

Policy Recommendations for Effective Climate Action in Albania



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From integrating climate education in schools to enabling public participation and transparent information-sharing, Albania faces the urgent task of turning climate awareness into action. As institutions, civil society, and local actors move to address international climate commitments, multiple interests, capacities, and gaps are emerging. How can Albania build a coherent and inclusive approach to Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) that aligns with the ACE work programme of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)? What barriers still hinder implementation, and what practical steps can bridge the divide?

This policy paper summarises key findings and actionable recommendations on how Albania can design and institutionalise an ACE strategy tailored to its national context – one that empowers citizens, strengthens institutions, and supports long-term climate resilience.

Key Findings

1. National Strategy for ACE

Albania should develop and adopt a comprehensive National ACE Strategy that aligns with the Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Work Programme of the UNFCCC. This strategy must include a long-term vision and clear objectives for each ACE element: education, training, public awareness, public participation, access to information, and international cooperation, supported by a dedicated coordination mechanism within the Ministry of Tourism and Environment. The strategy should be participatory, evidence-based, and backed by a sustainable financing and monitoring framework.



2. Digital Platform for Climate Action

The creation of a National ACE Information and Engagement Platform is recommended to increase transparency, visibility, and civil society engagement. Designed as a digital public platform and hosted by the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE), it would enable environmental NGOs, youth groups, educators, and municipalities to upload, share, and report on climate-related activities. This platform would serve as both a national repository of good practices and a reporting tool to support the monitoring of Albania's ACE implementation.



3. Integration of Climate Literacy in Education

In partnership with relevant actors, the Ministry of Education and Sports should lead a full integration of climate education into both formal and non-formal education systems. This includes revising curricula, developing national teaching materials, and institutionalizing teacher training on sustainability topics. At the same time, informal learning, through youth-led initiatives, community programs, and digital tools, should be scaled up, especially in rural and most-affected areas.



Background and Context

Like its neighbours in the Western Balkans, Albania is increasingly vulnerable to the diverse impacts of climate change, including rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and environmental degradation.

Like all countries that have ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, Albania has a clear obligation to ensure that its citizens are educated, informed, capable, and empowered to participate in decision-making and the implementation of climate action measures. This obligation under the UNFCCC¹ is referred to as “Action for Climate Empowerment” (ACE).

Findings from a nationwide questionnaire² and a civil society focus group³ underscore the significance of ACE in Albania. Respondents generally agree that ACE is crucial in the Albanian context, particularly in light of increasing climate impacts and a lack of broad public awareness. Many respondents highlighted that awareness of climate change and its impacts remains confined to specific professional or activist circles, with the broader population still uninformed or apathetic.

ACE encompasses six priority elements: climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation, access to information, and international cooperation. These components are essential for equipping individuals and communities with the knowledge, skills, and agency to actively engage in climate action and policy processes.

Over the past decade, Albania has integrated some ACE elements into national strategies and legal instruments, including the Law on Climate Change (No. 155/2020, the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 2021), and the National Adaptation Plan (NAP). These documents are part of the government’s formal commitment to public engagement, inclusive policy-making, and educational reform in line with global climate objectives. The National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) further highlights the importance of building institutional capacities and ensuring active public engagement.

Nevertheless, implementation on the ground remains fragmented and often ad hoc, particularly with respect to cross-sectoral coordination and long-term institutionalisation. Although different laws and national strategies exist, there are significant gaps in practice, especially at the local level and among vulnerable groups affected most by climate change.

Climate change education is partly incorporated into formal curricula through subjects such as biology, geography, and civic education. A few universities, notably the Agricultural University of Tirana, offer specialised courses in environmental policy and adaptation. However, there is a notable

1 Formalised in Article 6 of the UNFCCC and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement.

2 During the implementation of the project a Questionnaire for the Assessment of the Implementation of ACE Framework in Albania was distributed. This questionnaire aimed to identify and categorize the key actors involved in the implementation of ACE elements in Albania, as well as to evaluate their current contributions to advancing climate education, public awareness, participation, training, access to information, and international cooperation.

3 During the implantation of the project a focus group was organized with climate organizations and activists in Albania with the aim of discussing and exchanging ideas on the challenges and priorities of implementing the ACE framework.

absence of dedicated degree programs, and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is yet to be mainstreamed from the early grades (primary) through to high school (secondary). Pedagogical approaches remain largely traditional, with limited interdisciplinary content and insufficient training for educators on sustainability themes.

Training and capacity-building initiatives, though present in various policy frameworks, tend to be donor-driven, inconsistent, and lacking institutional continuity. While the Ministry of Tourism and Environment has initiated certain efforts, including assessments and localised capacity building initiatives, there is no national curriculum or certification framework for climate training. Municipalities, which often operate on limited technical and financial resources, face difficulty in building internal capacities to address climate-related planning and action.

Public awareness efforts often include short-term campaigns, such as the Climate Week initiative in Albania, which coincides with the Conference of the Parties (COP). This initiative is largely supported by international donors and implemented in partnership with public institutions.

Public participation is a legally guaranteed right under both the Aarhus Convention, which the country has ratified, and Albanian legislation, particularly Law No. 10431/2011 “On Environmental Protection” and Law No. 119/2014 “On the Right to Information.” Ministries are required to conduct stakeholder consultations when drafting climate policies. However, sometimes participation remains procedural rather than impactful. Survey respondents and focus group participants have highlighted limited inclusion of civil society and marginalised groups, as well as the absence of mechanisms that ensure follow-up or accountability in consultation processes.

Access to information is formally protected by national law, and Albania’s National Environmental Agency manages a platform to disseminate environmental data. In practice, however, these resources are often difficult to access, hard for the general population to understand, and not designed with the user in mind. Tailored information for local communities, farmers, and small businesses is largely lacking, as is the digital infrastructure in rural areas that would enable wider public access to data.

International cooperation is relatively strong, with Albania participating in several regional and EU-funded programs focused on climate adaptation and education. Different projects have contributed to curriculum development and institutional partnerships. Nonetheless, outputs from international initiatives are rarely institutionalised, which limits their transformative impact.

In the data gathered from the questionnaire and the focus group, education, training, and awareness were the most commonly cited ACE elements implemented by civil society groups, often through workshops, campaigns, and local engagement. However, public participation and access to information were identified as the least developed elements. NGOs and community actors frequently emphasised bureaucratic hurdles, inconsistent institutional support, and a lack of strategic alignment between government and grassroots initiatives.

Moreover, the coordination among actors, across government tiers and between institutions and civil society results in fragmentation. ACE-related initiatives are often short-term, project-based, and dependent on external funding. The absence of a central monitoring mechanism for ACE compounds this challenge further.

Albania needs a
dedicated ACE Strategy
with a coordinating
mechanism and
long-term vision.

This RIFS Policy Paper was prepared by Deborah Lika, Affiliate Scholar at the institute, as part of the project “Situation Analysis of ACE Implementation in Albania: Building a Policy Roadmap”

This RIFS Policy Paper should be cited as:
D. Lika. (2025). Policy Recommendations for Effective Climate Action in Albania, RIFS Policy Paper.



Key issues and urgent needs for advancing ACE in Albania

Identified through a nationwide questionnaire and a civil society focus group, these priority areas reflect the most pressing barriers and opportunities for implementing effective Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) in Albania.

- Fragmentation of efforts and lack of strategic coordination
- Limited institutional capacity and political ownership
- Inadequate integration of climate education
- Insufficient public awareness and information access
- Limited public engagement
- Lack of sustainable financing and monitoring systems

Urgent needs

- A national ACE strategy or action plan
- Dedicated institutional structures and inter-ministerial cooperation
- Systematic integration of climate education
- Sustainable financing mechanisms
- Targeted public awareness initiatives
- Strengthened mechanisms for public participation
- A national ACE monitoring and evaluation framework

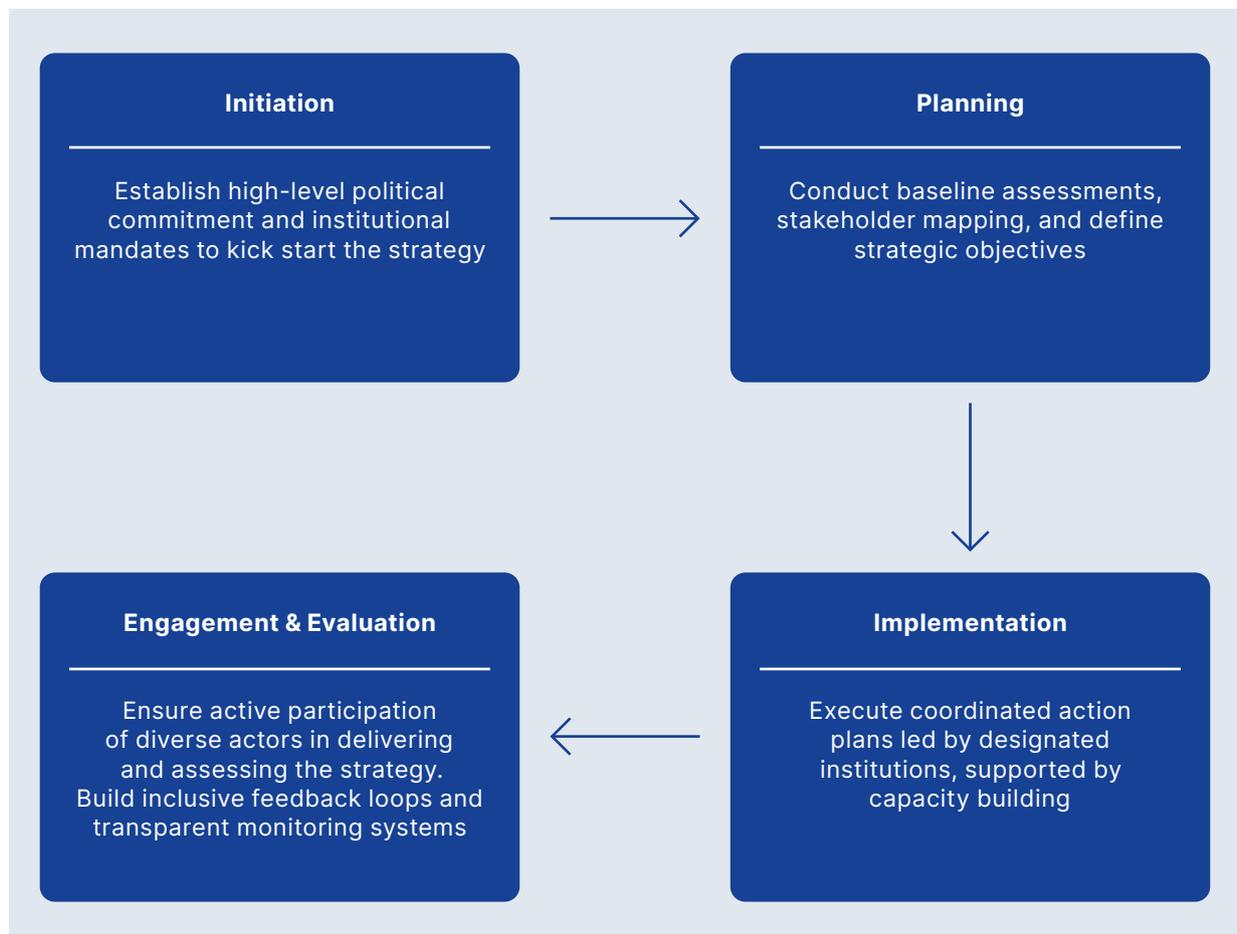
In light of the identified challenges and systemic gaps, this policy paper proposes three strategic and actionable recommendations to strengthen the implementation of ACE in Albania. These recommendations are aligned with international best practices, grounded in the national context, and designed to promote a whole-of-society approach to climate empowerment.

1. Develop and Adopt a National ACE Strategy With a Dedicated Coordination Mechanism



A foundational step for an effective implementation of ACE in Albania is the development of a comprehensive, stand-alone National ACE Strategy or ACE Action Plan.

This strategy should be aligned with Article 12 of the Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Work Programme on ACE, while also tailored to Albania's specific institutional, educational, and socio-cultural context. The strategy should articulate a long-term vision for ACE and translate it into a coherent framework with clear goals, cross-cutting principles (e.g., inclusion, equity, transparency), and measurable outcomes across all six ACE elements: education, training, public awareness, public participation, access to information, and international cooperation.



Key components and actions for a national ACE strategy

A national ACE baseline assessment is needed to identify gaps, stakeholder needs, existing good practices, and the general knowledge that Albanian citizens have about climate change and environmental issues. Experiences from other countries show that such assessments are most effective when they actively involve civil society, youth groups, educators, local governments, and vulnerable communities and are tailored to specific groups. This baseline assessment is important in providing a clear picture of where Albania currently stands in implementing the six ACE elements and should identify existing strengths, institutional gaps, stakeholder needs, and promising practices. In order for this process to be effective and to promote stakeholder ownership and trust it should be designed in a participatory and inclusive way by engaging civil society.

Within the national strategy, each ACE element should be implemented through specific objectives, supported by concrete actions, defined target groups, clear timelines, and measurable performance indicators aligned with Albania's legal, institutional, and socio-cultural context. For example:

ACE Element	Strategic Objective	Target Groups	Timeline	Performance Indicators
Education	Integrate climate change and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across pre-university curricula and teaching practices	Students (grades 1–12), teachers, and education planners	Medium-term (3–5 years)	% of schools implementing revised climate content; # of trained educators
Training	Build capacity of public officials, educators, and professionals in climate-related fields	Civil servants, teachers, journalists, local government	Medium to long-term (3–8 years)	# of trainees certified; # of institutions offering climate training
Public Awareness	Increase public understanding of climate change impacts and responses	General public, rural communities, youth, media	Medium-term (2–5 years)	Reach of campaigns; % increase in climate literacy (survey-based)
Public Participation	Enable inclusive and structured public input in climate policy-making	Civil society organisations, youth, women, local communities	Medium-term (3–5 years)	# of consultations held; diversity of participants; documented policy inputs
Access to Information	Improve access to timely, accurate, and user-friendly climate data and resources	Farmers, students, educators, local authorities	Medium-term (2–4 years)	# of users accessing digital platforms; satisfaction ratings; data update frequency
International Cooperation	Strengthen engagement with regional and global ACE initiatives and partners	Government institutions, academia, NGOs	Long-term (5–10 years)	# of international projects; participation in ACE networks; resources mobilised

To ensure effective implementation, Albania should strengthen the role of the ACE focal point within the Ministry of Tourism and Environment by integrating ACE responsibilities into the existing Climate Change Unit. This would support operational aspects of ACE implementation, including reporting, activity coordination, monitoring, and follow-up on national and international initiatives under the UNFCCC. While Albania currently has an officially designated ACE focal point under the UNFCCC, this role has not been actively fulfilled. Institutionalizing support through a focused and well-resourced mechanism within the Climate Change Unit would enhance continuity, accountability, and implementation capacity.

For ACE implementation to be effective it should be mainstreamed across all relevant sectors. A formal coordination group or task force could be created to ensure this occurs. The group should include representatives from the Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Youth, and other relevant institutions. Its role would be to align policies, jointly plan and budget for ACE actions, and regularly review progress. The group may include working clusters focused on education, youth engagement, digital access to information, and capacity-building, and should involve experts, practitioners, and civil society representatives. The ACE Strategy should be integrated with Albania's broader climate policy instruments, such as the updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), and the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP), to ensure policy alignment and leverage cross-sectoral synergies.

Financing and resource mobilisation planning

For the ACE Strategy to be effective and sustainable, it must be supported by a dedicated and realistic financing and resource mobilisation plan. This plan should be an integral part of the strategy and should outline how resources will be secured, allocated, and monitored across the six ACE elements.

The strategy should identify specific budget lines for ACE activities within relevant ministries, particularly the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE), Ministry of Education and Sports, and Ministry of Economy, Culture, and Innovation. This includes budgeting for education reform, public awareness campaigns, training programs, and digital infrastructure to support access to information. Integrating ACE-related costs into sectoral budgets will ensure long-term institutional commitment and reduce reliance on short-term, project-based interventions.

In addition to public funding, the strategy should establish a framework for engaging donor agencies, multilateral organisations, and international climate finance mechanisms. For example, Albania could align ACE priorities with existing support under the EU Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, UNDP programs, or the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The ACE coordination unit should be tasked with identifying funding opportunities, supporting project development, and maintaining coordination with donors to ensure alignment and complementarity.

The strategy should also explore ways to engage the private sector, both as a funding source and an implementation partner. Businesses, particularly in tourism, agriculture, and technology, could support ACE through public-private partnerships (PPPs), corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, or co-financed education and training efforts. Incentives such as recognition schemes or green tax benefits could be considered to foster engagement.

Resource mobilisation should include not only financial capital but also in-kind contributions, knowledge exchange, and human resources. Partnerships with universities, media, NGOs, and community organisations can broaden the reach and impact of ACE initiatives, particularly at the local level.

Finally, the financing plan should include mechanisms for transparency and accountability, such as annual financial reporting, public disclosure of funding sources, and periodic reviews.

1. Albania requires a dedicated national strategy on ACE that is supported by a clear coordination mechanism and underpinned by a long-term strategic vision.

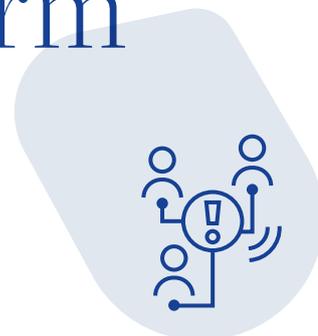
2. The National ACE Strategy should be developed in alignment with the six core elements of ACE and reinforced by strong institutional commitment.

3. The establishment of a digital ACE platform would significantly strengthen transparency, accountability, and public engagement.

4. For the platform to achieve its intended impact, civil society actors should be actively involved in its co-design, implementation, and use.

A National ACE Strategy should align with the UNFCCC's six ACE elements and include strong institutional backing.

2. Create a National ACE Information and Engagement Platform for Civil Society



A key recommendation to enhance coordination, transparency, and grassroots involvement in Albania's ACE implementation is the development of a publicly accessible, interactive digital platform dedicated to ACE and its six elements.

This platform should be designed and managed by the Ministry of Tourism and Environment in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports, the National Environmental Agency, and key representatives from civil society and academia. Its core purpose would be to provide a space where environmental NGOs, youth groups, educators, municipalities, and community organisations can upload, showcase, and report on their climate-related education, awareness, and engagement activities.

Currently, civil society efforts in Albania are often fragmented, undocumented, and disconnected from national climate reporting or policy dialogue. This platform would serve as a much-needed bridge between bottom-up action and top-down planning, allowing civil society to be seen, supported, and systematically included in the country's ACE agenda. In line with experiences from other countries, this tool could significantly improve national visibility and coordination of non-state contributions to ACE.

A digital ACE platform would boost transparency and civil society engagement.

The platform should be designed to be intuitive and accessible, ensuring usability for local actors with varying levels of digital literacy. Key features could include:

- A submission portal where registered civil society actors can log their activities, upload reports, share event outcomes, or tag ongoing campaigns under the six elements of ACE;
- A calendar of upcoming events (e.g., workshops, consultations, awareness campaigns, training sessions), open to both contributors and the public;
- A digital resource library where users can download toolkits, training modules, infographics, climate data, and relevant legislation;
- A map of climate actors, organised by region, theme, or ACE focus area, to facilitate access to relevant information and help prevent duplication;
- Optional reporting templates that can be used for voluntary contributions to national ACE tracking or annual reviews and international reports.

To ensure quality control and accountability, the platform should be managed by a technical team within the MTE, with support from a multi-stakeholder advisory group comprised of NGO coalitions, youth-led organisations, university representatives, and municipal actors. This group would participate in co-designing the platform's content structure, maintaining

transparency, and offering regular feedback to ensure the system remains relevant and inclusive.

Guidelines on how to register activities and engage with the tool should be developed in consultation with civil society to ensure ownership and ease of use. The government should also invest in capacity-building efforts to support civil society in using the platform. This includes online and in-person training sessions, targeted outreach in rural areas, and user guides to ensure equitable participation. The platform should also be promoted through national media, climate weeks, donor networks, and education systems to raise awareness about its purpose and benefits.

However, this platform should not be limited to information sharing; it must also serve as a reporting and engagement tool. Data collected through this system can feed directly into the monitoring and evaluation that should be detailed within the ACE Strategy. The goal should be to track non-governmental contributions, identify regional gaps, and build a more complete picture of ACE implementation in the country. This also aligns with international climate transparency goals under the UNFCCC and will strengthen Albania's reporting.

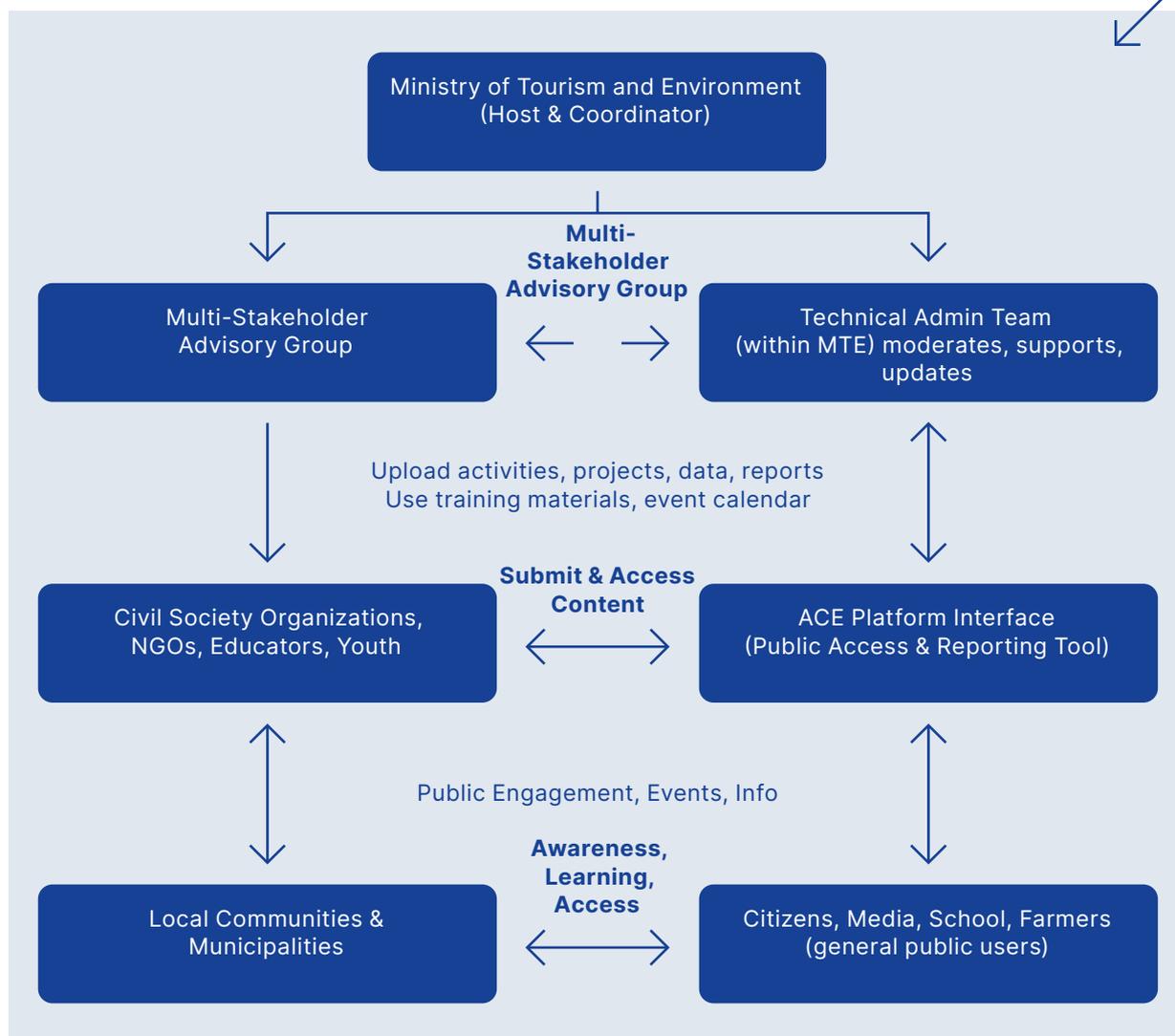
In order for it to be sustainable and ongoing, the platform should be institutionalised within the ACE coordination unit proposed under the ACE Strategy, and its development and maintenance should be supported through dedicated national budget allocations and, where possible, donor funding. This would mark a significant step toward democratizing climate action, recognizing grassroots leadership, and embedding participation and transparency at the core of ACE implementation.

From integrating climate education in schools to enabling public participation and transparent information-sharing, Albania faces the urgent task of turning climate awareness into action. As institutions, civil society, and local actors move to align with international climate commitments, multiple interests, capacities, and gaps emerge in the process. How can Albania build a coherent and inclusive approach to Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE), in alignment with the ACE work programme of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)? What barriers still hinder implementation, and what practical steps can bridge the divide?

One-way arrows indicate responsibility or access without direct feedback. For example: the general public accesses information but doesn't manage or update the system.

Two-way arrows indicate continuous interaction, collaboration, or accountability. For example: civil society contributes to and benefits from the platform by making them both users and contributors.

Downward arrows indicate delegation or oversight from a higher-level institution (like MTE) to technical or implementing bodies.



3. Systematically Integrate Climate Education into the Formal and Non-Formal Education Systems



The integration of climate change education into Albania's formal and non-formal education systems is essential for fostering a climate-literate and proactive society.

This requires a comprehensive, long-term reform of national curricula at all levels, from primary to tertiary education embedding climate change, environmental sustainability, and resilience as cross-cutting themes across subjects such as science, geography, civics, arts, and technology. The Ministry of Education and Sports, in close coordination with the Ministry of Tourism and Environment, should lead the development of standardised, age-appropriate, and competency-based educational modules. In addition to increasing awareness of environmental risks and vulnerabilities, climate education should promote positive narratives and empowering visions for the future. Students should be encouraged to view climate action not only as a necessity, but also as an opportunity to create healthier communities, cleaner environments, and more inclusive economies. Lessons should feature local and global success stories, highlight green career pathways, and introduce practical, solution-oriented approaches that can be related to clean energy, sustainable agriculture, and nature-based solutions that contribute to an improved quality of life. These modules should reflect Albania's specific environmental realities and socio-economic vulnerabilities such as hydro-meteorological risks, biodiversity loss, and tourism-related emissions, and be supported by accessible, teacher-friendly pedagogical materials and digital resources. Concrete actions should include:

- Revising the current national curriculum to integrate climate-related content in a structured and interdisciplinary way across all grades, ensuring progression of learning outcomes from basic environmental awareness in early education to more complex systems thinking and climate solutions in upper secondary education.
- Developing national climate education toolkits and lesson plans, co-created with curriculum developers, teachers, and environmental education experts. These resources should be freely available online, piloted in diverse school settings, and adaptable to local contexts.
- Integrating climate content into national textbooks and exam systems to institutionalise its importance and ensure consistent teaching and assessment across schools.

Civil society must co-design and actively use the ACE platform for it to be impactful.

Pre-service and in-service teacher training should be central to this reform. Universities and teacher training institutes should incorporate mandatory modules on environmental education, participatory teaching strategies, and interdisciplinary instruction into existing education programmes. Professional development should be continuous, supported by:

- Training-of-trainers (ToT) programmes, developed in partnership with experienced NGOs, universities, and international agencies (e.g. UNESCO, UNDP, EU Green Agenda);
- National or regional climate education workshops and certification programmes for in-service teachers and school administrators.

At the tertiary level, universities should be incentivised to:

- Create interdisciplinary degree or certificate programmes in climate policy, environmental law, adaptation planning, or sustainable development;
- Support applied student research, climate innovation hubs, and green initiatives that involve students in practical sustainability activities;
- Establish partnerships with municipalities, businesses, and NGOs to link academic knowledge with real-world climate challenges.

Parallel to reforms in the formal education system, non-formal education initiatives must be significantly expanded and institutionalised as part of the national ACE Strategy. These could include:

- Youth-led climate initiatives, including youth academies, environmental clubs, and national competitions that raise awareness and promote action;
- Community-based learning programmes implemented by municipalities, CSOs, or youth centres, with a focus on practical environmental stewardship (e.g., waste reduction, reforestation, water management);
- Mobile education units or digital outreach tools targeting rural, minority, or underserved populations.

To support implementation at scale, the government should establish a dedicated budget line for climate education at the Ministry of Education and Sports. Financial incentives should be provided to schools or institutions that innovate in climate teaching, participate in pilot programmes, or engage affected communities. A national recognition or award scheme (e.g. "Green School of the Year") could encourage wide participation.

Climate education initiatives must be integrated into broader national policy frameworks, including the ACE Strategy, updated NDCs, and the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan. Monitoring indicators should track the number of trained educators, the extent of curriculum integration, the reach of non-formal programmes, and students' understanding of climate topics. In doing so, we can ensure that education is not only a policy instrument but a long-term lever for social transformation and climate resilience.

This policy paper synthesizes key findings and presents actionable recommendations for how Albania can design and institutionalize a context-specific ACE strategy that empowers citizens, strengthens institutions, and fosters long-term climate resilience.



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project, Situation Analysis of ACE Implementation in Albania: Building a Policy Roadmap is funded by the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt as part of the Small Grants for Alumni of the CEE Fellowship.

This project is being implemented in Albania through the United Nations Association Albania, an NGO that works to strengthen informed policymaking, foster public participation and youth engagement, and to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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The Research Institute for Sustainability (RIFS) conducts research with the goal of understanding, advancing, and guiding processes of societal change towards sustainable development in Germany and abroad. The Institute is embedded within the GFZ Helmholtz Centre for Geosciences and is thus part of the Helmholtz Association. Its research approach is transdisciplinary, transformative, and co-creative: RIFS cooperates with partners in science, political and administrative institutions, the business community, and civil society to understand the problems of sustainable development, identify appropriate solutions, and support their implementation in cooperation with relevant actors and affected communities. Its central research topics include the energy transition, climate change and socio-technical transformations, as well as sustainable governance and participation. A strong network of national and international partners and a Fellow Programme support the work of the Institute.

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ViSdP:

Prof. Dr. Doris Fuchs,
Scientific Director, Speaker

Editor:

Damian Harrison

Layout:

Studio von Fuchs und Lommatzsch

DOI:

10.48481/rifs.2025.034