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NEWS FROM THE BASIN

Safeguarding and restoring European natural lakes and their ecosystems

EUROLakes is a **Mission Ocean project** which main goal is to propose an **innovative, holistic** and **science-based approach** to safeguarding and restoring **European natural lakes** and their **ecosystems**.

Through establishing **local communities** of practice, **EUROLakes** will apply the principles of **co-creation** and **inclusivity** to **develop** and showcase novel, integrated protection and restoration solutions, focusing particularly on **nature-based solutions.**

At the Water's Edge

There is something magical about lakes. With their calmness they quietly support life by providing drinking water, sustaining biodiversity, regulating local climates and offering spaces where people live, work and reconnect with nature. Yet, despite their importance, freshwater ecosystems rarely receive the same public attention as oceans or forests.

That is precisely why **World Lake Day**, celebrated each year on 27 August, matters. It reminds us that lakes deserve not only our appreciation, but also our commitment to protecting and restoring them. Their future depends on the choices we make today: how we manage the landscapes around them, how we balance environmental and societal needs, and how we converge science, policy and local communities to tackle increasingly complex challenges.

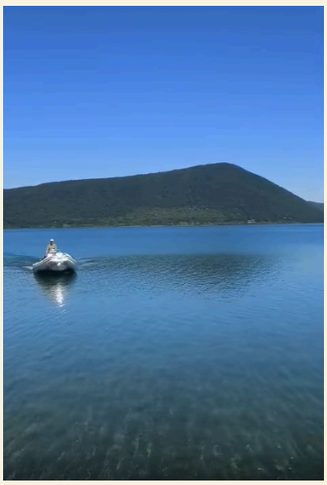
For EUROLakes, this year's celebration comes at a particularly meaningful moment. The project is halfway through, having successfully demonstrated during its first review the progress made across our demo lakes, confirming the strength of our collaborative approach. It is also a period marked by growing scientific output, active engagement with local stakeholders, and the conclusion of the EUROLakes Replication Call, paving the way for new lake regions to build on the project's knowledge and experience.

This edition of *News from the Basin* reflects that momentum. It brings together stories from our demonstration lakes, highlights recent research and international collaborations, and celebrates the people and organisations working towards a shared vision: healthier, more resilient freshwater ecosystems across Europe and the globe.

Thank you for being part of this growing community. We hope this issue informs and inspires for action towards Europe's lakes protection an dconservation.

EUROLakes Project Successfully Completes Its First Project Review

An important milestone confirms the project's progress and sets the stage for the next phase of natural lakes restoration and replication activities.



Eighteen months after launching our mission to protect and restore Europe's natural lakes, **EUROLakes** has successfully completed its first formal review by the European Commission.

The review marked an important moment for the consortium, bringing together project partners to present the progress achieved across research, stakeholder engagement, demonstration activities and the development of integrated landscape restoration solutions. The positive outcome reflects not only the quality of the work delivered so far, but also the strong collaboration between partners working across different disciplines and countries.

Since its launch, EUROLakes has been building the foundations for long-term lake restoration through the tailored application of the **4 Returns Framework**, active dialogue with local communities and the implementation of nature-based solutions tailored to the needs of each demonstration lake. Reaching this milestone confirms that the project is on track to deliver meaningful scientific, environmental and societal impact.

With this first review successfully behind us, EUROLakes now enters its next phase rehydrated. In the coming months, activities will focus on advancing restoration actions, supporting the newly selected replication lakes, and continuing to generate knowledge to support the conservation of freshwater ecosystems across the old continent.

Read the full story

Replication Sites Selected

Three Lakes as a Starting Point. Europe as a Perspective

EUROLakes enters its next phase and takes solutions beyond the demonstration sites

The EUROLakes network is growing!
Following a thorough selection process with more than 20 applications, ***three municipalities and their lakes*** have been selected as our new replication partners:

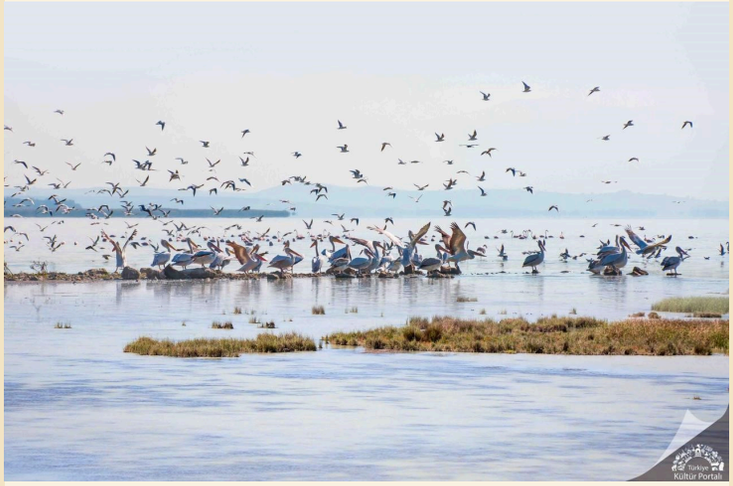
Municipality of Arifiye/Turkey: Lake Sapanca

©54mustafa, Tripadvisor

Municipality of Shkodër/Albania: Lake Shkodra

© Adventure Albania

Municipality of Manyas/Turkey: Lake Manyas



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Over the next two years, they will work alongside the EUROLakes team to bring our solutions to new places, test them in different contexts, and explore how they can be locally adapted, further developed, and scaled.

The Global Nature Fund (GNF), responsible for the activities related to Replication and Knowledge Sharing, coordinates the replication projects and leads the onboarding process for the new partners. This includes connecting them with the EUROLakes team, addressing administrative questions, providing technical guidance and ensuring a smooth start. The wider EUROLakes consortium also contributes its expertise throughout the whole replication process.

But replication is not a one-way process. We are not only bringing EUROLakes solutions to new sites, we also expect to learn from them. The local experiences, knowledge and perspectives of our replication partners will help us further develop and test the 4 Returns approach and the nature-based solutions developed within EUROLakes.

Through regular meetings, workshops, mentoring and peer-to-peer exchange, the replication partners and the wider consortium will have opportunities to identify synergies, share experiences and build connections that can last beyond the project itself. EUROLakes strengthens the exchange of knowledge and experience and lays the foundation for transferring successful solutions to other lakes across Europe.

The replication phase brings the EUROLakes journey full circle: solutions developed and tested at our demonstration sites are now reaching new lakes, where they can be adapted, challenged and enriched. By learning from different local contexts and sharing knowledge and experiences across borders, EUROLakes is extending its impact far beyond the project's original sites, and taking another step towards healthier, more resilient lakes across Europe.

Restoration in Action

From Vision to Practice Across our Demo Lakes

The strength of EUROLakes lies in its demonstration sites, where scientific knowledge, local expertise and community participation come together to develop practical solutions for restoring natural lake ecosystems. Throughout the past months, activities at **Lake Vico (Italy)**, **Lake Dümmer (Germany)** and **Lake Bistreț (Romania)** have continued to translate the project's integrated approach into tangible action on the ground.

From stakeholder workshops and landscape planning to ecological assessments and collaborative decision-making, each demonstration lake contributes valuable experience while addressing its own environmental challenges. Although every landscape is unique, they share a common objective: achieving healthier, more resilient freshwater ecosystems that can inspire similar initiatives across Europe.

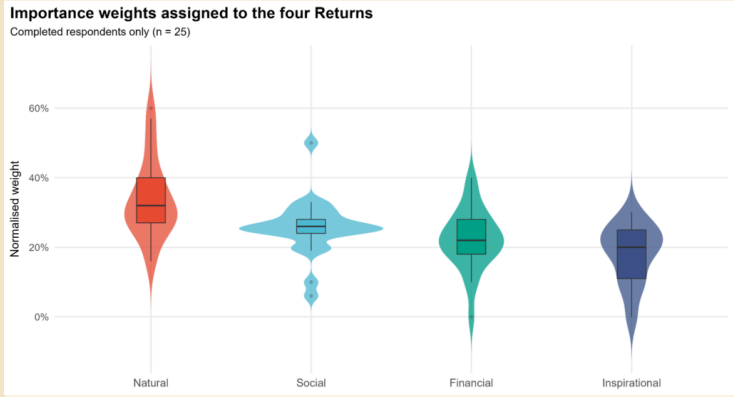
As restoration activities continue to progress, the lessons and results emerging from the three demonstration lakes are helping to shape practical methodologies, strengthen local Communities of Practice and build the foundation for future replication.

Read more about the latest findings coming from the demo lakes:

Results: Participatory evaluation of conservation and development interventions for Lake Vico

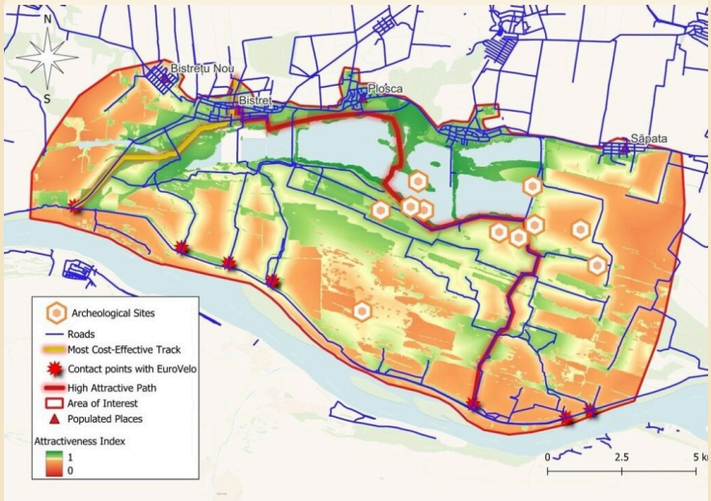
Dwell into the latest insights from the Participatory Multi-Criteria Analysis carried out at Lake Vico.

This work brings together local stakeholders - from farmers and businesses to public authorities and researchers - to evaluate different and shared restoration and management pathways for the lake.



Building Eco-Trail Visions for Lake Bistreț Through Participation

The main objective of the PMCA in Lake Bistreț was not to define a final eco-trail route, but rather to identify areas that could be considered more attractive for potential eco-trail development under different ecological and accessibility spatial criteria. The approach was intended to facilitate discussion among stakeholders and support exploratory planning.



Stakeholder Engagement

Engaging people with their lake: Insights from Dümmer lake

Lake Dümmer is showing how hands-on environmental education can build real stewardship for freshwater ecosystems. With 14 fully booked public events in the first half of 2026, the **Ökologische Station Naturschutzring Dümmer e. V.** is connecting residents and visitors with the lake's **biodiversity**, challenges and restoration efforts.

Read the full story

Knowledge in Action

Knowledge only becomes valuable when it can be used, transferred and scaled. In EUROLakes, we are not only generating new scientific evidence, but also strengthening the skills and capacity of the people working on lake restoration across the consortium, and beyond.

Over the past months, partners have been learning through dedicated trainings, developing practical tools and sharing research and experience at scientific and professional events. These activities are helping build a stronger common knowledge base within EUROLakes while creating resources, approaches and lessons that can potentially be adapted to other landscapes and restoration contexts beyond the project's demonstration sites.

Learning to Reflect, Adapt and Improve

Effective landscape restoration requires more than implementing solutions. It also requires teams to pause, reflect on what is working, recognise gaps and adapt their approach as they learn.

EUROLakes is now using a **4 Returns Reflection and Learning Tool** to support this process across the demonstration landscapes. Rather than evaluating or comparing the teams, the tool creates a structured space for collaborative learning around partnership, shared understanding, vision and planning, collective action, and monitoring and learning. The experience gathered through its use will contribute to lessons and practical guidance that can also benefit future freshwater restoration initiatives.

Read the full story

Building Skills for Innovative Lake Finance

Restoration also needs financial models capable of supporting long-term environmental outcomes. In April, EUROLakes partners took part in a dedicated training on **Results-Based Payments**, organised with Landscape Finance Lab, exploring how mechanisms such as Payments for Ecosystem Services and carbon credits can create incentives for measurable restoration outcomes.

Discover what the training revealed

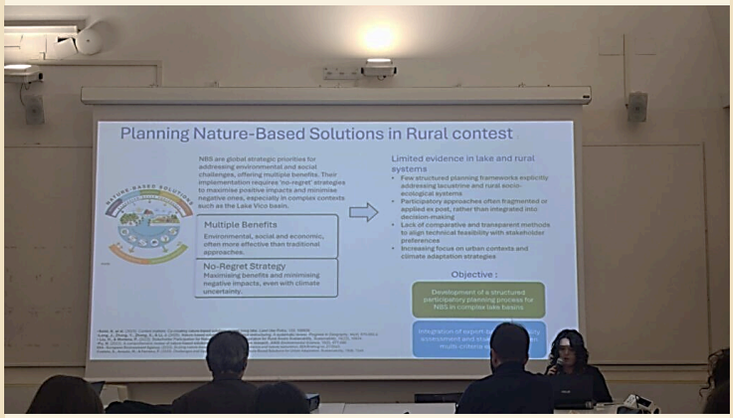
SCIENTIFIC DISSEMINATION

Spreading the newly generated knowledge is central to the EUROLakes mission. Over the past six months, project partners have continued to contribute to scientific publications and international conferences, extending the project's knowledge base and bringing lake restoration perspectives into wider research and professional communities.

From advances in environmental modelling and ecosystem assessment to discussions on stakeholder engagement, nature-based solutions and integrated landscape planning, EUROLakes researchers are helping strengthen the scientific foundation needed to safeguard Europe's lakes under changing environmental conditions.

Explore our lates publications

EUROLakes Showcases Participatory Planning at NatSoliS Conference in Naples

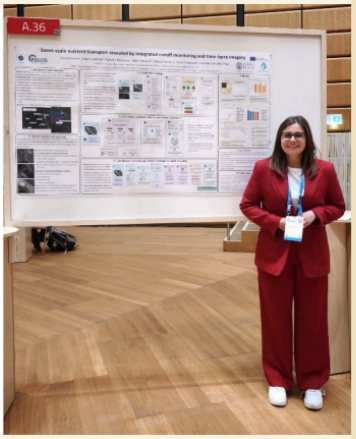


The delicate balance that binds water to land and communities to the landscapes they inhabit, took center stage at the end of February 2026 in Naples. Members of the EUROLakes research team traveled to the **University of Naples Federico II** to participate in the International Conference: **"Nature for Sustainable Cities: Planning Cost-Effective and Just Solutions for Urban Issues" (NatSoliS)** and present the emblematic case study of Lake Vico.

Continue reading

EUROLakes presented at EGU General Assembly 2026, Vienna

The European Geosciences Union (EGU) General Assembly brought together thousands of researchers and environmental experts in Vienna in May 2026 for one of the world's leading conferences on Earth and environmental sciences. Within this international context, the EUROLakes project participated in the conference by **presenting two scientific posters** focused on freshwater ecosystem restoration and monitoring activities at Lake Vico, the Italian pilot site of the project.



As presenters and researchers from the University of Tuscia, together with colleagues from Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM) and the INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED SYSTEMS ANALYSIS (IIASA), our colleagues had the opportunity to share complementary aspects of their ongoing work: participatory governance for Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) implementation and innovative monitoring approaches for diffuse nutrient pollution in agricultural lake catchments.

Read the article

Bridging Science and Policy

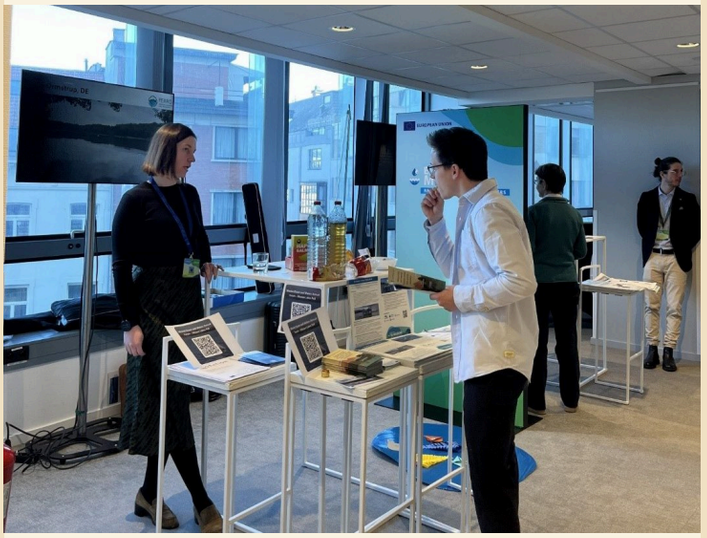
Beyond producing new knowledge, the project remains committed to making research accessible to policymakers, practitioners and fellow scientists, ensuring that scientific evidence translates into practical action.

Download our first Policy Brief produced jointly with fellow projects on lake conservation.

COLLABORATION ACROSS MISSION OCEAN

Strengthening Europe's Water Resilience: EUROLakes attended the European Ocean Days 2026

In early March, **EUROLakes** project, represented by the coordinator Wetlands International Europe, was in Brussels for the European Ocean Days, joining forces with policymakers and researchers to put freshwater ecosystems at the heart of the Blue Economy.



We showcased our work through two major touchpoints:

🤝 **The Power of Collaboration:** We hosted a joint stand along with our sister projects FERRO Project, IDEATION eu , FutureLakes and ProCleanLakes project. Together, we demonstrated how targeted, collaborative initiatives can translate EU policy into practical, on-the-ground lake restoration and protection.

💡 **Science in Action:** As part of the Annual Mission Ocean and Waters Forum, EUROLakes presented an e-poster in the official exhibition. This provided a platform to share our latest updates on progress from our demo lakes in Italy, Romania and Germany.

Read the full recap

Working Together for Greater Impact

Restoring Europe's lakes requires collaboration that extends well beyond individual projects. EUROLakes continued to strengthen cooperation with fellow Horizon Europe initiatives and sister projects.

The 4th MissionLakes Webinar, titled *"Building Consensus for Lake Restoration: Governance, Engagement and Cooperation"* held on 29 April 2026, was organized within the Mission Lakes Webinar Series and featured contributions from the WaterLANDS, ProCleanLakes and FutureLakes projects, as well as practical insights from the Lake Vesijärvi Foundation in Finland. The webinar led by EUROLakes partner Perla Rivadeneyra from Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei, brought together researchers and practitioners to discuss one of the central challenges of ecosystem restoration: how to create effective cooperation among institutions, scientists, local communities and decision-makers.

Mission Lakes webinars will resume in September. Such and other collaborative exchanges provide opportunities to share experiences, discuss emerging challenges and explore innovative approaches to lake restoration, while reinforcing the importance of coordinated action across Europe. By connecting expertise from different projects and disciplines, EUROLakes contributes to a growing community dedicated to accelerating the implementation of the EU Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters" objectives.

FROM THE BLOG

Stories Behind the Science

Beyond research results and project milestones, the EUROLakes blog offers a closer look at the people, places and ideas shaping lake restoration across Europe.

The **Lake Bistreț: a key floodplain lake in southern Romania** and **Why People are at the Heart of Lake Protection and Restoration** articles explore the unique characteristics of one of our demonstration lakes, highlight local perspectives and explain the scientific concepts that underpin the project's integrated restoration approach. These stories were part of the conclusion of EUROLakes campaign on its demo lakes and provide a richer understanding of the environmental challenges facing freshwater ecosystems and the collaborative efforts needed to restore them.

On YouTube, we featured a video, where we brought forth one of the Community Voices of Lake Bistret – Mr. Iulian Burtea, Mayor of Cârna. Having been born and raised on the shores of Bistret, Mayor Burtea is sharing his unique perspective on why this wetland is more than just a scenic landscape but is the heartbeat of the local economy. From its rich biodiversity to its long-standing tradition of fishing and gastronomy, Lake Bistret holds immense potential for sustainable tourism and ecological preservation. As part of our Demo Lakes campaign, we wanted to spotlight the people who know these waters best.

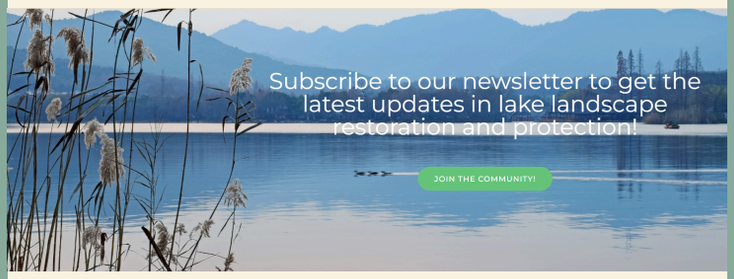
Looking Ahead

Building on the successful implementation of EUROLakes project during the first 18 months, the consortium will continue advancing restoration activities across the demonstration lakes while expanding the project's reach through the newly selected replication sites. Scientific research, stakeholder engagement and knowledge exchange will remain at the core of our work as we further develop practical solutions that support healthier and more resilient freshwater ecosystems.

The coming months will bring new collaborations, fresh insights and additional opportunities to demonstrate how integrated landscape restoration can create lasting environmental, social and economic value.

We look forward to sharing these developments with you in the next edition of *News from the Basin.*

Stay connected, follow our journey (@EUROLakes) and subscribe below to join a community inspired to restore and protect the natural lakes of Europe.



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Share the passion for natural lakes restoration by forwarding this newsletter to friends and colleagues to learn together how improving our lake ecosystems benefits the environment, local economies and communities, for a sustainable future.

EUROLakes is social. Let's connect!

EUROLakes

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