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Holding the line?

How European climate advisory bodies are navigating political contestation

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Policy report

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Summary

Climate advisory bodies or climate councils have become a cornerstone of climate governance across Europe, but rising political contestation around climate change is reshaping the political environment in which they operate. This report examines how four of Europe's earliest established climate advisory bodies – in the UK, Ireland, Sweden and Finland – are experiencing, and responding to, this changing political environment. It draws on 23 semi-structured stakeholder interviews conducted by the authors and a content analysis of UK parliamentary debates.

The conditions supporting ambitious and urgent climate action in many places around the world have deteriorated. The political consensus on this issue has shifted across much of Europe, creating shared challenges for climate advisory bodies, which play out differently from country to country. As important bridges between science and policy, climate advisory bodies are impacted by this shift, but our understanding of exactly how has, until now, remained limited.

Challenges for climate advisory bodies include declining political interest in climate change, compounded by growing polarisation, rising distrust in science, misinformation and organised opposition from incumbent industries. Sometimes, as in the UK and Ireland, these challenges surface as climate advisory body advice being used selectively or set aside; sometimes, as in Sweden and Finland, they escalate into direct challenges to a body's authority or existence.

Strong public standing, including trust in science and the backing of a broad range of stakeholders, can help to safeguard the existence and relevance of climate advisory bodies. However, it is less effective in ensuring that climate advisory bodies continue to impact on climate governance. Where public standing runs short, the legal strength of a climate advisory body's mandate, the scope of its duties and the security of its resourcing become important. In the UK, the government has a statutory 'duty to respond' to advice from its advisory body. But even this has limits in an environment of political contestation. Meanwhile, Finland's advisory panel, despite having widespread public support, must apply each year for the budget to maintain its existence.

Climate advisory bodies are adapting how they engage, collaborate and communicate in a harder political climate, engaging with government through both public and private channels and broadening outreach across the political spectrum. In Sweden, for example, interviewees credited briefing individual parties, rather than government alone, with helping the body survive the Sweden Democrats' initial opposition. Some bodies are cultivating wider stakeholder ecosystems and publishing jointly with peer bodies, which lends shared credibility and generates media attention. They are also changing how they communicate, reframing climate advice around economic and security costs, and moving from a single annual report to rolling sectoral reviews with cross-sectoral summaries. To a lesser extent, they are engaging more with the public.

Mandate and resourcing are interlinked: a narrow mandate makes it harder to justify more resourcing, and thin resourcing makes it harder to argue for a broader mandate. Individual climate advisory bodies cannot solve their resourcing and mandate challenges alone. Their resilience to political contestation also depends on the design choices of the policymakers and legislators who set up and reform them, and on their wider ecosystem, in particular civil society.

Recommendations

Climate advisory bodies, subject to their mandate and resourcing permitting, should:

- Engage government through both formal public channels, such as published advice and responses to consultations, and informal private channels, such as bilateral meetings, briefings for ministers and their advisers. They should also widen their engagement, working with legislators across the political spectrum, not just those in government, and with parliamentary committees covering areas beyond the climate and the environment.

- Build their stakeholder ecosystems purposively, rather than defaulting to more ad hoc engagement, so that these actors can champion the body and its recommendations.
- Pursue joint publications with peer advisory bodies in adjacent areas of policy to extend the reach, relevance for the political debate and credibility of these publications. Where joint work is not feasible, highlight the findings of international bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change to show that other bodies have reached similar conclusions.
- Consider continuous, ongoing forms of communication, such as rolling or sectoral reviews combined with a cross-sectoral overview, rather than relying on one-off or annual reports.
- Reframe climate advice to include issues around economic and security costs, where appropriate, to engage audiences who may not respond to a climate change framing.
- Strengthen public engagement, including through in-person engagement beyond urban centres, lay summaries and press releases for the media targeting non-specialist audiences, and, where mandate and resourcing allow, explore the use of deliberative processes.
- Build and proactively publish evidence of the impact and cost-effectiveness of their own work rather than assembling it reactively, to build transparency and institutional resilience.
- Consider carefully bounded co-funding arrangements that preserve independence with technical, climate finance or research funding agencies, or philanthropy, as a partial buffer against politically driven budget cuts. Independent revenue streams through mechanisms such as emissions trading schemes could also be explored.

The wider ecosystem, including civil society and funders, should:

- Support climate advisory bodies in reaching audiences they cannot reach alone, recognising effective communication and collaboration is resource intensive.
- Use and build on the evidence and recommendations of climate advisory bodies in their own work, helping the advice to reach decision-makers and the public, so that advisory bodies can focus their limited capacity on independent analysis and/or avoid being drawn into political debates.
- Develop shared infrastructure, through networks such as the International Climate Councils Network, for pooling best practice and building evidence on the impact of advisory bodies.

Governments and policymakers should:

- Guarantee stable, multi-year funding for climate advisory bodies, rather than leaving resourcing to annual negotiation.
- Ensure that recruitment processes are open and competitive, rather than based solely on ministerial selection, to strengthen climate advisory bodies' independence and credibility.
- Strengthen the role of climate advisory bodies through a 'duty to act' mandate, so that government is required to propose corrective measures once a gap between targets and policy is identified, not simply to acknowledge it.
- Explicitly authorise and fund stakeholder and public engagement as core functions of climate advisory bodies, rather than leaving this to their discretion.
- Require parliamentary approval, rather than executive decision alone, for any proposal to restructure, merge or abolish an existing advisory body.

These recommendations are easiest to apply when a body is created or its founding legislation is reviewed, though they can also be applied retroactively to existing bodies through amendments to legislation.

1. Introduction

Over thirty European countries have either established a climate advisory institution or passed a law to create one. These advisory institutions generally take one of four forms: independent expert advisory bodies, 'in house' expert advisory bodies, stakeholder engagement platforms or stakeholder and/or ministerial roundtables (Evans and Duwe, 2021). In this report, we focus on independent expert advisory bodies, because they are the most common and their independence puts them in a particularly strong position to strengthen climate governance. Isolated from short-term political pressures, they have the potential to add a long-term perspective to policymaking and to depoliticise debates around climate change (Hale, 2024; Crowley and Head, 2017).

In total, 16 European countries, of which 14 are EU member states, now have operational independent expert advisory bodies on climate change (hereafter 'climate advisory bodies'), while Portugal and Spain have legislated to create one. Called by different names – councils, committees or panels – these bodies typically comprise experts from different backgrounds and are primarily tasked with providing independent scientific advice on climate policy.

Over time, climate advisory bodies have become a cornerstone of effective climate governance. While their form and function vary, most perform three key roles (Evans and Duwe, 2021):

- Advising government on climate targets and policy pathways, serving as a knowledge broker and, at times, a policy entrepreneur
- Monitoring and assessing the implementation of climate action against national targets and identifying gaps, serving as a watchdog that holds government accountable
- Engaging stakeholders and the public, including by publishing accessible summaries of progress on climate action, serving as a convenor that facilitates productive dialogue.

Where these bodies have had time to establish themselves, evidence of their contribution to climate governance is striking. The UK Climate Change Committee, for example, has helped to shape a ban on new petrol and diesel vehicles, the reform of electric markets and offshore wind expansion, green financing and flood policy (Elliott et al., 2021). Ireland's Climate Change Advisory Council, described as an "authoritative voice in the national climate debate", has helped to justify an increase in carbon taxation, inform the end of government subsidies for peat and coal, and enhance dialogue about the role of agriculture and land use in Ireland (Tallon et al., 2021, p.3). Finland's panel recommended the 2035 climate neutrality target in 2018 based on scientific analysis of fairness and feasibility, and this has subsequently been enshrined in the 2022 Climate Change Act (Kulovesi, 2022). More broadly, comparative research across Germany, Ireland and New Zealand identified climate advisory bodies as among the "most important institutions" created by national climate framework laws (Averchenkova et al., 2024).

However, the political environment in which climate advisory bodies operate in Europe is changing, illustrated by recent election results. In the 2024 European Parliament elections, left and centrist parties lost ground overall. This includes the Greens/European Free Alliance (EFA) group, which fell from 74 seats to 53 (partly reflecting the UK's departure from the EU), and the centrist Renew Europe. Meanwhile, the radical right and mainstream right parties gained seats, including parties critical of the EU's environmental agenda. The pro-environment majority that carried the European Green Deal no longer commands a majority (Hix et al., 2024; Pearson et al., 2024). Election results varied across countries, and polling suggests that support for the populist right was driven more by views on immigration and inflation than by environmental policy (Pearson et al., 2024). Nonetheless, conditions supporting ambitious climate action have deteriorated in other areas (Bocquillon, 2024): for example, large protests led by farming groups spread across more than a dozen EU countries between 2023 and 2024, prompting the EU to

withdraw or dilute several measures aligned with the Green Deal (Jones and Youngs, 2025; Matthews, 2025).

As important bridges between science and policy, climate advisory bodies are likely to have been impacted by this shift, but our understanding of exactly how has been limited. Little research has examined how these bodies experience, and respond to, growing political contestation. Given the central role these bodies have in climate governance, this report sets out to address this gap.

Report focus, data sources and structure

In this report, we focus on four climate advisory bodies: the Irish Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC), the UK Climate Change Committee (CCC), the Swedish Klimatpolitiska Rådet (Climate Policy Council) and the Finnish Ilmastopaneeli (Climate Change Panel). All four were among the first climate advisory bodies to be established in Europe:

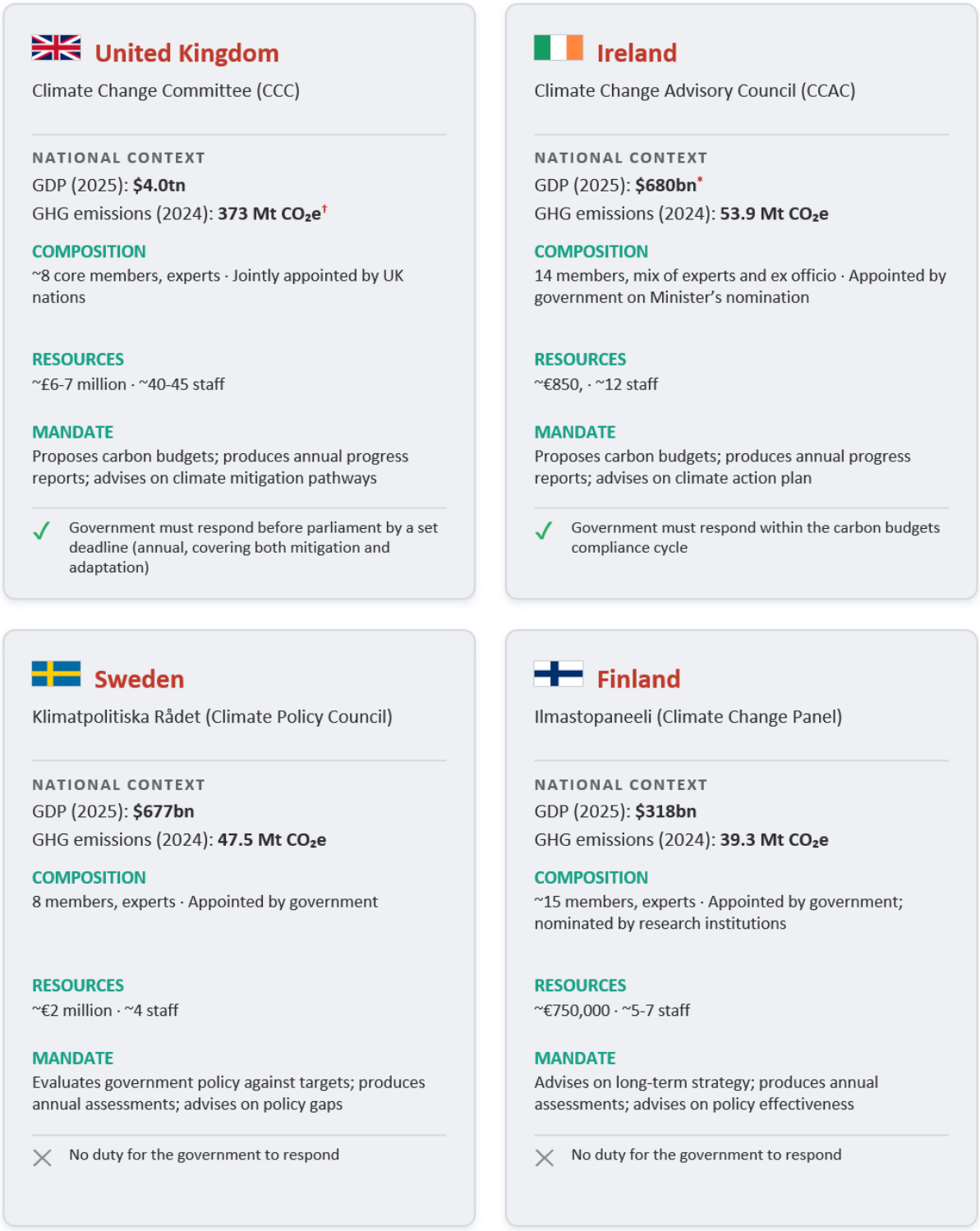
- The UK CCC was established under the Climate Change Act in 2008. It was the first statutory climate advisory body of its kind.
- The Irish CCAC was first established under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act (Ireland's Climate Act of 2015) in 2015, though its role was significantly amended by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.
- The Swedish Climate Policy Council was established in 2018 alongside Sweden's Climate Act, as part of the broader national climate policy framework adopted by the Swedish parliament in 2017.
- The Finnish Climate Change Panel has provided science-based climate policy advice since 2011, though its role was only formally defined in law with Finland's 2015 Climate Act, which was subsequently replaced by a new Climate Act in 2022.

Figure 1.1 shows the key similarities and differences between the four climate advisory bodies.

In this report, we draw on two main sources of evidence. The first is a set of 23 semi-structured interviews conducted by the authors with members and secretariats of climate advisory bodies, academics, civil society actors, government actors and journalists, from Ireland, Sweden, Finland and beyond. The second is a content analysis of parliamentary references to the UK Climate Change Committee between 2019 and 2025, conducted by Averchenkova and Pabreja (forthcoming), extending an earlier study by Averchenkova et al. (2021) covering 2008–2018 to allow comparison over time. Full methodological detail is provided in the Appendix.

The remainder of this report is structured as follows. Section 2 examines the challenges facing climate advisory bodies in the UK, Ireland, Sweden and Finland amid intensifying political contestation around climate action, including issues related to cost, effectiveness and impact on the daily lives of citizens and the cost of living. Section 3 explores how climate advisory bodies in Europe and beyond are navigating this contestation in practice, and what limits their ability to do so. Section 4 concludes with policy recommendations for climate advisory bodies, the wider ecosystem that supports them, and the governments and policymakers that design these bodies.

Figure 1.1. Composition, resources and mandate: key features of the UK CCC, the Irish CCAC, the Swedish Klimatpolitiska Rådet and the Finnish Ilmastopaneeli



** Ireland's gross domestic product (GDP) is inflated by multinational accounting practices; modified gross national income (GNI), which excludes these effects, stood at approximately €322 billion in 2024. See Central Statistics Office of Ireland. † UK figure includes land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF); Ireland, Sweden and Finland figures exclude LULUCF.*

Sources: GDP – International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook (2025 estimates). Greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) – national statistics, 2024 (UK: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero; Ireland: Environmental Protection Agency; Sweden and Finland: National Inventory submissions to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change). Composition, resources and mandate – authors' analysis of public documents and responses from interviewees.

2. The challenges facing climate advisory bodies

The political consensus on climate action has shifted across much of Europe. In recent years, we have seen declining political interest in climate change (Crawley et al., 2022), increasing polarisation (Coffé et al., 2026), growing distrust in science, compounded by both misinformation and disinformation around climate change (Zapp, 2022; Sethi, 2024; Science Feedback, Data for Good and QuotaClimat 2026), and organised opposition from incumbent, emissions-intensive industries (Errichiello et al., 2025).

These political trends create similar challenges for climate advisory bodies across the UK, Ireland, Sweden and Finland even though national debates in each country have their own particular characteristics. In the following section, we show that the way in which each of these four climate advisory bodies experiences these challenges depends on political will, the public standing of the advisory body (its reputation as an independent and credible source of evidence, trust in science and the backing of a broad range of stakeholders), its resourcing and mandate.

Climate advisory bodies shape policy and hold governments to account, but their impact is uneven

Across the four climate advisory bodies examined in this report, the clearest evidence of impact concerns the content and scrutiny of climate policy and incorporation of climate considerations into related policy areas. In the UK, a content analysis of parliamentary debates between 2019 and 2025 (Averchenkova and Pabreja, forthcoming) shows the CCC acting in three roles at once:

- Policy entrepreneur: shaping 82 statutes and bills, including on topics beyond its statutory remit
- Watchdog: cited to assess government performance and help hold it accountable
- Legitimiser: cited to justify policy decisions, including backsliding.

The analysis shows substantial growth in references to the CCC in the parliamentary debates over time. But it also shows that a body designed, in part, to depoliticise the climate debate is itself becoming politicised when political contestation around climate action increases. The CCC's analysis shaped specific decisions. Its recognition of carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS) as "a necessity, not an option" (CCC, 2019, p. 23) was cited across party lines and directly shaped the UK's Net Zero Strategy deployment targets and the government's £22 billion commitment to CCUS (Averchenkova and Pabreja, forthcoming). In addition, the UK government followed the CCC's advice not to carry forward the UK's overachievement of its Third Carbon Budget, a decision that strengthened the credibility of the carbon budget framework (Averchenkova and Pabreja, forthcoming). Previous studies found that CCC's independent analysis is widely used by stakeholders due to its "analytical rigour, objectivity and evidence-based policy advice" (Averchenkova et al., 2018, p.5). In a subsequent paper, Averchenkova et al. (2021) argue that the CCC has contributed to making climate governance rigorous and evidence-based, and has helped to protect technical policymaking from political influence. However, the influence of the CCC has limits, and many of its proposals were not adopted. For example, the UK government objected to amendments, backed by CCC evidence, that would have made achieving net zero by 2050 a statutory duty of Ofgem, the independent regulator of gas and electricity (Averchenkova and Pabreja, forthcoming).

In Ireland, where the interviews focused most on impact, the most frequently cited effect of the CCAC was on carbon budgets, which one interviewee said make it an "intrinsic part of the policymaking process". Carbon budgets were also the most contested area of the CCAC's work. Interviewees pointed to CCAC recommendations on land use that fed into the government's Land Use Review (Oversight Group, 2026), and to a recommendation on electric vehicle grants for lower-income households that, while not taken up directly, contributed to a shift in policy. On accountability, interviewees highlighted the CCAC's annual reports and statements on

contentious issues, and the evidence base it provides to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and climate litigants, who, in one interviewee's words, "fasten on statements from the CCAC as a hammer". They also credited it with keeping climate change, including adaptation, on the political agenda. One interviewee argued that without the CCAC climate issues "would slip down the agenda even further", while another said it "holds a line" against green backlash. Interviewees were equally clear about the limits of the CCAC's impact. One estimated that between 30% and 50% of the CCAC's recommendations are properly followed through, while questioning whether this included "the big ones". Another summarised the situation as one in which "ambition is very high, but the implementation is very slow". Another interviewee said the CCAC prevents the government from "run[ning] free", but that there is still "a gap in accountability". The €26 billion cost estimate in the CCAC's joint report with the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council was "referenced everywhere for months", but interviewees said such reports are often "dismissed or... condensed into a single line", and that wider awareness of the CCAC and its work remains low.

For Finland and Sweden, where there is less previous research on advisory bodies, the evidence on impact is thinner. In Finland, an official evaluation found that the Panel's calculations and positions on the land-use carbon sink were the single most visible and most debated topic among stakeholders (Gaia Consulting Oy, 2023), which suggests that its analysis matters enough to be contested. In Sweden, Aarthun and Sundqvist (2025) found that the Climate Policy Council has become a point of reference in the national conversation on climate policy.

Declining political interest in climate change is narrowing the space in which these bodies can operate

Across all interviews, rising energy costs and geopolitical instability were repeatedly described as competing with climate change for political attention.

In Ireland, an academic described climate change as having become a "complete afterthought", following the exclusion of the Green Party, which had previously been in government, from the Fine Gael-Fianna Fáil coalition in January 2025. The Green Party lost 11 of its 12 seats in the November 2024 general election, in a campaign in which climate change did not feature prominently (Dwyer, 2024; Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2024). Interviewees also pointed to specific examples of resistance to climate action by the government as well as wider civil society. These included the delayed publication of the Climate Action Plan;[1] the move by government to disapply section 15 of Ireland's Climate Act of 2015, which requires[2] relevant bodies to perform their functions in a manner consistent with national climate plans, across three pieces of legislation; a 2026 Civil Reform Bill that could restrict who has standing to bring climate litigation before the courts (Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 2026; Hickey, 2026); as well as widespread fuel protests across Ireland calling for the removal of the carbon tax on diesel and petrol.

In Finland, the declining political interest in climate change was linked to growing concerns around the costs of climate policies and to the collapse of the country's land-use carbon sinks in 2022, when high rates of logging and slow tree growth meant its forests absorbed less carbon. This was compounded by increased logging in the drive to replace Russian timber imports following the EU's 2022 import ban (Pietarinen et al., 2025). According to interviewees, the 2023 right-wing coalition, which brought together the National Coalition Party, the Finns Party, the Swedish People's Party of Finland and the Christian Democrats, has given greater priority to economic and cost-of-living concerns than to climate action, while timber supply after the ban on Russian imports has competed with carbon sink goals.

In Sweden, the minority government of the Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats and the Liberals, gave climate action a lower political priority. According to Karlsson, a researcher focusing

[1] Ireland's 2026 Climate Action Plan, which had initially been scheduled for late 2025, has not been published at the time of writing.

[2] The Critical Infrastructure Act 2026, the Development (Strategic Gas Reserve) Act 2026, and the Dublin Airport (Passenger Capacity) Act 2026 contain provisions that allow for the disapplication of Section 15 of the Ireland's Climate Act of 2015.

on climate change leadership at Uppsala University, it has deliberately weakened its climate policies (Hulth, 2025). The minority government scrapped the stand-alone environment ministry in 2022, moved to cut fuel taxes (ibid.) and argued that other countries, including China, India, the US and Brazil, should take on greater responsibility for emissions reductions (Government Offices of Sweden, 2024).

In the UK, a previously high degree of cross-party consensus on climate action weakened under pressure from the energy price and cost-of-living crisis of 2022 (Rutter and Sasse, 2022). In September 2023, the Conservative government announced "a new approach" to achieving the UK's net zero commitments that delayed or softened several climate policies, while keeping the 2050 target (Sunak, 2023; Evans et al., 2023). Contestation around climate policy has persisted since, surfacing within the Labour government after it took office in 2024.

Growing polarisation, misinformation and organised opposition are making the space more hostile

According to an international expert on climate advisory bodies we spoke to, climate change has become a dividing line between political parties and their supporters, rather than a shared goal. They said this polarisation around climate issues is the "main challenge" facing these bodies, as it makes it harder for them to remain impartial and be heard across the political spectrum.

In the UK, climate change has become a 'wedge issue': since 2021, an organised backlash against net zero has turned a policy position that once received broad cross-party support into a source of political division (Averchenkova and Pabreja, forthcoming). There is also clear evidence of polarisation in Finland, where land use and forestry have become flashpoints in the debate on climate change along with transport and heating. This reflects the significance of the land use sector within the country's climate neutrality target and patterns of land ownership. More than 600,000 private individuals own around 60% of the country's forests, meaning that measures that encroach on land rights are particularly politically sensitive (Ekblom and Laikola, 2025).

Evidence of polarisation in Ireland and Sweden was weaker, but not absent, especially as these countries move to design and implement specific policies to meet climate targets. A study by Ireland's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found that most people in Ireland support spending carbon tax revenues on emissions reduction and climate preparedness, but over a third of those surveyed oppose specific proposals such as reducing the national cattle herd to lower greenhouse gas emissions or higher taxes on cars that use petrol and diesel (EPA & Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, 2021). A doctoral study examined the attitudes of 4,000 households living near one of the borders between Sweden's four electricity price zones (areas that each have their own wholesale electricity price) (Ewald, 2025). It found that exposure to higher electricity prices increased opposition to fuel taxes and led many people to develop an exaggerated perception of how costly and unfair the taxes are (ibid.).

Climate misinformation, which is false or misleading content shared without intent to deceive, and disinformation, which is false information that is deliberately spread, have been documented in all four countries, in different forms. In the UK, misleading content frequently outperforms pro-climate content on social media (Climate Action Against Disinformation [CAAD], 2024), although it appears to harden existing opposition to net zero rather than create new opposition (de Nadal et al., 2026). In Sweden, far-right media have portrayed climate change as a hoax since 2018 (Vowles and Hultman, 2021). In Ireland, climate change denial is rare, but "discourses of delay" are common (Healy, 2022). In Finland, forest carbon sink estimates have been revised and contested, and the forest industry publishes its own list of "claims based on false or groundless information" about forests (Finnish Forest Industries, 2022; Yle News, 2024).

Interviewees also noted clustering of misinformation around particularly contentious issues, such as logging in Finland and the burning of turf (peat) in Ireland. In Ireland, a 2022 proposal to restrict the sale and distribution of turf was met with claims that people would be arrested for burning it. The environment minister described this as misinformation, noting that the regulations did not ban burning (Mooney, 2022). The episode fed a narrative of urban elites against rural

communities (Guardian, 2022). In both countries, the contested claims concerned what policies would mean for rural livelihoods and traditions, rather than whether climate change is real.

Another targeted challenge emerged from interviews with Irish and Finnish actors. Interviewees noted that organised economic interest groups, specifically Ireland's agricultural lobby and Finland's forestry lobby, are strongly opposed to climate action, having been spurred on by, in the words of a member of the Irish CCAC, "broader European, anti-intellectual, anti-science, anti-climate change" narratives. The Irish Farmers' Association has protested publicly against the agricultural targets in the Climate Action Plan (Daunton, 2021). In Finland, the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners condemned a statement by 68 scientists criticising increased logging as "a political pamphlet lacking a scientific point of view" (Aho, 2017). Antagonism generated by these economic interest groups exacerbates the challenging political environment in which climate advisory bodies are operating.

In hostile environments, the advice of climate advisory bodies is used selectively, or set aside altogether

Research on parliamentary debates in the UK shows that analysis by the UK CCC was cited on both sides of the fossil fuel debate, to support different goals (Averchenkova and Pabreja, forthcoming). In analysis of interventions concerning the future of fossil fuel investments between March 2023 and March 2025, 49% of references to the CCC supported new fossil fuel investment while 51% opposed it, although both drew on the same underlying projections (Averchenkova and Pabreja, forthcoming). Arguments in favour of new fossil fuel investments cited CCC reports showing projections that oil and gas would still be needed in 2050. They pointed to a gap between future demand and the supply expected from existing fields, to argue that this necessitated new domestic oil and gas production (Averchenkova and Pabreja, forthcoming). These arguments ran counter to the CCC's own conclusions and advice. The CCC's *Seventh Carbon Budget* report projected steep declines in oil and gas consumption of 84% and 77% respectively from 2025 levels by 2050, and its 2023 progress report explicitly stated that continued oil and gas use "does not in itself justify the development of new North Sea fields" (Averchenkova and Pabreja, forthcoming).

Elsewhere interviewees described governments engaging less with advisory bodies, or acting less on their advice, over time. In Ireland, government engagement with the CCAC was said to have diminished, making it harder for the Council to influence government thinking. One interviewee suggested that the government does not "take [the CCAC] that seriously" and that its efforts to listen have been "lip service". For example, the Irish government has stated that further work is needed to ensure the next carbon budget programme is "feasible" before it is adopted (O'Doherty, 2026), implying that the CCAC's proposed carbon budgets are not yet practicable. This is despite the CCAC's public pushback, highlighting the economic costs of delay (e.g. Irish Fiscal Advisory Council and Climate Change Advisory Council, 2025).

In Sweden, interviewees said the current government engages significantly less with the Climate Policy Council than previous governments. One noted that the Minister for Climate and Environment did not attend the launch of the Council's annual report. In Finland, interviewees said the current government is less likely to take on the Panel's advice than its predecessor, for example by pushing ahead with a nuclear-only energy strategy despite the Panel's advice that nuclear energy must be complemented with renewables. The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has also publicly rejected the body's recommendations to reduce logging (Rajala, 2025), arguing that such a restriction would lock Finland into a fossil-based economy and increase emissions overall (Essayah, 2026).

Challenge to climate advisory bodies' authority

In the UK, Sweden and Finland, climate advisory bodies have also faced challenges to their authority, and even their continued existence. In the UK, between January 2023 and March 2025, Conservative MPs questioned the CCC's credibility, especially in relation to its cost-benefit analysis of net zero, alleging that the analysis was based on contestable assumptions (Averchenkova and Pabreja, forthcoming). Going further, Conservative MPs questioned the legitimacy of the CCC, raising concerns over its unelected membership, and characterising the CCC as a well-resourced institutional voice for climate ambition operating without a counterpart for energy affordability and security (Averchenkova and Pabreja, forthcoming).

In Sweden, the Prime Minister and Minister for Climate and Environment publicly characterised the Climate Policy Council's 2024 annual report as one view among several, rather than an authoritative statement (Aarthun and Sundqvist, 2025). The government is also reviewing how members of the Climate Policy Council are appointed, with a proposal to replace the body's own nomination of members with selection by a parliamentary committee (Aarthun and Sundqvist, 2025). Moreover, the Sweden Democrats, having opposed the creation of the Climate Policy Council, have previously pushed to abolish the body outright, framing it as an ideologically motivated institution that issues opinions, rather than fact-based recommendations. Interviewees argued that the overall high trust in science in Sweden has, and will continue to, safeguard the Climate Policy Council from such attacks, and pointed to the recently announced extension of the mandate of the current chair for three years as evidence. A former member of the Climate Policy Council and civil society actor offered a more sceptical reading. They argued that this extension is a strategic calculation, made with a view to redirecting the body's focus towards international climate action, such as buying carbon offsets, rather than domestic reductions.

Finland's Climate Change Panel has faced the most direct threat to its institutional existence. In 2025, the government proposed to merge four independent panels – the Climate Change Panel, the Nature Panel, the Sustainability Panel and the Forest Bioeconomy Science Panel – under the Prime Minister's Office (Yle, 2025). Interviewees criticised this proposal, arguing that there is ongoing need for all these panels, with each providing a different perspective on the planetary crisis, and that merging them would not lead to significant savings, as they are generally very cost effective. A member of the secretariat of the Climate Change Panel suggested abolishing the body would not be "worth the political points" the government would gain among a minority of the population, given its generally high support among the majority. Indeed, they noted that the proposal had been opposed by environmental NGOs, the Confederation of Finnish Industries, and several MPs and MEPs. The proposal has, therefore, stalled for now. Another member of the secretariat noted that episodes such as this mean that the body can "no longer take its funding as granted", a precarity sharpened by the fact that the Climate Change Panel must apply for its budget annually and operates on a smaller budget than its peers (Gaia Consulting Oy, 2023).

Public standing helps safeguard climate advisory bodies, but does not by itself sustain their impact

In summary, climate advisory bodies in the UK, Ireland, Sweden and Finland are facing similar challenges: a cooling political environment, marked by declining political interest in climate change, compounded by rising polarisation, organised opposition and growing misinformation. The way in which these challenges play out, however, differs from country to country. Sometimes, as in the case of the UK and Ireland, they surface as advice being used selectively or set aside, and sometimes, as in the case of Sweden and Finland, they escalate into direct challenges to a body's authority or continued existence.

The experience of the four climate advisory bodies suggests that when political will declines, strong public standing can help to safeguard their existence and relevance, as does sustained engagement with their advice and pressure from civil society. In Finland, the proposal to merge four advisory panels together was opposed by environmental NGOs, the Confederation of Finnish Industries, MPs and MEPs, and has stalled. In Sweden interviewees expect high trust in science to

continue to safeguard the Climate Policy Council. In Ireland, the CCAC, which stakeholders see as independent and balanced, has so far not faced attacks from government, the public or lobby groups. In the UK, the CCC's evidence is cited by all major parties, even when it is contested. Public standing therefore protects a body's existence and relevance more reliably than its impact. Advice from Ireland and Finland's climate advisory bodies has been dismissed, while the advice of the UK CCC has been used selectively to argue both sides of the net zero debate. Where standing runs out, the strength of a body's mandate and the security of its resourcing, as well as engagement of a broader ecosystem of actors, discussed in the next section, become decisive.

3. How climate advisory bodies are navigating political contestation

In this section, we explore how climate advisory bodies are navigating political contestation in practice, building their political and public standing, while working within mandate and resourcing constraints. While the focus of this report is on climate advisory bodies in Europe, in this section we also draw on examples from elsewhere, which were raised by interviewees when discussing the range of strategies available to climate advisory bodies. The evidence on the Irish, Swedish and Finnish bodies comes mainly from our 23 interviews (15 Irish stakeholders, four Swedish, three Finnish and one international expert; see Appendix). We flag where a view was raised by only one or a few interviewees. The UK CCC, which we examined based on parliamentary debates rather than interviews, features where its published work offers relevant examples.

Climate advisory bodies are divided on whether to engage more actively in the political debate

Interviews with stakeholders revealed that climate advisory bodies are divided on how to defend their advice in hostile political environments. Do they stick strictly to providing scientific evidence through their reports? Or do they take a more active role, engaging the public, correcting misinterpretation and misinformation, to shape how their evidence is received?

A broader pattern emerged in the evidence from the interviews, with those working inside or close to climate advisory bodies arguing for caution, and those who were more distant arguing for intervention. A member of the secretariat of the Finnish Climate Change Panel illustrated the live nature of this debate within climate advisory bodies, stating that "there is a clear demand for... taking policy positions" but also "a reluctance to be seen as a lobby actor". They added that they "don't want to be... associated as one of the NGO or environmental organisations." A member of the Irish CCAC, for example, framed the body's role narrowly, stating that "our job was not to sell policy, but to explain the technical issues". A former member went further, suggesting that public engagement "might have been a bit of a distraction from the advice to government".

By contrast, a civil society actor in Ireland argued that it is "really important that [climate advisory bodies] push back against... regression". A former member of the Swedish Council, who now works in civil society, also argued that the Climate Policy Council should realise that public engagement is "super important" and that they "as a public agency have a responsibility to really take [public engagement] seriously... it's not someone else's job". Similarly, in the academic community, Aarthun and Sundqvist (2025) argue that the Swedish Climate Policy Council's overall approach avoids both scientific and political details and emphasises independence, which leaves its advice insufficiently embedded in the political processes it serves. Drawing on the concept of boundary organisations with dual accountability to science and politics (Guston, 2001), they argue that councils need to present politically salient facts and embrace an interdependent position towards politics, providing science advice *with* political influence.

Climate advisory bodies are balancing criticism and collaboration by adopting a dual approach to government engagement

A related, practical tension, raised across all three countries, is how do climate advisory bodies remain independent of government, and willing to challenge it, without losing its ear? As a member of the secretariat of the Finnish Climate Change Panel put it: "How do we remain sufficiently critical about their policymaking, while still being heard, so that they don't just put us aside?" The same interviewee noted that members of the Climate Change Panel are themselves divided on the right approach. A member of the Irish CCAC pushed back on the framing altogether, arguing that collaboration is not necessarily a compromise on independence, but rather a precondition for impact. In their words, "being independent and talking into a void is not a value proposition. You've got to be constructively engaging, otherwise what's the point?"

In practice, climate advisory bodies in Ireland, Sweden and Finland are managing this tension by simultaneously engaging with the government in public and private, and adjusting their messaging as needed. According to interviewees, Ireland's CCAC and Finland's Climate Change Panel have both made public statements correcting specific inaccuracies or pushing back on contested claims, while also engaging with government behind closed doors. Sweden's Climate Policy Council has adopted a deliberately cross-party approach, organising briefings with individual party representatives, rather than engaging solely with the government. Interviewees credited this approach with helping to secure the body's survival despite the Sweden Democrats' initial opposition towards it. Iterating on such experiences, the International Climate Councils Network (ICCN), an international network of 28 climate advisory bodies, is now encouraging its members to extend their engagement with sectoral parliamentary committees beyond those focusing solely on climate change or the environment.

Climate advisory bodies are building wider ecosystems of stakeholders

The relationship with government is not the only one that climate advisory bodies are reconsidering. Beyond government, an international expert on climate advisory bodies suggested that they can call on a wider "ecosystem" of stakeholders, including civil society, academia and the private sector, or political champions, to take forward and act on their recommendations, rather than directly engaging in political debate. This offers one route out of the tension outlined above between providing advice through formal channels and stepping more actively into the political debate, especially for those bodies with a narrow mandate. Indeed, a former member of the Swedish Climate Policy Council argued that collaboration with civil society is key to helping defend the country's climate targets and the body's own legitimacy.

Interviewees were divided on whether stakeholder engagement should be formalised or left informal. An example of the formal approach is Denmark's Climate Dialogue Forum (Klimadialogforum), a legally mandated stakeholder platform established under the Danish Climate Council. Some argued that a more formalised process would be more transparent, while others worried that it could lead to a loss of discretion and agility.

Looking more widely, approaches also appear to vary. South Africa's Presidential Climate Commission builds stakeholder representation directly into its structure, with commissioners drawn from stakeholder groups, including traditional leadership. Chile's Comité Científico Asesor de Cambio Climático and New Zealand's Climate Change Commission rely on external university partnerships to extend their research capacity and amplify their recommendations. Underlying both formalised and informal positions, however, was the concern that meaningful stakeholder engagement is resource-intensive and beyond the capacity of many climate advisory bodies, especially those whose mandates do not explicitly call for stakeholder engagement.

Climate advisory bodies are collaborating with other advisory institutions

A related strategy that climate advisory bodies have adopted is collaboration with their peers. Finland's Panel has published joint work with two sister panels: the Forest Bioeconomy Science Panel, on biogenic carbon capture and forest-sector value creation (Suomen ilmastopaneeli and Metsäbiotalouden tiedepaneeli, 2026), and the Nature Panel, on aligning climate and nature policy (Suomen ilmastopaneeli and Suomen Luontopaneeli, 2025). Ireland's CCAC co-published a report with the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council estimating the cost to Ireland of missing its binding EU commitments, chiefly under the Effort Sharing Regulation (agreed in 2018), which sets national emission limits for transport, buildings, small industry, waste and agriculture and requires countries that overshoot to buy the shortfall from those that over-perform. The report put the potential bill at €8–26 billion, or €3–12 billion if the government delivers the measures in its Climate Action Plan (Irish Fiscal Advisory Council and Climate Change Advisory Council, 2025).

Another example of collaboration mentioned by an interviewee concerned the Netherlands, where the Scientific Climate Council has worked with the country's Health Council, co-publishing a report on the growing health risks posed by climate change and potential policy responses

(Netherlands Scientific Climate Council and Health Council of the Netherlands, 2026). Some interviewees said that initiatives such as this have helped to lend shared credibility, by allowing bodies to pool expertise, convey the far-reaching impacts of climate change, and generate more media attention.

Climate advisory bodies are changing how they communicate and how openly they work

Climate advisory bodies have also examined their own working practices, adjusting how they govern themselves and operate in order to build greater transparency. For example, Ireland's CCAC now recruits through open applications, although the Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment still makes the final appointments. Finland's Climate Change Panel publishes minutes from every meeting on an ongoing public archive (Ilmastopaneeli, n.d.) and Sweden's Climate Policy Council maintains a public repository of its recommendations (Klimatpolitiska Rådet, n.d.). Ireland's CCAC has also introduced a horizon-scanning programme, enabling its secretariat to monitor emerging debates and challenges so that the Council can respond to new topics more quickly (CCAC, 2024). We interpret initiatives such as these as efforts to make the work of climate advisory bodies more open and, potentially, to strengthen their perceived legitimacy. However, our interviews do not show whether these efforts have achieved this.

Another way in which climate advisory bodies are building their public standing is by changing the way they communicate, something noted by all our interviewees. The ICCN has a dedicated working group to support its members with communications, reflecting a shared view across the sector that reaching the right audience, in the right form, at the right time, matters almost as much as the underlying analysis. Indeed, Finland's Climate Change Panel has hired a part-time communications specialist, shared with the Nature Panel, which has helped to drive increased media visibility (Gaia Consulting Oy, 2023). Ireland's CCAC has moved from a single annual review to multiple sectoral reviews published across the year, with a view to sustaining media attention rather than concentrating it around one launch. Irish interviewees stressed that the media play an important intermediary role between the CCAC and the public, so that the visibility of its recommendations is shaped by media choices. The CCAC also produces adaptation scorecards tracking progress on adaptation across eleven sectors (CCAC, 2025), and Sweden's Climate Policy Council has developed a public visualisation tool, called Panorama, to help citizens track the country's climate transition. Such initiatives aim to give government, media and the public, an accessible assessment of where the implementation of climate action is falling short. Climate advisory bodies across Europe also appear to be converging around the strategy of reframing their climate advice around economic and security concerns. The UK CCC, for example, recently published analysis suggesting that a single fossil fuel price shock could rival the cost of net zero itself (CCC, 2026a). Beyond the four bodies studied, interviewees also pointed to the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change's framing of its advice around security and competitiveness (2025).

Public engagement remains divisive and underdeveloped as a strategic response

Climate advisory bodies have also sought to strategically engage the public as part of efforts to build their public standing. But compared with the strategies outlined above, public engagement stands out as an area where climate advisory bodies have made fewer adjustments. A few advisory bodies have embraced innovations in this area. The UK CCC, for example, has commissioned issue-specific citizens' panels, testing household views on affordability for its *Seventh Carbon Budget*, and gathering public views on acceptable climate risk for its 2026 adaptation report (CCC 2025 and 2026b). Outside Europe, South Korea's Presidential Committee has gone further, launching a permanent Climate Citizens' Assembly in 2026, with 220 citizens serving as policy "co-designers" alongside its scientific advisors (Hyung-yoon, 2026).

Across Ireland, Sweden and Finland, however, the value of public engagement appears to be more contested. Notably, interviewees in Ireland, where citizens' assemblies have previously been organised by the government, raised concerns about the resources required to run these assemblies relative to their impact, and the danger of exhausting the good will of the public by

overusing such initiatives. Generally, across all three countries, interviewees stressed that a climate advisory body's capacity for public engagement is dictated by its mandate. A body without a public-engagement remit neither has the license nor, often, the resourcing to take on a more active public role, even where individual members might want to. Beyond constraints on mandate, a former member of Sweden's Climate Policy Council speculated that the academic composition of the body may leave it "a bit distant" from the public and argued that it needs to start treating public engagement as a genuine responsibility rather than "someone else's job".

Interviewees suggested some immediate steps that climate advisory bodies could take to strengthen their relationship with the public. Some interviewees argued that they could start by calling out poor public participation processes, such as those organised during the development of the 2023 National Energy and Climate Plans across the EU, and doing more in-person engagement beyond urban centres. When it comes to tackling misinformation and disinformation, interviewees were more sceptical. They acknowledged the importance of calling out inaccuracies in the media, especially when they concern the advice provided by the body. But they felt that the sheer scale of misinformation on social media, and more generally online, makes it impossible for climate advisory bodies to meaningfully counter this, especially without an appropriate mandate and resourcing. Most council and secretariat members interviewed felt that climate advisory body members mainly engage with the media in their personal expert capacity and should continue this.

Mandate and resourcing set a ceiling on what a strategy can achieve

The examples above show that climate advisory bodies are actively working to build both their political and public standing, cultivating cross-party support and stakeholder ecosystems, as well as investing in communication. However, the extent to which these strategies are possible or effective does not solely depend on the willingness of the members and secretariats of individual climate advisory bodies.

Two structural factors constrain what climate advisory bodies can do in the face of political contestation, regardless of their ambition. The first is mandate. One interviewee argued that bodies solely tasked with advising government, without a watchdog or stakeholder or public engagement remit, cannot take on a "more public facing and scrutiny approach". Relatedly, although climate advisory bodies are in theory independent from government, the same interviewee noted that not all such bodies worldwide are, which constrains their ability to take outspoken public positions and be critical of the government. Even a statutory "duty to respond", as in the UK and Ireland, has limits when political contestation escalates as it requires government only to respond to advice, not to act on it. The UK experience suggests that a stronger "duty to act", as in Denmark, where government must formally outline how it will close any gap the advisory body identifies in its climate plans, may offer a more resilient safeguard (Averchenkova and Pabreja, forthcoming; Denmark, 2020; Gorrissen Federspiel, 2023).

The second structural factor that constrains climate advisory bodies is resourcing. Apart from a small minority of bodies like those in the UK, Denmark or New Zealand, climate advisory bodies have small secretariats, and many are facing sustained budget pressure. This means they have little capacity to take on the strategies outlined above even if they recognise their value. Thus, mandate and resourcing do not just determine the exposure of climate advisory bodies to political contestation; they also determine how well-equipped these bodies are to respond to political contestation and how resilient they are to political change.

External factors can soften the consequences of weak political will. Interviewees in Ireland identified EU climate targets as an enabler of impact, as they add weight to the CCAC's work by raising the cost of failing to meet the targets. One former member described them as a "backstop" against rollback of climate commitments. Interviewees also pointed to the small size of Ireland's climate governance space, where close links between sectors, academia and government enable ideas to spread quickly. Even so, these enablers appeared to function only as buffers against declining political will, which emerged as the clearest barrier to achieving impact.

Some climate advisory bodies have tried to work around their resourcing constraints. At an individual body level, Ireland's CCAC has moved towards co-funding for specific projects with aligned institutions, such as the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland and Met Éireann, Ireland's national meteorological service. Further afield, Chile's Comité Científico Asesor de Cambio Climático has moved towards philanthropic funding to expand its capacity. At a network level, the ICCN is facilitating mutually beneficial knowledge-sharing on best practices around communication and climate modelling. It is also helping climate advisory bodies build a stronger evidence base of their own impact, including a joint statement on the impact of climate councils published at the 30th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP30) (ICCN, 2025), to support future resourcing negotiations.

These are all real but only partial fixes. Mandate and resourcing are themselves interlinked: a narrow mandate makes it harder to justify more resourcing, and thin resourcing makes it harder to argue for a broader mandate; neither can be solved by a body acting alone. Meaningfully addressing challenges around the mandate and resourcing of climate advisory bodies, and safeguarding against political contestation of action on climate change, therefore, requires robust institutional design ideally from the outset, and/or external engagement from civil society and politicians to improve and strengthen these advisory bodies once they have been established.

4. Conclusion and policy recommendations

Our analysis of climate advisory bodies in the UK, Ireland, Sweden and Finland shows that strong public standing, including trust in science and the backing of a broad range of stakeholders, can help to safeguard the existence and relevance of climate advisory bodies under political contestation. However, public standing is less effective in ensuring that climate advisory bodies continue to impact on climate governance. Climate advisory bodies are responding to political contestation through a range of strategies. Where public standing runs short, how far these strategies can go depends increasingly on the legal strength and breadth of a body's mandate and the security of its resourcing.

Political contestation around climate change forces climate advisory bodies to reconsider how they operate. They must think carefully about their own role within climate governance, strategically manage their relationships with government, other stakeholders and the public, and be willing to embrace innovation. Public standing and adaptive strategies can protect a body's existence and relevance, but there is a limit to what they can achieve independently without addressing constraints on their mandate and resourcing. This points to a role for the wider ecosystem around climate advisory bodies and for the policymakers who design and reform these bodies, in helping to protect them from the impacts of political contestation.

Recommendations

Climate advisory bodies, subject to their mandate and resourcing permitting, should:

- Engage government through both formal public channels (such as published advice and responses to consultations) and informal private channels (such as bilateral meetings, briefings for ministers and their advisers). They should also widen their engagement, working with legislators across the political spectrum, not just those in the government, and with parliamentary committees covering areas beyond climate and the environment.
- Build their stakeholder ecosystems purposively and deliberately, rather than defaulting to ad hoc engagement with stakeholders.
- Pursue joint publications with peer advisory bodies in adjacent policy areas to extend their reach, relevance for the political debate and credibility. Where joint work is not feasible, highlight the findings of international bodies such as the IPCC and the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change to show that others have reached similar conclusions.
- Consider continuous communication, combining rolling or sectoral reviews with a cross-sectoral overview, where useful, as well as one-off or annual reports.
- Reframe climate advice to include issues around economic and security costs, where appropriate, to reach audiences who may not productively engage with a climate change framing.
- Strengthen public engagement, including through in-person engagement beyond urban centres, lay summaries and press releases for the media targeting non-specialist audiences, and, where mandate and resourcing allow, explore the use of deliberative processes.
- Build and proactively publish evidence of the impact and cost-effectiveness of their own work rather than assembling it reactively, to build transparency and institutional resilience.
- Consider carefully bounded co-funding arrangements that preserve independence with technical, climate finance or research funding agencies, or philanthropy, as a partial buffer against politically driven budget cuts. Independent revenue streams through mechanisms such as emissions trading schemes could also be explored.

The wider ecosystem, including civil society and funders should:

- Support climate advisory bodies in reaching audiences they cannot reach alone, recognising communication and collaboration is resource intensive.
- Use and build on the evidence and recommendations of climate advisory bodies in their own work, helping the advice to reach decision-makers and the public, while allowing the bodies to remain focused on independent analysis
- Develop shared infrastructure, through networks such as the International Climate Councils Network, for pooling best practice and building a collective evidence base on the impact of climate advisory bodies.

Strengthening institutional design – governments and policymakers should:

- Guarantee stable, multi-year funding, rather than leaving resourcing to annual negotiation.
- Ensure that recruitment processes are open and competitive, rather than purely based on ministerial selection, to strengthen climate advisory bodies' independence and credibility.
- Strengthen the role of climate advisory bodies through a "duty to act" mandate, so that government is required to propose corrective measures once a gap between targets and policy is identified, not simply to acknowledge it.
- Explicitly authorise and fund stakeholder and public engagement as core functions of climate advisory bodies, rather than leaving this to their discretion.
- Require parliamentary approval, rather than executive decision alone, for any proposal to restructure, merge or abolish an existing advisory body.

These recommendations are easiest to apply when a body is established or its founding legislation is reviewed. They can also be applied retroactively to existing bodies through amendments to that legislation, as with the 2021 amendment that significantly changed the role of the Irish CCAC.

Appendix. Methodological summary

Stakeholder interviews

Findings on the challenges being faced by climate advisory bodies in Ireland, Sweden and Finland, and on the strategies being employed by climate advisory bodies worldwide to navigate political contestation, are based on 23 semi-structured interviews conducted by the authors with a broad range of stakeholders (see Table A). With some stakeholders falling into more than one category, nine interviews were conducted with current and former members and secretariats of the bodies, six with academics, five with civil society actors, three with current and former government actors, one with a media actor and one with an international expert.

All interviews were conducted in English. They were transcribed using Microsoft Teams. Transcripts were then manually checked and anonymised, before being inductively coded using NVivo.

Table A. Overview of interviewees

Interviewee	Country	Stakeholder category
1	Ireland	Member of a climate advisory body
2	Ireland	Academic
3	Ireland	Member of the secretariat of a climate advisory body
4	Ireland	Civil society actor
5	Ireland	Civil society actor
6	Ireland	Journalist
7	Ireland	Former member of a climate advisory body and government actor
8	Ireland	Member of a climate advisory body
9	Ireland	Former government actor
10	Ireland	Civil society actor
11	Ireland	Member of a climate advisory body
12	Ireland	Academic
13	Ireland	Academic
14	Ireland	Government actor
15	Ireland	Member of the secretariat of a climate advisory body
16	Sweden	Civil society actor
17	Sweden	Academic
18	Finland	Member of the secretariat of a climate advisory body
19	Sweden	Former member of a climate advisory body and civil society actor
20	Sweden	Academic
21	Finland	Academic
22	International	Expert on climate advisory bodies
23	Finland	Member of the secretariat of a climate advisory body

Parliamentary debates

Findings on the influence of the UK Climate Change Committee (CCC) are based on a content analysis of parliamentary interventions referencing the CCC between 1 January 2019 and 31 March 2025 conducted by Averchenkova and Pabreja (forthcoming). The interventions were sourced via Hansard records, using the same search terms as an earlier study conducted by Averchenkova et al. (2021) to allow comparison. The resulting 1,758 references were coded into thematic categories using NVivo; the CCC's influence was assessed using three categories: evidentiary influence (use of CCC output as supporting evidence), direct influence (on matters where the CCC is a statutory adviser, such as carbon budgets) and diffused influence (references across legislation beyond its formal remit). Contestation around climate change, which featured heavily in parliamentary debates between March 2023 and March 2025, was also captured under the theme 'net zero'.

Averchenkova and Pabreja (forthcoming) use the three categories developed by Averchenkova et al. (2021) and evaluate the extent to which the CCC during this period was:

- A 'legitimiser', justifying government's pre-determined policy objectives, using ambiguous or contested advice;
- A 'knowledge broker', generating neutral advice based on a synthesis of the best available evidence, and maintaining the respect of stakeholders, generating the basis of well-informed dialogue; and/or
- A 'policy entrepreneur', facilitating efforts to influence government decisions, including encouraging the adoption of innovative solutions.

Averchenkova and Pabreja (forthcoming) add to this analysis through an in-depth examination of the ways in which the evidence or authority of the CCC was contested.

Limitations

Our analysis relies on evidence from publicly available information and interviews. We acknowledge that the volume and spread of interviews may result in some limitations, especially as we conducted more interviews with Irish stakeholders (15) than we did for Swedish, Finnish and international stakeholders (9).

Coding parliamentary interventions and interview transcripts also involves an element of researcher judgement.

We acknowledge that the depth and comparability of this evidence vary across countries, given their differing institutional and political systems.

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