



RETOOL

Strengthening Democratic
Governance for Climate Transitions

RETOOL Project Newsletter 6th Issue

As the RETOOL project is near its end, our journey of research and dialogue has contributed in reshaping conversations around climate democracy. Throughout this project, we have explored new perspectives across key domains, deepening our understanding of how democratic governance connects with the urgent demands of the climate imperative.

With most of our research now complete, our focus turns to sharing these final insights and frameworks designed to strengthen democratic governance across Europe. Stay tuned for our upcoming newsletter issues focused on our final findings, key takeaways and the lasting impact of our project.

NEW RESEARCH

The Electoral Politics of Climate Change in Europe

Climate-related hazards and issue attention to climate policy in the European Parliament

Aron Buzogány , Mihail Chiru  & Vlad Surdea-Hernea 

Published online: 28 Jul 2026

 Cite this article  <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2026.2702599>



[Climate-related hazards and issue attention to climate policy in the European Parliament](#)

The European Parliament is often portrayed as an environmental champion, but until now, we have known little about what drives individual legislators' attention to climate policy. This article examines whether MEPs are responsive to climate-related hazards in their constituencies by matching climatological data from the subnational electoral districts of MEPs across five Member States with their issue attention to climate change during the 2004–2024 terms.

The study reveals that extreme heat episodes, wet spells and temperature anomalies in an MEP's constituency are indeed associated with increased parliamentary attention to climate change. However, further analyses suggest these findings are driven primarily by cross-country differences rather than within-country temporal variation. Additionally, contrary to expectations in previous party politics scholarship, the research finds no evidence that the effect of climate hazards is conditioned by MEPs' party positions on the environment.

Human Rights and the Paris Agreement: A Two-Way Street

In: [Climate Law](#)

Authors: [Prof Annalisa Savaresi](#)  and [Corina Heri](#) 

Online Publication Date: 15 Jul 2026

[Human Rights and the Paris Agreement: A Two-Way Street](#)

This article examines the evolving relationship between the Paris Agreement and human rights law, focusing on the dynamic interaction between these two regimes. The study argues that human rights norms increasingly inform the interpretation, enforcement, and implementation of the climate regime, while the Paris Agreement functions as an interpretive, evidentiary, and accountability framework within human rights law and practice.

It analyses how human rights considerations have been incorporated into the Paris Agreement through its preamble, operational provisions, and subsequent treaty body practice, particularly in areas concerning participation, transparency, safeguards, and just transition. It further examines how courts and other human rights oversight mechanisms have relied on the Paris Agreement's temperature goals, governance structures, reporting mechanisms, and mitigation pathways when assessing states' obligations.

Drawing on text analysis alongside institutional and judicial practice, the authors assess the interaction between the climate and human rights regimes. They demonstrate that cross-fertilisation between the two regimes remains partial, selective, and contested, reflecting continuing tensions concerning accountability, institutional competence, state sovereignty, and the limits of adjudication. Ultimately, the article concludes that the relationship between the Paris Agreement and human rights law is best understood as an evolving process of reciprocal interpretive and institutional reinforcement.



NEW DELIVERABLES

[Participation and deliberation in EU climate governance](#)

Public participation and deliberation are key to creating effective, legitimate, and socially acceptable climate policy. In this new RETOOL report, we map and assess 15 participatory and deliberative mechanisms across the EU and national levels, evaluating them against academic literature, human rights law, and the 1998 Aarhus Convention across nine key dimensions including accessibility, transparency, accountability, and policy impact.

While the EU boasts a wide array of climate participation tools, their uneven quality leaves significant room for improvement. The report identifies five primary challenges: imbalanced representation, implementation gaps, limited impact and transparency, low public visibility, and a lack of deliberation across governance levels. To overcome these hurdles, we outline an agenda for action to strengthen standards, empower civil society, and institutionalize deliberation across Europe.

[Public participation in EU climate governance: Examining the National Energy and Climate Plans & National Long-term Strategies](#)

Well-designed public participation is key to effective, widely accepted climate governance. In our new report, we evaluate the quality of public participation during the development of EU National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP) and National Long-term Strategies (LTS).

Analyzing 106 NECPs and 26 LTSs across four key dimensions—inclusiveness, deliberative quality, policy impact, and transparency—our study reveals significant variations in quality across Member States and over time. Deep-dive case studies in Germany, France, Sweden, and Slovenia highlight how pre-existing national frameworks influence engagement, showing that NECPs are frequently sidelined in broader national policy-making.

By introducing a novel framework to assess participation quality and institutionalisation, this deliverable expands the empirical scope of EU climate governance research.

[The Impact of Deliberative Participation in Central and Eastern Europe: Learnings from Estonia and Poland](#)

How do deliberative mini-publics influence climate action and democratic governance in Central and Eastern Europe? Our latest report answers this by evaluating climate assemblies and citizen dialogues in Estonia (Tartu, Tallinn, and the national *Arvamusrännak*) and Poland (*Civic Council on Energy Costs*).

Using a combined framework from RETOOL and KNOCA alongside 26 semi-structured interviews, the study finds that deliberative processes excel at building capacity and changing political concepts, though direct policy implementation remains harder to secure. The research highlights a key structural tension: deliberation is most feasible at the local level where political authority for systemic change is limited, but hardest to sustain at the national level where impact could be greatest.

The findings provide valuable lessons on political accountability and show how post-1989 democratic transition legacies shape conditions for climate governance innovation.

POLICY BRIEFS



Policy Brief | July 2026

Keeping Climate Commitments under Parliamentary Control: Strengthening national parliaments for climate governance in the European Union

By Aron Buzogány, Vlad Surdea-Hernea, Alice Brawley-Chesworth and Maiu Lauring



Funded by
the European Union

[Keeping Climate Commitments under Parliamentary Control: Strengthening national parliaments for climate governance in the European Union](#)

National parliamentary debate on climate change has expanded dramatically from under 2% of statements in the early 2000s to over 10% by 2020. However, the tone, analytical depth, and institutional oversight capacity remain highly fragmented across Europe. To bridge this gap, parliaments are turning to democratic innovations across four distinct pillars: commitment mechanisms like framework laws and sectoral

targets, extended oversight mechanisms, independent expert information channels, and direct citizen participatory pathways. Despite these innovations, structural implementation across EU member states remains deeply uneven. While eleven member states possess comprehensive climate framework laws, only five enforce sector-differentiated targets. Seven rely on total emission budgets, five integrate green-budgeting provisions into their core architecture, and eighteen maintain advisory bodies with widely diverging mandates and financial resources. Strengthening national climate governance requires a comprehensive approach across seven core priorities: connecting parliamentary climate innovations into a cohesive portfolio, converting long-term targets into traceable milestones, embedding climate scrutiny into routine legislative cycles, securing independent analytical expertise, establishing clear pathways for public input, aligning accountability directly with administrative authority, and leveraging inter-parliamentary networks for cross-border peer learning. Ultimately, these democratic innovations will only strengthen climate governance if they transition from extraordinary measures into the everyday, cross-party routine of parliamentary work.



[Policy Brief: Separating the Technical from the Political: The Use of Delegated and Implementing Acts in EU Climate Policy and Implications for Democracy.](#)

We carried out an in-depth analysis of the use of delegated and implementing acts in the EU over time, both in general and in climate policy, and reflected on their democratic role. Our analysis shows that while delegated and implementing acts are

an efficient motor of EU climate policy development, they also contain deficiencies in terms of accountability, representation, knowledge, and participation.

In this policy brief, we highlight our key findings and outline policy lessons to ensure that delegated and implementing acts do not pose risks to the democratic quality of EU climate policy.

Contact us

Send us an email for any questions or to express interest in the RETOOL research.

[send email](#)

Stay in Touch



retoolproject.bsky



retool-project



retool.project



The RETOOL project has received funding from the European Union's HORIZON EUROPE Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No [101132661](#).

You received this email because you expressed your interest in getting informed on RETOOL news via our online subscription form, or meeting us in an event, or via e-mail.

If you are no longer interested in receiving our news you may [Unsubscribe](#)

