horizontal Governance Gaps: Sectoral Fragmentation

Disaster risk reduction intersects with multiple policy domains, including spatial planning, water management, health, social services, transport, and energy. However, governance structures often remain organised along sectoral lines, with limited incentives for cross-sectoral coordination.

This fragmentation has several consequences:

- risk assessments focus on single hazards rather than systemic risk;
- sectoral policies may unintentionally increase vulnerability elsewhere;
- local authorities face coordination burdens that exceed their administrative capacity.

Climate change exacerbates horizontal gaps by increasing the frequency of compound and cascading risks that cannot be managed within a single sector. For example, drought management requires coordination between water authorities, agriculture, energy providers, and local governments, while heatwave preparedness intersects with health, urban planning, and social services.

The absence of institutionalised mechanisms for horizontal coordination limits the effectiveness of even well-designed policies.

4.3 Implementation Gaps: From Strategy to Practice

Implementation gaps refer to the disconnect between formal policy commitments and actual practices on the ground. Many disaster risk reduction strategies remain declarative, outlining objectives without specifying concrete pathways for implementation.

Typical characteristics of implementation gaps include:

- lack of operational guidance for municipalities;
- absence of measurable indicators for preparedness and prevention;
- limited monitoring and evaluation of non-response activities.

Local authorities often rely on informal arrangements and individual initiative to translate strategic goals into action. While this can yield short-term success, it does not provide a sustainable basis for long-term risk reduction.

Implementation gaps are particularly evident in the area of preparedness, which receives less political attention and funding than emergency response or post-disaster recovery.

4.4 Participation Gaps: Integrating Non-Professional Actors

Non-professional actors—such as volunteers, community groups, non-governmental organisations, and private sector entities—play a critical role in disaster response and recovery. However, their involvement in preparedness and planning remains weakly institutionalised.

Participation gaps arise when:

- cooperation relies on informal personal relationships;
- roles and responsibilities are unclear;
- legal and insurance frameworks for volunteers are insufficient;
- community knowledge is not systematically incorporated into risk assessments.

These gaps limit the potential of community-based disaster risk reduction and reduce the sustainability of societal contributions to resilience.

Evidence from LOCALIENCE indicates that municipalities with structured cooperation mechanisms involving non-professional actors demonstrate higher preparedness levels and more effective coordination during crises.

4.5 Learning and Feedback Gaps

Effective disaster risk reduction requires continuous learning across events and governance levels. However, learning mechanisms are often underdeveloped or fragmented.

Common learning gaps include:

- post-disaster evaluations that focus on response performance rather than governance arrangements;
- limited dissemination of lessons learned across municipalities;
- weak integration of learning outcomes into planning and policy revision.

Climate change increases the importance of learning, as historical experience becomes a less reliable guide for future risks. Governance systems that fail to institutionalise learning are likely to repeat past mistakes and struggle to adapt.

4.6 Governance Gaps as a Structural Pattern

A key insight from the LOCALIENCE project is that governance gaps appear across diverse institutional contexts, including both centralised and federal systems. This suggests that the challenges identified are **structural rather than context-specific**.

Addressing these gaps therefore requires more than incremental adjustments to existing policies. It calls for **governance innovation**, particularly at the local level, where risks materialise and coordination challenges are most acute.

Policy and governance gaps in disaster risk reduction are not failures of individual actors or institutions. They are the result of governance systems that have not yet fully adapted to the complexity, uncertainty, and multi-actor nature of climate-related disaster risk.

5 THE ROLE OF NON-PROFESSIONAL ACTORS IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

5.1 From Informal Support to Structured Governance

Why Non-Professional Actors Matter for Disaster Risk Reduction

Non-professional actors play an increasingly important role in disaster risk reduction, particularly at the local level. Climate-related disasters are becoming more frequent, longer-lasting, and more complex, often exceeding the operational capacity of professional emergency services alone.

Non-professional actors include a wide range of stakeholders:

- individual citizens and households,
- organised volunteers and volunteer associations,
- community groups and non-governmental organisations,
- local businesses and utility providers.

These actors contribute resources that are difficult to replicate through formal systems, including local knowledge, social networks, trust, and rapid mobilisation capacity. In many municipalities, they represent the **first line of support** during emergencies and a critical component of recovery.

From a governance perspective, non-professional actors are not an auxiliary resource but an **integral part of local resilience systems**. Their effective involvement depends less on goodwill and more on governance arrangements that enable safe, coordinated, and sustained participation.

5.2 Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction in a Changing Risk Context

Community-based disaster risk reduction (CB-DRR) emphasises the active role of local communities in identifying risks, reducing vulnerabilities, and strengthening preparedness. In the context of climate change, CB-DRR becomes increasingly relevant as risks are shaped by local exposure, behaviour, and social conditions.

Key principles of CB-DRR include:

- participation of local actors in risk assessment and planning;
- integration of local and experiential knowledge with scientific data;
- shared ownership of preparedness and prevention measures;
- emphasis on anticipation and early action.

CB-DRR is particularly effective for climate-related risks such as heatwaves, droughts, and local flooding, where behavioural change, awareness, and timely response can significantly reduce impacts.

However, CB-DRR initiatives often remain project-based and isolated from formal disaster risk governance structures. Without institutional anchoring, their long-term impact remains limited.

5.3 Spontaneous and Organised Volunteering: Different Roles, Shared Challenges

Spontaneous Volunteering

Spontaneous volunteers frequently emerge in the immediate aftermath of disasters. They are typically motivated, locally embedded, and capable of rapid mobilisation. Their contribution can be decisive, particularly in the early phases of response.

At the same time, spontaneous volunteering poses governance challenges:

- lack of coordination with professional responders;
- safety risks and liability concerns;
- duplication of efforts;
- uneven quality of assistance.

Climate change increases the likelihood that spontaneous volunteering will become more frequent, as disasters affect wider populations and generate strong societal responses.

Figure 7: Example of spontaneous volunteering (Vermont Community Foundation, 2025)

Organised Volunteering

Organised volunteers operate within established structures such as voluntary fire brigades, rescue organisations, or civil protection associations. They typically receive training, operate under defined command structures, and are covered by insurance and legal frameworks.

In many Central European countries, organised volunteers form a **core component of local disaster response capacity**. However, their role in preparedness and prevention is often underutilised, as governance systems tend to focus on response functions.

5.4 Bridging the Gap Between Spontaneous and Organised Actors

Effective disaster risk governance does not require choosing between spontaneous and organised volunteering. Instead, it requires **interfaces that enable cooperation while maintaining safety, accountability, and efficiency**.

Such interfaces may include:

- pre-defined communication channels;
- volunteer reception and registration mechanisms;
- basic training and safety guidance;
- clear role definitions during different disaster phases.

Governance arrangements that acknowledge and plan for spontaneous volunteering are better equipped to harness societal capacity without compromising professional response operations.

Figure 8: Understanding flood risk at a local level and taking appropriate action can help communities become more flood resilient (The Flood Hub, 2025)

5.5 Risks and Limitations of Community Engagement

While the involvement of non-professional actors offers significant benefits, it also entails risks that must be addressed deliberately.

These include:

- unequal participation across communities;
- exclusion of vulnerable or marginalised groups;
- volunteer fatigue and burnout;
- over-reliance on unpaid labour.

From a governance perspective, these risks highlight the importance of **balanced and ethical engagement**, where community participation complements rather than replaces professional responsibility.

5.6 Implications for Local Authorities

Local authorities play a pivotal role in shaping how non-professional actors contribute to disaster risk reduction. Their responsibilities extend beyond coordination during emergencies to include preparedness, facilitation, and learning.

Key governance implications for municipalities include:

- recognising communities as partners in preparedness, not only as beneficiaries of assistance;
- investing in coordination and facilitation capacity;
- clarifying legal and insurance arrangements for volunteers;
- embedding community engagement into routine governance processes.

Evidence from LOCALIENCE suggests that municipalities with structured cooperation mechanisms involving non-professional actors demonstrate higher preparedness levels and more resilient response capacity.

5.7 From Participation to Governance

A recurring challenge is that participation of non-professional actors often remains informal and personality-driven. While this can be effective in the short term, it limits sustainability and scalability.

Transitioning from participation to governance requires:

- institutional recognition of non-professional actors;
- clearly defined cooperation mechanisms;
- integration of community input into planning and decision-making;
- systematic learning from practice.

Non-professional actors are not a substitute for professional disaster management systems. They are a **force multiplier** whose contribution depends on governance arrangements that enable structured, safe, and sustained cooperation.

6 Why Local Cooperation Needs a Different Governance Logic

Disaster risk reduction has traditionally been organised around emergency response. This logic is deeply rooted in public administration: clear hierarchies, defined command structures, and rapid decision-making under pressure. These arrangements are essential during acute crises and will remain so.

However, climate change fundamentally alters the conditions under which disaster risk governance operates. Many of the most damaging climate-related risks—such as droughts, heatwaves, or repeated flooding—do not unfold as sudden emergencies. They develop gradually, interact with existing vulnerabilities, and require sustained coordination across sectors and actor groups over time.

Under these conditions, governance systems that rely solely on hierarchical control struggle. They are effective at responding to events, but far less effective at:

anticipating risks,

- coordinating preparedness across sectors,
- engaging communities before disasters occur,
- learning systematically from experience.

Local multi-stakeholder platforms emerge as a response to this governance gap. They are not designed to manage emergencies. Instead, they address the **everyday governance tasks** of disaster risk reduction: coordination, preparedness, trust-building, and learning.

6.1 What Local Platforms Are – and What They Are Not

Local platforms are often misunderstood as new institutions or additional administrative layers. In practice, their value lies precisely in **what they are not**.

Local platforms are:

- **not** command centres,
- **not** formal decision-making bodies,
- **not** replacements for professional emergency services.

Rather, they are **structured spaces for cooperation** that bring together actors who already play a role in disaster risk reduction but rarely interact systematically outside crises.

Typically, local platforms involve:

- municipal administrations and technical departments,
- professional emergency services,
- organised volunteer organisations,

- community groups and civil society actors,
- local businesses and infrastructure operators.

Figure 9: Disaster responders volunteering (International Medical Relief, 2025)

What brings these actors together is not a common formal mandate, but a shared exposure to local risk.

Platforms provide a setting in which these actors can:

- develop a common understanding of risks,
- clarify roles and expectations,
- coordinate preparedness activities,
- reflect jointly on lessons learned.

This function is particularly important in municipalities where cooperation otherwise depends on informal relationships and personal initiative.

6.2 Why Informal Cooperation Is No Longer Enough

In many local contexts, cooperation already exists. Fire brigades know community leaders, municipal staff know volunteer coordinators, and informal networks activate quickly during emergencies. These arrangements often work remarkably well—until they do not.

Climate change exposes the limits of informal cooperation:

- risks become more frequent, reducing recovery time;
- staff turnover disrupts personal networks;
- responsibilities expand beyond response into preparedness and prevention;

- coordination needs become more complex and continuous.

Informal cooperation tends to be:

- **reactive**, activated by events rather than anticipation;
- **fragile**, dependent on individuals;
- **uneven**, leaving gaps where relationships do not exist.

Local platforms do not replace informal cooperation. They **stabilise and extend it**, creating continuity beyond individual events and personalities.

6.3 Core Functions of Local Multi-Stakeholder Platforms

Experience from LOCALIENCE and similar initiatives shows that effective platforms consistently perform a limited set of core functions. Their strength lies not in complexity, but in **focus**.

Creating a Shared Understanding of Risk

Different actors perceive risk differently. Engineers focus on infrastructure, emergency services on response capacity, health authorities on vulnerable populations, and communities on lived experience.

Platforms create a space where these perspectives can be combined. This does not require advanced modelling or technical expertise. Often, the most valuable outcome is simply **alignment**: agreement on which risks matter most locally and why.

Shared understanding reduces conflict, supports prioritisation, and improves the quality of decision-making under uncertainty.

Coordinating Preparedness before Crises Occur

Preparedness is often nobody's primary responsibility. It sits between departments, budgets, and planning cycles. Platforms give preparedness a home.

Through regular interaction, platforms help to:

- align training and exercises,
- identify gaps in capacity,
- coordinate communication strategies,
- avoid duplication of effort.

Preparedness coordination is one of the most tangible benefits reported by municipalities participating in LOCALIENCE pilots.

Managing Interfaces Between Professional and Non-Professional Actors

One of the most sensitive governance challenges in disaster risk reduction is the interface between professional responders and non-professional actors.

During emergencies, unclear roles can create friction, safety risks, and inefficiencies. Platforms address this **before disasters occur**, by clarifying:

- who communicates with whom,
- under what conditions volunteers are mobilised,
- how safety and liability are managed,
- where informal support is most useful.

This interface management does not restrict community engagement—it makes it safer and more effective.

Supporting Continuous Learning and Adaptation

Learning is often treated as a post-disaster activity. Platforms shift learning into an ongoing process.

Joint reflection after events allows actors to:

- identify governance bottlenecks,
- adjust preparedness measures,
- improve coordination mechanisms.

Over time, this builds adaptive capacity—an essential quality under conditions of climate uncertainty.

Linking Local Practice with Higher Governance Levels

Local platforms also serve as translation mechanisms between local experience and national policy frameworks.

- They provide structured channels through which:
- local challenges can be communicated upward,
- national guidance can be interpreted locally,
- successful practices can be shared and scaled.

This vertical linkage is critical for overcoming the implementation gaps identified earlier in the White Paper.

6.4 Designing Platforms That Actually Work

Not all platforms succeed. Experience shows that success depends less on formal design and more on **governance culture and facilitation**.

Key design principles include:

- Light Institutionalisation

- Platforms need recognition and continuity, but excessive formalisation discourages participation.
- Dedicated Facilitation
- Someone must be responsible for convening, coordinating, and maintaining momentum. This role is often underestimated but critical.
- Inclusiveness
- Platforms should actively involve actors beyond traditional emergency management structures, including social services, health actors, and community representatives.
- Multi-Hazard Orientation
- Focusing on single hazards limits relevance. Platforms should address systemic risk patterns.
- Integration with Existing Structures

Platforms work best when connected to municipal planning and crisis management processes, rather than operating in parallel.

6.5 Establishing a Local Platform: A Pragmatic Pathway

Local platforms do not need to start fully formed. A gradual approach is often more sustainable:

1. mapping relevant actors,
2. clarifying purpose and scope,
3. agreeing on basic rules of engagement,
4. identifying immediate preparedness priorities,
5. embedding platform activities into existing processes.

This incremental pathway allows trust to develop and avoids overburdening participants.

6.6 Risks, Fatigue, and How to Address Them

Platforms face real risks:

- loss of momentum,
- domination by professional actors,
- unclear added value,
- dependence on short-term projects.

Addressing these risks requires:

- visible short-term benefits,
- rotation of responsibilities,

- periodic reflection on purpose,
- support from national frameworks.

6.7 Why National and European Enabling Conditions Matter

Local platforms cannot thrive in isolation. Their sustainability depends on higher-level support:

legal clarity for cooperation with non-professional actors,

- funding for coordination roles,
- access to risk information,
- guidance that respects local flexibility.

National and European actors shape the conditions under which local cooperation becomes routine rather than exceptional.

7 LOCAL MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORMS AS GOVERNANCE INSTRUMENTS

What Local Practice Reveals About Governance in Action

7.1 Purpose and Analytical Role of the Case Snapshots

This chapter does not present country reports or comprehensive national assessments. Its purpose is analytical and interpretative: to use selected local experiences from Central Europe to **identify recurring governance patterns** and **derive transferable lessons** relevant for disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change.

The case snapshots serve three functions within the overall structure of the White Paper:

- **Grounding governance concepts in practice**
  They illustrate how abstract governance challenges identified in Chapters 3–4 materialise at the local level.
- **Testing the platform logic introduced in Chapter 6**
  They show how cooperation mechanisms function under different institutional conditions.
- **Informing transferability and scaling**
  They reveal which elements of local practice are context-specific and which can be adapted elsewhere.

The cases are intentionally selective and illustrative. Their value lies not in representativeness, but in their ability to expose **how governance actually works under real-world constraints**.

7.2 Case Snapshot 1 – Czech Republic

Strong Response Capacity, Weaker Preparedness Integration

Local disaster risk governance in the Czech Republic is characterised by a strong, centrally coordinated civil protection system combined with extensive reliance on voluntary fire brigades at the municipal level. This configuration delivers high response capacity during acute events, particularly floods and storms.

However, the case evidence highlights a structural imbalance between **response strength and preparedness integration**.

Local authorities often depend on:

- informal cooperation with volunteer organisations,
- personal networks between municipal staff and responders,
- event-driven coordination activated during emergencies.

Preparedness and prevention activities tend to remain fragmented across departments and projects. Climate change amplifies this gap by requiring sustained, anticipatory coordination that informal arrangements struggle to provide.

Key lesson:
In highly centralised systems, local platforms offer a mechanism to **rebalance governance towards preparedness without weakening response capacity**.

7.3 Case Snapshot 2 – Austria

Participatory Governance with Coordination Challenges

Austria's federal structure grants significant autonomy to provinces and municipalities. Disaster risk governance benefits from strong scientific input and participatory traditions, particularly in flood risk management and alpine hazard contexts.

Local case evidence shows:

- effective engagement of technical experts and community actors,
- mature cooperation in hazard-specific domains,
- strong organised volunteer structures.

At the same time, fragmentation across Länder[1] creates coordination challenges. Preparedness approaches differ substantially between regions, and horizontal integration across sectors remains uneven.

Local platforms demonstrate particular value in:

- connecting scientific expertise with local knowledge,
- aligning preparedness activities across municipal boundaries,
- translating federal strategies into operational local action.

Key lesson:
Decentralisation alone does not guarantee coherence. Platforms help **stabilise cooperation across administrative fragmentation**.

7.4 Case Snapshot 3 – Poland

Centralised Frameworks, Emerging Local Engagement

Poland represents a governance context where national disaster risk management frameworks are strong and increasingly informed by advanced risk assessment tools. However, local-level engagement in preparedness and prevention remains uneven.

Local practice reveals:

- limited institutionalised cooperation with non-professional actors,

[1] Countries within federal state

- strong reliance on national guidance and funding,
- emerging but fragile community-based initiatives.

Where local platforms or similar mechanisms are introduced, they primarily serve a **translation function**, helping municipalities make national risk data usable for local decision-making.

Key lesson:
In strongly centralised systems, local platforms function as **interpretative interfaces** between national tools and local realities.

7.5 Case Snapshot 4 – Slovenia

Post-Disaster Reform as a Governance Opportunity

Severe flood events have acted as catalysts for institutional reform in Slovenia, increasing political attention and investment in disaster risk reduction.

Local experiences demonstrate:

- rapid mobilisation of resources during recovery,
- willingness to experiment with new coordination mechanisms,
- increased awareness of preparedness deficits.

However, if these arrangements are not institutionally anchored, they often fade once the recovery phase ends and attention shifts elsewhere.

Platforms provide a way to convert post-disaster momentum into **long-term governance capacity**.

Key lesson:
Post-disaster windows of opportunity should be used to **institutionalise cooperation**, not only rebuild infrastructure.

7.6 Case Snapshot 5 – Hungary

Technical Capacity Without Local Diffusion

Hungary has established advanced national modelling and forecasting capacities, particularly in the fields of drought and water management. While the uptake of these tools at the local level is still developing, several local cases provide useful insights.

Local cases show:

- Varying levels of formal mandates for municipal preparedness,
- Opportunities to further strengthen the involvement of community actors,
- A predominantly sectoral approach in implementation.

Where platform-like forms of cooperation are in place, they demonstrate clear added value, especially by connecting technical expertise with local decision-making processes.

Key lesson:
The impact of strong technical capacities can be significantly enhanced by reinforcing local governance structures and facilitation mechanisms.

7.7 Cross-Cutting Governance Patterns

Across all case snapshots, several recurring patterns emerge:

1. **Preparedness is structurally underdeveloped** compared to response.
2. **Informal cooperation is widespread but fragile.**
3. **Local capacity is highly uneven**, even within the same country.
4. **National frameworks shape but do not determine local outcomes.**
5. Most importantly, the effectiveness of local disaster risk governance depends less on formal institutional design and more on **how cooperation is enabled, facilitated, and sustained.**

7.8 Transferable Lessons for Local Disaster Risk Governance

From the cases analysed, five transferable lessons can be derived:

1. **Local platforms work across governance systems**
   Their function adapts to context, but their core value remains consistent.
2. **Preparedness requires dedicated governance space**
   Without platforms, preparedness remains marginalised.
3. **Facilitation matters more than formal authority**
   Successful cooperation depends on coordination capacity.
4. **Community engagement must be institutionalised**
   Reliance on goodwill and personal networks is insufficient.
5. **Scaling requires national enabling conditions**
   Platforms thrive when supported by legal clarity, data access, and funding.

7.9 Linking Case Evidence Back to the Platform Model

The case snapshots confirm the central argument of this White Paper: **local multi-stakeholder platforms are not context-specific innovations, but adaptable governance mechanisms.**

Their effectiveness lies in:

- addressing preparedness deficits,

- stabilising cooperation,
- enabling learning under uncertainty.

They provide a practical response to the governance gaps identified in earlier chapters and prepare the ground for the barrier and recommendation analysis that follows.

8 CATALOGUE OF POLICY MEASURES

Scaling Local Cooperation Beyond Pilot Initiatives

8.1 Scaling - Core Governance Challenge

Local cooperation mechanisms, including multi-stakeholder platforms, have demonstrated clear value in improving preparedness, coordination, and learning. Across Central Europe, municipalities participating in LOCALIENCE pilots and similar initiatives report tangible benefits, particularly in anticipation and interface management between actors.

However, these benefits remain **spatially and institutionally limited**. Successful cooperation often:

- remains confined to pilot areas,
- depends on temporary project funding,
- relies on individual leadership,
- lacks formal anchoring in governance systems.

Scaling is therefore not a question of replication, but of **institutionalisation**. It concerns whether the *functions* of cooperation—coordination, facilitation, learning—become part of routine governance practice rather than exceptional activities.

This chapter analyses why scaling fails, what risks it creates, and under which conditions it becomes feasible.

8.2 Institutional and Legal Barriers

(Why cooperation remains informal)

A major obstacle to scaling local cooperation lies in institutional and legal ambiguity. In many governance systems, preparedness and prevention responsibilities are insufficiently defined, while cooperation with non-professional actors lacks explicit legal grounding.

This creates a situation where:

- municipalities are encouraged to cooperate, but not clearly mandated;
- legal responsibility remains unclear in non-emergency phases;
- liability and insurance frameworks are inconsistent or incomplete.

As a result, local authorities often adopt **risk-averse behaviour**, preferring informal cooperation over institutionalised mechanisms. While this reduces legal exposure, it undermines sustainability and learning.

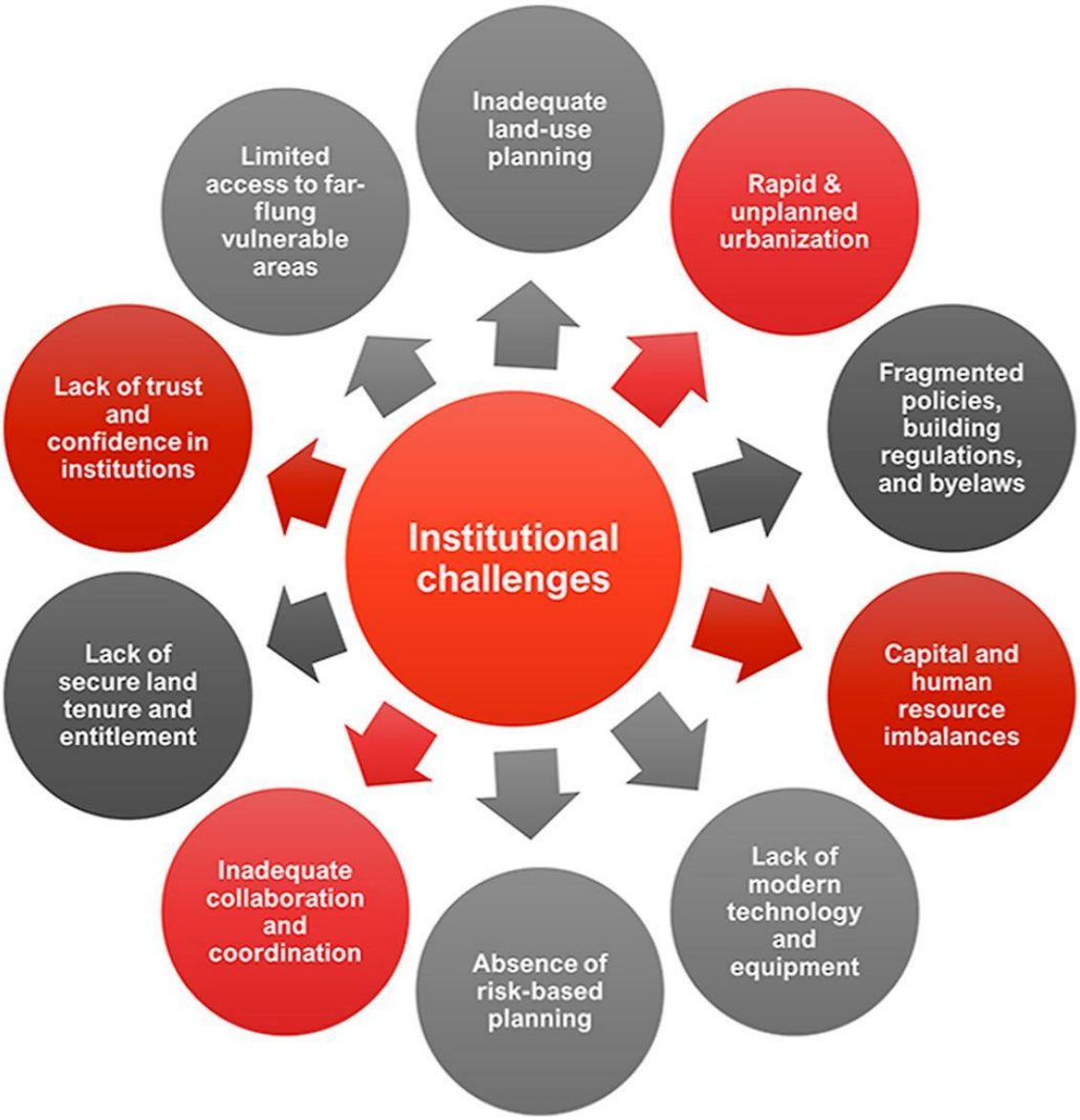

Figure 10: Institutional challenges in reducing disaster risks (International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, DOI:10.1016/j.ijdrr.2023.103581)

8.3 Capacity and Resource Barriers

(Why cooperation is fragile even when it works)

Local cooperation requires time, coordination, and facilitation. These functions are rarely recognised as core administrative tasks.

Common constraints include:

- insufficient staff capacity,

- high turnover of municipal personnel,
- competition with short-term political priorities,
- reliance on external funding for coordination roles.

Critically, coordination capacity is often viewed as an "overhead cost" rather than a resilience investment. This perception significantly limits scaling potential.

8.4 Knowledge and Data Barriers

(Why local decisions remain reactive)

Despite growing availability of climate and risk data at national and European levels, local authorities often struggle to use this information effectively.

Challenges include:

- technical complexity of risk assessments,
- lack of locally tailored data,
- weak integration of scientific knowledge with local experience.

Without translation mechanisms, data remains disconnected from decision-making. Platforms can address this gap, but only when supported by **relevant information and guidance**.

8.5 Social and Organisational Barriers

(Why cooperation erodes over time)

Cooperation depends on trust, perceived value, and inclusion. Over time, platforms may face:

- declining participation,
- dominance by professional actors,
- exclusion of smaller organisations or vulnerable groups,
- volunteer fatigue.

These barriers rarely appear immediately. They emerge gradually and are often overlooked until cooperation weakens significantly.

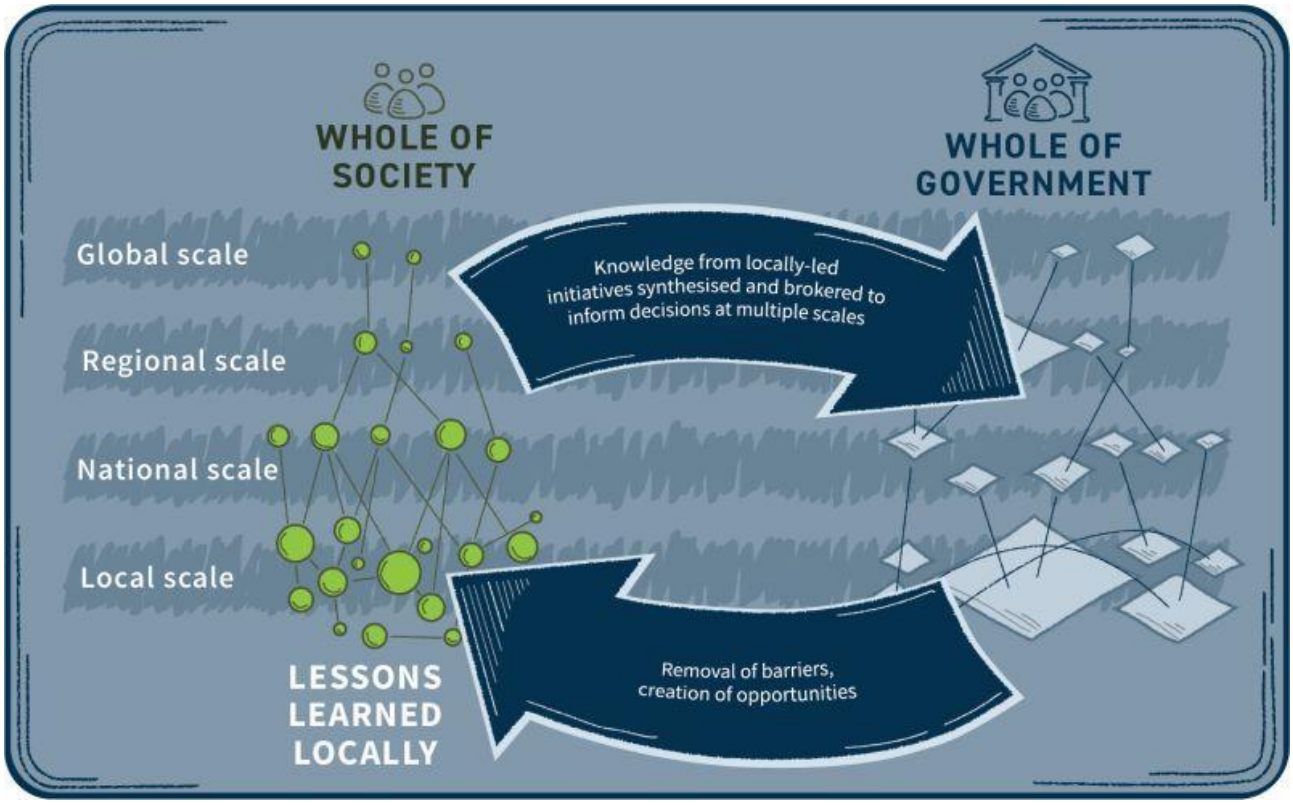

Figure 11: Transformative climate-resilient development requires connections between 'whole of society' and 'whole of government' working through inclusive multi-level governance (Adapted from Bulkeley et al. 2023)

8.6 Risks of Scaling Without Governance Design

Scaling cooperation without addressing governance design creates several risks:

- **Over-formalisation**: rigid structures reduce flexibility and participation;
- **Tokenistic platforms**: platforms exist on paper but lack influence;
- **Territorial inequality**: better-resourced municipalities benefit disproportionately;
- **Project dependency**: cooperation dissolves once funding ends.

Recognising these risks is essential for designing sustainable scaling strategies.

8.7 Linking Barriers to Enabling Conditions

The following table explicitly links **identified barriers** with **required enabling conditions**, forming the analytical backbone for Chapter 9.

Barrier Category	Observed Barrier	Required Enabling Condition
Legal / Institutional	Unclear mandate for preparedness	Explicit recognition of local cooperation mechanisms
Legal / Institutional	Liability uncertainty	Clarified insurance and legal frameworks
Capacity	Lack of facilitation roles	Stable funding for coordination capacity
Capacity	High staff turnover	Institutionalised roles and procedures
Knowledge	Inaccessible risk data	Locally usable risk information and guidance
Social	Volunteer fatigue	Recognition, rotation, and visible benefits
Organisational	Sectoral silos	Cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms

Table 1 - Governance Barriers and Required Enablers

8.8 Multi-Level Enabling Conditions

Scaling cooperation is a **shared governance task**.

- **Local level**
  adapts cooperation mechanisms to context, mobilises actors, maintains platforms.
- **National level**
  provides legal clarity, funding instruments, data access, and guidance.
- **European level**
  supports coherence, experimentation, peer learning, and capacity-building.

Without alignment across these levels, scaling remains fragmented and fragile.

Scaling local cooperation requires shifting disaster risk reduction from project logic to governance logic. This shift is not technical; it is institutional, financial, and cultural.

9 TRANSFERABILITY FRAMEWORK

Supporting Policy Learning and Adaptation

Why Transferability Matters – and Why It Is Often Misunderstood

One of the most common weaknesses of pilot-based governance initiatives is that success remains local. Effective cooperation mechanisms are developed, tested, yet struggle to move beyond their original context. This challenge is particularly acute in disaster risk reduction, where local conditions, institutional arrangements, and risk profiles vary widely.

Transferability is often misunderstood as replication: the assumption that a successful model can simply be copied elsewhere. Experience from LOCALIENCE and comparable initiatives demonstrates that this assumption rarely holds. Governance solutions do not travel as finished products. They travel as **sets of functions, principles, and enabling conditions**.

The purpose of this Transferability Framework is therefore not to promote uniform models, but to support **context-sensitive adaptation** of local cooperation mechanisms, particularly multi-stakeholder platforms.

9.1 Purpose and Principles

The transferability framework is designed to:

- support decision-makers in assessing whether a measure is suitable for adaptation;
- identify conditions and adjustments required for successful transfer;
- avoid one-size-fits-all solutions.

The framework is intentionally simple and qualitative. It serves as a heuristic tool to inform discussion and decision-making, not as a quantitative evaluation instrument.

9.2 Transferability Criteria

Each priority measure can be assessed against five criteria:

1. **Risk and Hazard Relevance**
   Alignment with the local or regional risk profile, including multi-hazard considerations.
2. **Legal and Institutional Fit**
   Compatibility with existing legal frameworks, mandates, and institutional arrangements.
3. **Capacity and Resource Requirements**
   Feasibility given available human, financial, and organisational resources.

4. **Data and Tools Readiness**
   Availability of necessary information, data systems, and analytical tools.
5. **Social Acceptance and Trust**
   Likelihood of acceptance by local actors and the level of trust required for cooperation.

Assessment results can be visualised using radar diagrams once applied to specific measures and contexts. The White Paper adopts this simplified framework to balance methodological robustness with practical usability for local and national actors.

9.3 What is Transferable – and What is Not

A critical first step is to distinguish between elements that are inherently context-specific and those that can be adapted across settings.

Not directly transferable are:

- specific institutional arrangements,
- legal forms and mandates,
- organisational charts and formal procedures.

These elements are embedded in national administrative traditions and legal systems.

Potentially transferable are:

- governance functions (e.g. coordination, facilitation, learning),
- cooperation principles (e.g. inclusiveness, preparedness focus),
- process logics (e.g. gradual institutionalisation),
- enabling conditions (e.g. funding for coordination roles).

The Transferability Framework focuses explicitly on these transferable dimensions.

9.4 Core Transferable Governance Functions

Evidence from Chapters 6 and 7 shows that successful local cooperation consistently performs a limited number of governance functions, regardless of institutional context.

These include:

- **Preparedness coordination**
  Creating a permanent space for preparedness beyond emergency response.
- **Interface management**
  Clarifying roles between professional and non-professional actors before crises occur.
- **Facilitation and convening**
  Ensuring continuity of cooperation beyond individual personalities.

- **Learning and adaptation**
  Embedding reflection and adjustment into routine practice.
- **Vertical linkage**
  Connecting local experience with national frameworks and resources.

Transferability depends on whether these functions can be reproduced in another context—not whether the same organisational form is adopted.

9.5 Context Factors That Shape Transferability

Transferability is always shaped by contextual factors. The framework identifies four categories that consistently influence whether and how cooperation mechanisms can be adapted.

Context Dimension	What It Refers To	Why It Matters for Transferability	Implications for Adaptation
Institutional Context	Degree of centralisation, clarity of local mandates, existing coordination mechanisms and administrative traditions	Institutional settings determine where decision-making authority lies and how much room local actors have to organise cooperation. Highly centralised systems offer less local autonomy but often stronger national guidance, while decentralised systems allow more local initiative but require stronger coordination mechanisms.	Cooperation models must be adapted to existing mandates and governance traditions. In centralised systems, platforms often function as coordination and interpretation mechanisms, while in decentralised systems they stabilise cooperation across fragmented responsibilities.
Capacity Context	Availability of staff, coordination and facilitation roles, financial stability, and administrative workload	Even well-designed cooperation mechanisms fail without sufficient capacity to maintain them. Limited staff and unstable funding constrain the scope and ambition of local platforms.	Transfer should prioritise light, incremental approaches and focus on core functions. Dedicated facilitation capacity is often more critical than formal structures or extensive activities.
Risk Context	Dominant hazards, frequency of events, exposure, and degree of multi-hazard interaction	Risk profiles influence urgency, focus and motivation for cooperation. Areas exposed to frequent or compound hazards tend to prioritise preparedness, while lower-risk areas may struggle to sustain attention outside crisis periods.	Cooperation mechanisms should be tailored to local risk dynamics. In high-risk areas, platforms can support continuous preparedness; in lower-risk areas, they may focus on awareness, learning and gradual capacity building.
Social Context	Levels of trust, strength of volunteer traditions, civic engagement, and social cohesion	Social capital shapes who participate, how cooperation works, and whether it is sustainable over time. High trust facilitates informal cooperation, while low trust requires more structured governance arrangements.	Transfer requires sensitivity to local social dynamics. Cooperation models should build on existing volunteer traditions where present, while investing in trust-building and inclusion where social cohesion is weaker.

Table 2 - Context - institutional, capacity, risk and social

9.6 A Stepwise Approach to Transferability

Rather than replication, the framework proposes a **stepwise adaptation pathway**:

1. identify which governance functions are missing locally;
2. assess existing cooperation practices;
3. select platform elements that address local gaps;
4. adapt them to institutional and capacity constraints;
5. test them through practice;
6. adjust based on learning.

This approach allows municipalities to start small and avoid over-engineering.

9.7 Assessing Transferability in Practice

To support practical use, transferability should be assessed through qualitative questions rather than rigid scoring systems.

Examples include:

- Which cooperation functions are currently absent or weak?
- What enabling conditions already exist?
- Where are the main risks of over-formalisation or overload?
- Which actors are likely to support or resist cooperation?

Such questions encourage reflection and adaptation rather than compliance.

9.8 Common Transferability Pitfalls

Experience across Central Europe highlights recurring pitfalls:

- copying institutional forms instead of functions,
- underestimating facilitation needs,
- ignoring capacity constraints,
- assuming volunteer engagement without governance support.

The framework explicitly aims to avoid these pitfalls by focusing on governance logic rather than models.

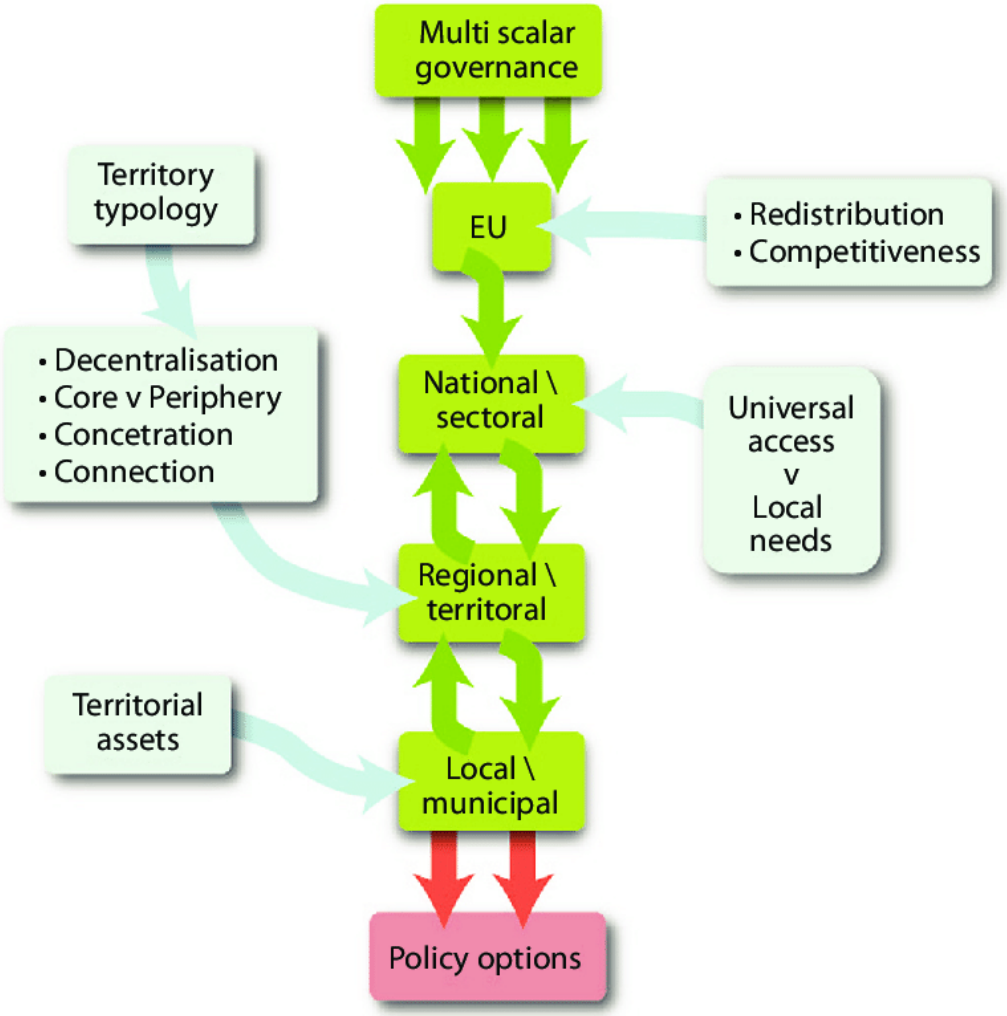

Figure 12: Multi-level Governance and Policy Formation (DOI: 10.7163/Eu21.2013.23.4)

9.9 Role of National and European Levels in Supporting Transferability

Transferability is not solely a local responsibility. National and European levels shape the conditions enabling adaptation.

Their most effective contributions include:

- providing flexible guidance rather than templates,
- funding coordination capacity rather than structures,
- supporting peer learning and exchange,
- recognising diversity of local contexts.

Such support increases the likelihood that successful practices are meaningful rather than superficial.

9.10 Transferability as a Learning Process

Transferability should be understood as a **learning process**, not a one-off exercise. As cooperation mechanisms are adapted, they generate new insights that can form further scaling and policy development.

This reinforces the core argument of the White Paper: disaster risk reduction under climate change depends less on perfect design and more on **adaptive governance capacity**.

9.11 Using the Framework in Practice

The framework should be applied collaboratively, involving both local and national stakeholders. Its primary value lies in facilitating structured discussion about feasibility and adaptation needs, rather than producing definitive scores.

9.12 RECOMMENDATIONS

To enable effective multi-level implementation, the following recommendations are proposed.

What Needs to Change in Practice
The analysis presented in this White Paper leads to a set of clear, practice-oriented recommendations. These recommendations are not conceived as a checklist of actions, but as directions for governance change that reflect how disaster risk reduction actually works at the local level. They address local, national and European actors simultaneously, recognising that effective disaster risk reduction depends on aligned action across governance levels.
Strengthen Preparedness as a Permanent Governance Function
Preparedness must move from the margins of disaster governance to its centre. Local authorities should create permanent spaces where preparedness is discussed, coordinated and reviewed outside crisis periods. Multi-stakeholder platforms provide a practical mechanism for anchoring preparedness in everyday governance practice. National frameworks should explicitly recognise preparedness as a continuous responsibility and support it through guidance and funding mechanisms, not only through emergency-driven instruments.
Invest in Coordination and Facilitation Capacity
Effective cooperation does not happen automatically. It requires people, time and continuity. Local authorities need dedicated facilitation and coordination capacity to maintain cooperation mechanisms, convene actors and support learning processes. National and European funding instruments should explicitly allow and encourage investment in governance capacity, including coordination roles, rather than focusing exclusively on infrastructure or equipment.
Clarify Interfaces Between Professional and Non-Professional Actors

Roles and responsibilities between professional responders and non-professional actors must be clarified before disasters occur. This includes communication channels, safety responsibilities and conditions for volunteer engagement. Local platforms provide an appropriate setting for such clarification, reducing friction and risk during emergencies. Legal and insurance frameworks at national level should support, rather than hinder, this cooperation.
Make Risk and Climate Information Usable for Local Decision-Making
Risk data and climate projections must be translated into formats that support local planning and decision-making. Availability alone is insufficient. National and European institutions should prioritise usability, guidance and interpretation, while local cooperation mechanisms can act as intermediaries that combine scientific knowledge with local experience.
Institutionalise Learning and Feedback
Learning must become a routine governance function rather than an ad hoc response to major disasters. Local authorities should regularly reflect on preparedness and cooperation, involving both professional and non-professional actors. National systems should integrate local experience into policy updates and avoid purely compliance-driven reporting frameworks.
Enable Transferability Without Forcing Uniformity
Successful practices should be adapted, not copied. Transferability requires sensitivity to institutional, capacity, risk and social contexts. European and national actors should support peer learning, experimentation and flexible guidance rather than prescribing standard models. Local adaptation is not a weakness, but a condition for sustainability.

Table 3 - Implementation-Oriented Recommendations

For Local Authorities:

- Treat disaster risk reduction as a continuous governance process rather than a set of emergency procedures.
- Invest in cooperation mechanisms that mobilise local societal capacities.
- Use local platforms to integrate climate adaptation, preparedness, and learning.

For National Authorities:

- Focus on enabling local action through legal clarity, guidance, and capacity support.
- Align funding mechanisms with preparedness and prevention objectives.
- Strengthen feedback loops to ensure local experience informs national policy development.

Taken together, these recommendations do not call for radical institutional reform. They call for **incremental changes in how disaster risk governance is practised**, focusing on cooperation, facilitation and learning.

When implemented consistently, these changes can significantly strengthen local resilience under conditions of climate change.

10 PRACTICAL UPTAKE ACTION PLAN THROUGH THE EXAMPLE OF CZECHIA

10.1 Short Introduction

The objective of this action plan is to provide a structured framework for presenting how the findings and outputs of the LOCALIENCE project can be connected to national, regional and institutional disaster risk reduction (DRR), civil protection and climate resilience processes. The Czech approach is presented as a practical example demonstrating the sequential steps of policy capitalisation, institutional cooperation, financing orientation and practical integration. Based on this approach, other LOCALIENCE partner countries can outline and adapt their own action plans according to their national governance structures, stakeholder environment, policy processes and available resources.

Czechia is used as the first uptake model because the White Paper identifies a strong centrally coordinated response system, extensive municipal and volunteer capacities, and a need to better integrate preparedness and prevention into routine governance practice. The action plan does not create a new strategy. It improves the use of existing policy and coordination processes by showing how LOCALIENCE findings can be transferred into Sendai Framework implementation, DRR practice, civil protection and climate resilience processes.

For clarity, the term "Sendai/DRR policy unit" is used in a functional sense. It refers to the competent national authority, department or expert team responsible for coordinating implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, national DRR reporting and cooperation with the national disaster risk reduction platform or equivalent coordination mechanism. In Czechia, this role is expected to involve the Ministry of the Interior, particularly the Directorate General of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic, in cooperation with other relevant ministries and expert bodies.

The "Sendai approach" means the policy logic promoted by the Sendai Framework: understanding disaster risk, strengthening disaster risk governance, investing in resilience, enhancing preparedness and applying the principle of building back better after disasters. In practical terms for LOCALIENCE, this means multi-hazard, multi-stakeholder, prevention-oriented and evidence-based implementation that connects national policy work with local action.

The process may be confirmed at a later stage through a Letter of Intent or an equivalent institutional acknowledgement by the competent Czech authority. Until such confirmation is issued, the table below should be read as a proposed uptake pathway based on project evidence and the consultation process.

10.2 Czechia Action Plan

The action plan is intentionally limited to four steps and combines the main implementation aspects addressed in LOCALIENCE. The first steps capture activities that have already started or can be completed within the project period. The later steps define future actions that demonstrate uptake, support sustainability and create a process model for other partner countries.

10.2.1 Budget and financing assumptions

The budget figures below are indicative planning estimates, not binding commitments. They assume that some coordination can be covered through existing institutional staff time and project capitalisation resources. Cost classes are used as follows: € = low cost up to EUR 10,000; €€ = medium cost from EUR 10,000 to EUR 50,000; €€€ = high cost above EUR 50,000. Short-term actions include approximate EUR ranges, while longer-term actions use cost classes to indicate the expected scale and possible financial needs.

10.2.2 Step-by step Action Plan

STEP 1 – INITIAL TRANSFER OF PROJECT FINDINGS TO POLICY ACTORS	
Action	Initial transfer of LOCALIENCE Gap Analysis and White Paper findings to Czech policy actors. The White Paper findings have already been shared with relevant Czech actors and can be further presented to the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of the Interior and the national DRR platform or equivalent coordination mechanism.
Level of Action	Policy; Institutional; Networking; Knowledge-sharing.
Objective / Purpose	Increase governmental and expert awareness of local resilience needs, including cooperation between professional and non-professional actors, multi-hazard preparedness, nature-based solutions and links between national policy and local implementation.
Key Activities	Submit key findings; prepare a concise policy brief or crosswalk note; hold expert consultation; identify priority gaps for national policy reporting and coordination; initiate discussion with relevant policy actors.
Responsible Actor	The Ministry of the Interior - Directorate General of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic, with support from the University of Ostrava and other relevant partners.
Main Stakeholders Involved	Ministry of the Interior; Ministry of the Environment; University of Ostrava; Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic; civil protection, climate adaptation and local governance experts; national DRR platform or equivalent coordination structure; LAGs; volunteer organisations including voluntary fire brigades.
Expected Results	Initial policy awareness; shared understanding of relevant gaps; clearer understanding of stakeholder roles; basis for further integration and multi-level cooperation.
Success Indicator	Meeting notes, acknowledgement, consultation record or crosswalk note linking LOCALIENCE findings to Czech DRR and Sendai Framework-related work.
Budget / Financing	Indicative low cost (€): approximately EUR 3,000-7,000, mainly for staff time, preparation of a short policy brief or crosswalk note, 1-2 consultations and documentation. Possible sources: existing project resources, ministry in-kind contribution, institutional staff time or small coordination budget.
Indicative Timeline	Started and ongoing; to be documented during 2026.

STEP 2 – INTEGRATION INTO EXISTING POLICY OR STRATEGIC POLICIES AND PROCESSES	
Action	Map LOCALIENCE findings to existing Czech DRR, civil protection, municipal resilience, local action group (LAG), climate adaptation and Sendai Framework-related documents or reporting processes. Identify practical improvements in LOCALIENCE-relevant domains: local and multi-level governance, cooperation between professional and civic actors, multi-hazard approaches and nature-based solutions.
Level of Action	Strategic; Policy; Institutional.
Objective / Purpose	Use project results to improve existing policy cycles and strengthen local resilience without creating a parallel strategy. The step supports integration of multi-hazard and multi-actor approaches into current planning and reporting processes.
Key Activities	Prepare a concise crosswalk; select three priority issues, such as local preparedness platforms, usable municipal risk information and feedback from local practice to national policy review; assign preliminary owners and define simple follow-up indicators.
Responsible Actor	Competent Czech ministry responsible for the policy or Sendai/DRR policy unit, supported by the Directorate General of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic, the University of Ostrava and the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic.
Main Stakeholders Involved	National civil protection and DRR authorities; climate adaptation and water management actors; regional and municipal representatives; municipalities and their associations; LAGs; NGOs; volunteer and non-professional actor organisations where relevant.
Expected Results	A Czech mini action matrix linking selected LOCALIENCE findings to existing strategic, reporting or implementation processes.
Success Indicator	Completed crosswalk or mini action matrix; responsible actors identified; at least three White Paper recommendations linked to Czech policy or implementation processes.
Budget / Financing	Indicative low-to-medium cost (€-€€): approximately EUR 8,000-15,000 for analytical work, preparation of the mini action matrix and targeted stakeholder consultation. Possible sources: national institutional budgets, project capitalisation resources, technical assistance or expert-support budgets.
Indicative Timeline	Short term, 2026-2027.

STEP 3 – ENGAGEMENT OF COORDINATION MECHANISMS AND EXPERT PLATFORMS	
Action	Use coordination mechanisms, expert platforms and Czech local pilot experience to test selected White Paper recommendations in practice.
Level of Action	Operational; Capacity-building; Networking.
Objective / Purpose	Strengthen science-policy-practice cooperation and demonstrate operational applicability at local level.
Key Activities	Discuss selected recommendations in an expert or coordination platform; connect the discussion with Czech pilot experience, especially enhanced alert-mobilisation-feedback arrangements for

	rural municipalities; prepare a short municipal cooperation checklist; share good practices on local multi-level cooperation, multi-hazard preparedness, nature-based solutions and improved communication between professional and non-professional actors.
Responsible Actor	Directorate General of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic, University of Ostrava and Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic, with facilitation by the competent policy unit and participation of local pilot actors.
Main Stakeholders Involved	Pilot municipalities; Fire Rescue Service representatives; voluntary fire brigades and other organised volunteer actors; technical experts; risk information and warning system actors; national DRR platform or equivalent coordination mechanism where applicable.
Expected Results	Operational validation of selected recommendations; clearer interfaces between professional and non-professional actors; practical input for local preparedness guidance.
Success Indicator	Number of platform or expert consultations; pilot-based lessons learned note; municipal checklist or short operational guidance.
Budget / Financing	Indicative medium cost (€€): approximately EUR 15,000-40,000 depending on the number of pilot municipalities, workshops and expert inputs. Costs cover facilitation, local consultations or exercises, preparation of the checklist/guidance and documentation. Possible sources: national preparedness or civil protection budgets, Interreg/European cooperation funds, municipal in-kind contributions and follow-up project resources.
Indicative Timeline	2026-2028; project-end and early post-project period.

STEP 4 – LONG-TERM CAPITALISATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTPUTS	
Action	Formalise Czech uptake and prepare a transferable process template for other LOCALIENCE countries.
Level of Action	Strategic; Institutional; Networking; Capacity-building.
Objective / Purpose	Document uptake, support sustainability and enable partner countries to adapt their own national or regional action plans.
Key Activities	Summarise the Czech sequence as a transfer template; invite partners to identify their national owner, priority actions, demonstration mechanism and evidence of uptake; link results to the transnational roadmap. A formal output may be a Letter of Intent or equivalent confirmation, but this should be treated as evidence of uptake rather than a timeline item.
Responsible Actor	Competent Czech authority for formal confirmation; LOCALIENCE partnership for transfer and roadmap linkage.
Main Stakeholders Involved	Czech policy authority; Czech project partners: Ministry of Interior – General Directorate of Fire Rescue Service and University of Ostrava; all LOCALIENCE partner countries and associated partners; national or regional DRR, civil protection and climate adaptation stakeholders.
Expected Results	Documented uptake in Czechia; transfer logic for other partner countries; stronger basis for post-project cooperation.
Success Indicator	Signed Letter of Intent, implemented policy reference or equivalent evidence; partner-country adaptation template; reference in the transnational roadmap or post-project cooperation plan.

Budget / Financing	Indicative variable cost (€-€€€): approximately EUR 5,000-25,000 for documentation and preparation of a transfer template. Higher costs may arise only if a broader post-project coordination mechanism, new training programme or dedicated funding instrument is launched. Possible sources: partner institutional budgets, national DRR coordination resources and follow-up transnational funding.
Indicative Timeline	After approval of the revised White Paper and before final reporting where possible; continued post-project during 2027-2029.

10.3 Final Reflections and Transferability to Other Partner Countries

This action plan can serve as a replicable framework for all LOCALIENCE partner countries to explore and document how the findings and recommendations of the White Paper can be incorporated into their respective policy environments. Its transferable value lies in the sequence of actions rather than in the Czech institutional setting itself: identify the competent policy owner, map project findings to existing policy processes, select a small number of priority actions, test them through local or expert coordination mechanisms, and formalise uptake through a Letter of Intent or equivalent evidence.

For other LOCALIENCE partner countries, the same logic can be adapted through four guiding questions:

- *Which national or regional authority owns the relevant Sendai Framework, DRR, civil protection or climate adaptation policy process?*
- *Which findings from the Gap Analysis correspond to an existing policy update, reporting cycle or implementation bottleneck?*
- *Which local pilot, platform, expert group or cooperation mechanism can demonstrate feasibility?*
- *What document can provide evidence of uptake, such as a Letter of Intent, action matrix, meeting record, platform decision or annex to an existing strategy?*

This approach turns the White Paper from a policy recommendation document into a practical uptake pathway. It also creates a bridge between the future Letter of Intent, the transnational roadmap for cooperation beyond the project, and country-specific action planning by other LOCALIENCE partners.

11 CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Strengthening Local Disaster Risk Governance in a Changing Climate

11.1 Disaster Risk Reduction as a Governance Challenge

This White Paper started from a simple observation: climate-related disasters are no longer exceptional events that can be managed primarily through emergency response. Across Central Europe, floods, droughts, heatwaves and storms increasingly represent **systemic risks** that unfold over time, interact with existing vulnerabilities, and challenge traditional governance arrangements.

The analysis presented throughout the document confirms that the principal obstacle to effective disaster risk reduction is not the absence of strategies, data or technical solutions. Instead, it lies in the **gap between policy intent and everyday implementation**, particularly at the local level where risks materialise first and impacts are felt most directly.

Disaster risk reduction under climate change must therefore be understood as a **governance challenge**. It requires coordination across levels of government, sectors and actor groups, as well as sustained engagement beyond moments of crisis.

Figure 13: Example - The framework conceptualizes resilience across three core domains (weADAPT, 2025)

11.2 Why the Local Level Matters Most

Local authorities occupy a unique position in disaster risk governance. They are responsible for spatial planning, local preparedness, coordination with emergency services and engagement with communities. At the same time, they often operate with limited resources, fragmented mandates and high expectations.

The evidence reviewed in this White Paper demonstrates that **local capacity alone is insufficient** to meet the growing demands of climate-related disaster risk reduction. However, when supported by appropriate governance mechanisms, local authorities can act as effective integrators of professional expertise, community knowledge and societal capacity.

Local multi-stakeholder platforms illustrate how this integration can occur in practice. By creating structured spaces for cooperation, they enable preparedness, coordination and learning to become routine governance functions rather than ad hoc responses.

11.3 Key Insights from the Analysis

Several cross-cutting insights emerge consistently across the chapters:

- **Preparedness remains structurally underdeveloped** compared to response and recovery.
- **Informal cooperation is widespread but fragile**, heavily dependent on individuals and short-term initiatives.
- **Non-professional actors represent a major resilience asset**, yet their involvement is rarely institutionalised.
- **Multi-level governance gaps are persistent**, affecting both centralised and decentralised systems.
- **Successful local practices exist** but struggle to scale without enabling conditions.

These insights reinforce the need to move beyond isolated projects towards **governance arrangements that support continuity, learning and adaptation**.

11.4 Added Value of the LOCALIENCE Approach

The LOCALIENCE project demonstrates that meaningful improvements in disaster risk reduction do not necessarily require large-scale institutional reform. Instead, **incremental governance innovation** can deliver significant benefits when it focuses on how actors cooperate in practice.

The project's key contribution lies in:

- highlighting the importance of facilitation and coordination capacity;
- demonstrating the value of local multi-stakeholder platforms;
- providing evidence on transferability across diverse contexts;
- linking local practice with national and European policy discussions.

Rather than promoting a single model, LOCALIENCE offers a **governance logic** that can be adapted to different institutional, capacity and risk contexts.

11.5 From Projects to Sustainable Governance Practice

A recurring risk identified throughout the analysis is that cooperation mechanisms remain confined to pilot initiatives or project cycles. While projects play an important role in experimentation and learning, **they cannot substitute for sustainable governance arrangements**.

Moving from project-based cooperation to routine practice requires:

- institutional recognition of cooperation mechanisms;
- stable funding for coordination and facilitation roles;
- integration of learning into planning and decision-making;
- alignment between local, national and European levels.

This transition represents a cultural shift as much as an organisational one. It involves recognising that governance capacity is a core component of resilience, not an administrative overhead.

> The Czechia uptake action plan demonstrates how this transition can start with a limited number of manageable steps: transferring project findings to policy actors, integrating them into existing policy processes, testing them through coordination mechanisms, and documenting uptake through a Letter of Intent or equivalent commitment. This provides a practical model for other LOCALIENCE partner countries without requiring uniform institutional arrangements.

11.6 Looking Ahead: Priorities for the Coming Years

The coming years will be decisive for disaster risk reduction in Central Europe. Climate impacts are accelerating, while local authorities face increasing pressure to act under conditions of uncertainty.

Three priorities stand out:

1. **Strengthening preparedness as a continuous process**
   Preparedness must move beyond plans and exercises to become an integral part of everyday governance.
2. **Embedding cooperation into institutional routines**
   Structured cooperation mechanisms should not depend on individual initiative solely.
3. **Supporting adaptation and learning across contexts**
   Transferability should be treated as a learning process, enabling practices to travel while respecting local conditions.

These priorities require commitment across governance levels and sustained investment in people, relationships and coordination.

The Czechia uptake action plan demonstrates how this transition can start with a limited number of manageable steps: transferring project findings to policy actors, integrating them into existing policy processes, testing them through coordination mechanisms, estimating indicative financing needs, and

documenting uptake through a Letter of Intent or equivalent commitment. This provides a practical model for other LOCALIENCE partner countries without requiring uniform institutional arrangements.

11.7 Final Reflection

Disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change cannot be reduced to technical fixes or emergency management alone. It is fundamentally about **how societies organise themselves to anticipate, manage and learn from risk**.

This White Paper argues that resilient societies are built not only through infrastructure and response capacity, but through governance systems that enable cooperation, trust and adaptation before disasters occur.

Local multi-stakeholder platforms provide one practical pathway towards such systems. When supported by enabling conditions at national and European levels, they can help transform disaster risk reduction from a reactive function into a proactive and sustainable governance practice.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Floods, droughts, heatwaves, windstorms, and wildfires are no longer isolated or exceptional events; they increasingly interact as compound and cascading hazards that place sustained pressure on crisis management systems. While most countries in the region have adopted national strategies for climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR), recent events demonstrate that strategic commitments alone do not translate automatically into effective implementation at the local level.

This White Paper is designed as an **implementation-oriented policy guidance**. Its primary purpose is to support national and local authorities in translating disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation strategies into operational, multi-actor cooperation mechanisms, with a particular focus on the local level. Rather than proposing new strategies, it concentrates on **how existing policies can be made to work in practice**, especially in contexts characterised by limited local capacity, fragmented governance arrangements, and increasing multi-hazard risks.

The document builds on evidence generated by the LOCALIENCE project and related policy analyses. It focuses on a recurring governance pattern observed across Central Europe: relatively strong national frameworks combined with weak territorial diffusion, voluntary subnational engagement, and under-institutionalised cooperation with non-professional actors. This pattern results in persistent implementation gaps, particularly in preparedness, anticipatory planning, and recovery.

Five key findings underpin the analysis:

- **Disaster risk governance has not kept pace with climate-driven complexity.**
  Governance systems remain largely hazard-specific and response-oriented, while climate change increasingly produces multi-hazard and systemic risks that require anticipatory and coordinated action.
- **Local authorities are on the frontline of disaster impacts but lack enabling conditions.**
  Responsibilities are frequently decentralised without corresponding legal clarity, financial resources, data access, or coordination mechanisms.
- **Non-professional actors play a critical but underutilised role.**
  Communities, volunteers, civil society organisations, and private actors already contribute significantly to preparedness, response, and recovery, yet their involvement remains informal and insufficiently integrated into official crisis management systems.
- **Multi-level governance gaps are structural rather than incidental.**
  Vertical disconnections between national and local levels, horizontal policy silos, and weak feedback mechanisms persist across countries, regardless of whether governance systems are centralised or federal.
- **Local multi-stakeholder platforms offer a practical governance solution.**
  When properly enabled, local platforms can bridge professional and non-professional capacities, support multi-hazard preparedness, and strengthen learning across governance levels.

Based on these findings, the White Paper proposes a **prioritised catalogue of policy measures** aimed at strengthening implementation capacity at the local level while clarifying the enabling role of national

authorities. To support policy learning and adaptation across countries, it introduces a **simple transferability assessment framework**, designed to help decision-makers understand under which conditions local policy solutions can be adapted and scaled.

To make this orientation explicit, the White Paper includes a practical uptake action plan through the example of Czechia. The chapter translates the recommendations into four concrete steps: initial transfer of project findings to policy actors, integration into existing policy or strategic processes, engagement of coordination mechanisms and expert platforms, and long-term capitalisation through a Letter of Intent or equivalent evidence and a transfer template for other LOCALIENCE countries. It also clarifies Sendai-related terminology and includes indicative budget and financing assumptions for each action step.

The document addresses both **local practitioners**, who require practical guidance on cooperation and implementation, and **national policymakers**, whose decisions shape the legal, financial, and institutional conditions for local action. Its overarching message is clear: strengthening disaster resilience in the context of climate change is not primarily a question of new strategies, but of **governance arrangements that make cooperation possible in practice**.

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