



Operationalising Resilience in Climate Action (ORICA)

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What did this research aim to address?

The Operationalising Resilience in Irish Climate Action project aimed to strengthen Ireland's ability to build climate resilience by examining how resilience is currently framed and put into practice across national, sectoral and local adaptation policies. As Ireland continues to scale up its climate action, developing a shared understanding of resilience is essential to support effective planning and help practitioners deliver meaningful outcomes for communities. This work is important for policymakers, local authorities, state agencies and communities, who are increasingly involved in adaptation decision-making. A clear and coherent approach to resilience can enhance coordination and help make adaptation more effective and equitable. The project adopted an innovative mixed-methods approach that combined detailed analysis of national and local policies, systematic mapping of adaptation actions, and engagement with practitioners, particularly in the water sector. This integrated perspective allowed the research to assess resilience across multiple governance levels and identify opportunities to enhance implementation. The approach is novel in its focus on both the evolution of policy and the practical experience of those implementing it.

What did this research find?

The research found that Ireland has made steady progress in integrating resilience into climate adaptation policy, with newer national frameworks placing greater emphasis on long-term planning, governance and equity. Stakeholder interviews with practitioners in government, local authorities and the water sector reinforced this, highlighting a growing awareness of resilience and a genuine willingness to improve adaptation practice.

At the same time, interviews highlighted several challenges that limit how effectively resilience is being put into action. Many practitioners reported that resilience is defined differently across national, sectoral and local plans, making it difficult to align work and measure progress. They also described capacity pressures – such as limited staff, competing responsibilities and short-term funding – as major barriers to moving from planning to concrete implementation. Fragmented governance structures can lead to duplication of effort or uncertainty about roles. Despite these hurdles, stakeholders pointed to real strengths: local authorities are emerging as important drivers of community-focused and nature-based adaptation, and national policy is evolving in ways that can support more coherent action. Overall, the findings suggest that, while strong foundations are in place, clearer guidance, better coordination and sustained investment are needed to fully operationalise resilience across Ireland.

How can the research findings be used?

The research offers practical guidance on how Ireland can build on recent progress and strengthen its approach to climate resilience. Policymakers can use the findings to refine future versions of the National Adaptation Framework and sectoral plans by providing clearer definitions, setting measurable resilience targets and improving consistency across documents. This would help practitioners understand what resilience looks like in practice and how best to deliver it. Local authorities can draw on the results to support ongoing community engagement, expand nature-based solutions and build on their emerging strengths as leaders of place-based adaptation. The study also highlights the importance of long-term investment and sustained staffing to ensure that planning efforts translate into action on the ground. National and local bodies can use the insights to improve coordination, streamline responsibilities and develop shared tools or guidance that make implementation easier. The findings also point to opportunities for deeper public engagement and more collaborative decision-making. Future work could focus on monitoring adaptation outcomes and exploring resilience in other sectors. Overall, the research provides a foundation for more coherent, practical and people-centred climate adaptation across Ireland.

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