

PRESS RELEASE

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EUROLAKES: LEADING CHANGE IN EUROPE'S NATURAL LAKES CONSERVATION THROUGH INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

Europe's natural lake ecosystems are subject to significant pressure stemming from climate change, pollution and natural resources overuse from human activity, threatening their fragile ecological balance and resilience. To address these challenges, the new EUROLakes project, funded under Horizon Europe's Mission Ocean and Waters, was launched in September 2024, with the ambitious goal to transform the way lakes are restored and protected.

The holistic solutions developed within the project will leverage the 4 Returns Framework for Landscape Restoration, aiming to achieve four critical outcomes: environmental sustainability, economic benefits, social well-being and inspiration for local communities. This integrated approach sets the ground for a collaborative engagement of people, government and business to achieve long-term benefits through nature-based solutions (NBS). The implementation of the novel methodology will be demonstrated at three sites: Lake Vico (Italy), Lake Bistreț (Romania) and Lake Dümmer (Germany), with replication plans for other locations across Europe, following a call for application selection process.

Innovative Strategies for Sustainable Lake Management

The project integrates community-driven strategies and advanced modeling systems to create and deploy localized restoration plans, considering objectives like pollution reduction, habitat protection and enhanced biodiversity monitoring.

Key project activities include:

- *Tailored Nature-Based Solutions*, such as reed bed protection, nutrient runoff control and habitat restoration to enhance biodiversity.
- *Advanced Digital Twins and Modeling*, to include innovative simulations to predict the impact of restoration activities under different scenarios, offering actionable insights for adaptive management and optimized strategies.
- Establishing local *Communities of Practice* to empower stakeholders to actively engage in co-designing and implementing sustainable restoration strategies.
- *Capacity Building* through training programs on ecosystem services valuation and novel strategies for lasting financing mechanisms, ensuring long-term support for lake restoration at landscape level.

“EUROLakes is not just about restoring lakes. It’s about revitalizing the connection between nature and society. EUROLakes represents a unique opportunity to unify science, communities and policy to ensure these vital freshwater ecosystems thrive for generations to come.”

Aleksandra Starcevic, EUROLakes Project Manager, Wetlands International Europe

By combining community involvement, digital technology and innovative financing, the project aspires to become a model for scalable and adaptive management of natural lakes, establishing a replicable roadmap for integrated lake ecosystem conservation in a more resilient Europe.

The consortium of EUROLakes consists of 13 partners from 7 European countries, and comprises an interdisciplinary mix of competencies and expertise. The total budget of the project is 3 911 194 EUR, with EU contribution amounting to 3 819 769 EUR. EUROLakes was launched in September 2024 and ends in August 2028.

For more information, visit EUROLakes website: <https://eurolakes.eu>.

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