

Managing a Shared Resource: Water Governance Across the Mediterranean

MedLab **Thematic Week** Focus on **Water**. **Welcome**

Rosario Sapienza, TESIM, Ilze Ciganska, Interact, Diana Kobayter, TESIM/ 20.01.2026

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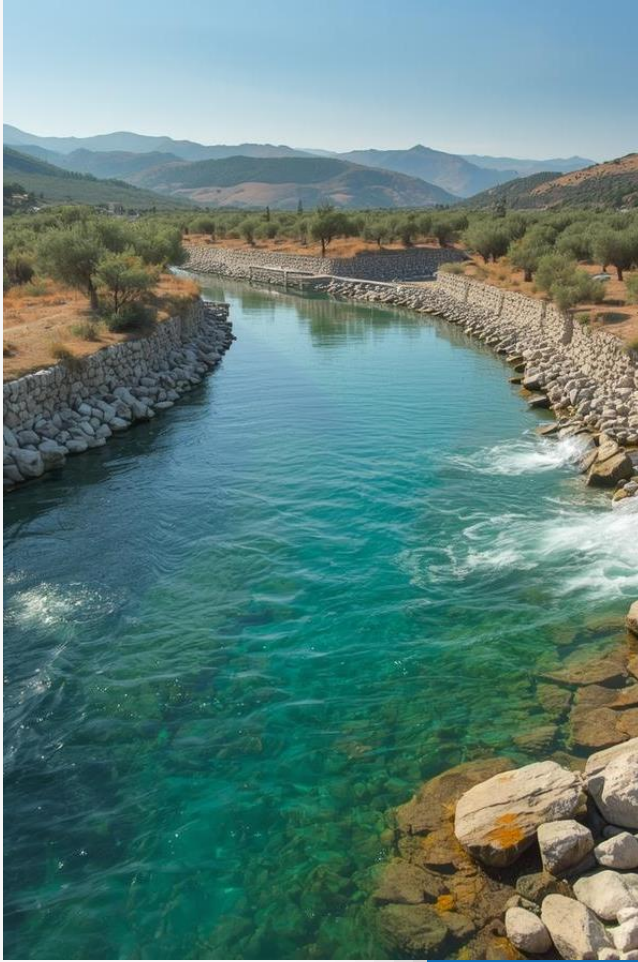
Thank you

Interreg as a Policy Lab for Med Focus on water

*Jean Pierre Halkin, DG Regio, EU
Commission*

*Reka Rozsavolgy, DG Regio, EU
Commission*





Panel Discussion

- Veliko Srzic | [SWAMrisk project](#)
- Barbara Sarnari | [URWAN](#), [NAWAMED](#), [Medwaycap](#)
- Nicola Tselikas | [RE-WATER](#), [ECO-FLOW](#), [AQUA](#)
- Stefano Marino | [RE-WATER](#), [ECO-FLOW](#), [AQUA](#)

Moderated by: **Rosario Sapienza**, TESIM





Project Contributions

- Diego Santalana | [WABIN project](#)
- Roula Khadra | PROTECHMED [MENAWARA](#) and [Medwaycap](#)
- Magida Mcheik | [WISEMED](#), EVE projects
- Mladen Todorovic | [IR2MA project](#)
- Daiva Matoniene | [RESWATER](#) project
- Christoph Schoder | [WetLand4Change project](#)



River Contract

INTERACT SESSION

20th january 2026

Diego Santaliana

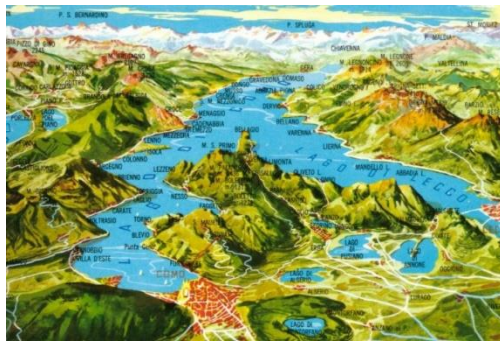
Upper Adriatic Technology Park



What is a River Contract?

River Contracts are voluntary strategic and negotiated planning tools that pursue the protection and proper management of water resources and the enhancement of river territories together with protection from hydraulic risks, contributing to local development.

<https://www.ita-slo.eu/en/wabin>



In addition to the River contracts, there are evolutions that lead to the Lake, Mouth, Lagoon, Aquifer and Coast contracts.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qbFINAIwSU>

The choice of River Contracts

The contractual management of **collective assets** and the adoption of instruments such as **River Contracts** today represent a concrete alternative to the ongoing risk and the seemingly "inevitable" and progressive degradation of the land and environment. **They represent a peaceful and democratic grassroots effort, a resumption of collective responsibility, a form of direct democracy.**

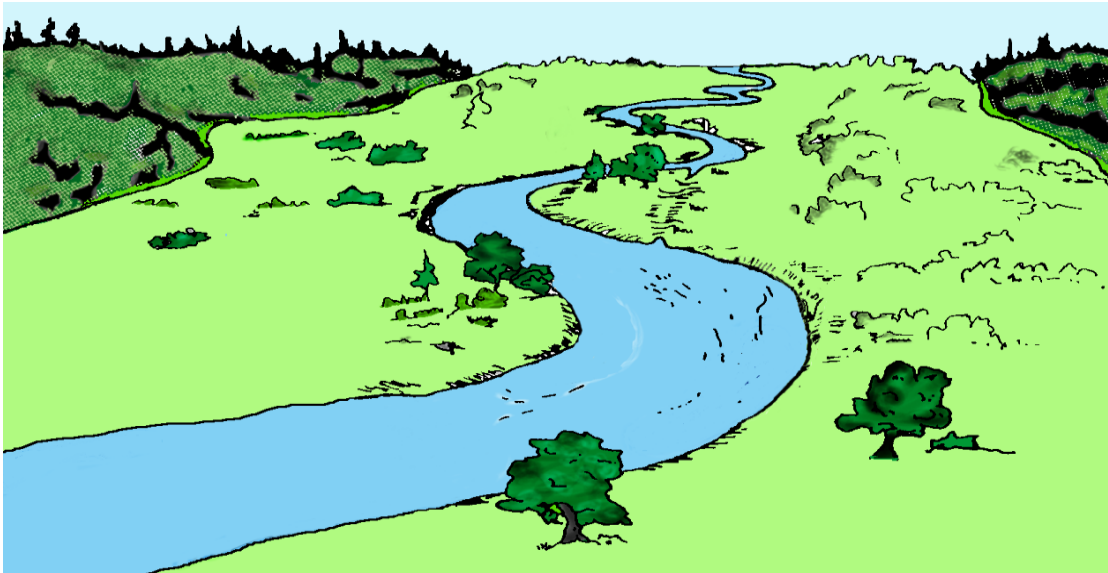


“.....the sleep of citizens generates monsters”

They originated in France in the 1980s.

- Participatory processes activate Contracts.
- Contracts produce projects, projects actions and interventions.

The purpose of a River Contract lies in the ability to produce concrete improvements in a river territory.



They have become an operational tool in other European countries, including Italy.

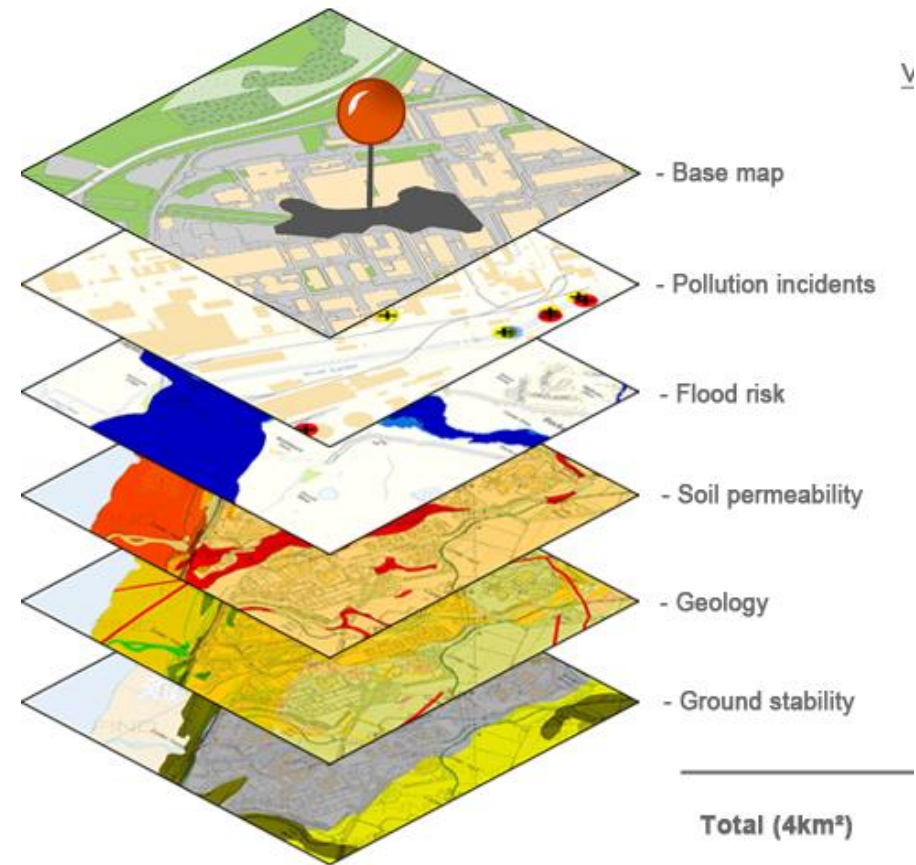
Seeking new collective values

The strategies implemented by a river contract must promote coordinated actions regarding water, soil, and related resources. They must directly engage stakeholders in protecting natural capital.



River contracts are a governance tool and should under no circumstances be mistaken for a new level of planning or programming.

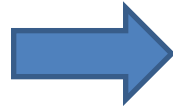
River Contracts: systematizing knowledge



De-fragmenting the knowledge system allows us to avoid duplication or the implementation of useless or even harmful works for the territory, or even to create virtuous synergies between interventions.

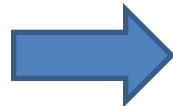
Basic Requirements in Italy

Purpose and coherence requirements



Aimed at clarifying the interactions between River Contracts and environmental legislation, with particular reference to the Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC), the Floods Directive (Directive 2007/60/EC), the Habitats Directive (Directive no. 92/43/EC), the related objectives, the daughter legislation and all the land use plans and programmes.

Setup requirements



They concern the phases considered essential for the articulation of a River Contract

River Contracts essential phases

Document of Intent

This document launches the process. It is drafted by the CDF's promoting committee and contains a preliminary analysis of the issues to be addressed and the objectives.

Integrated preliminary fact-finding analysis

Activation of the River Contract management bodies, launch of the fact-finding analysis of the territory, and process of involving local stakeholders

Strategic Document

Concretely and comprehensively defines the medium- to long-term scenario.

Action Plan

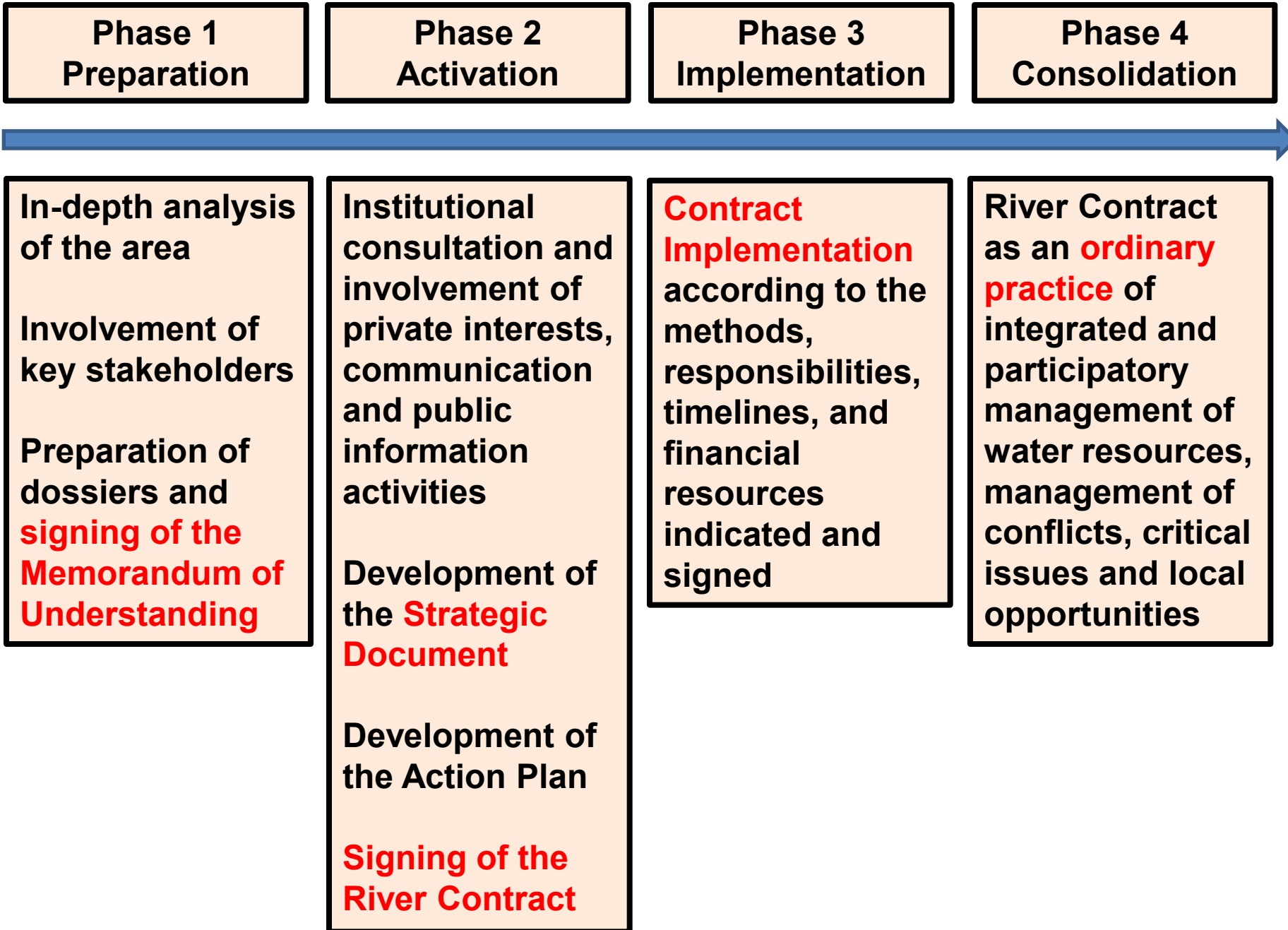
Contains timelines, responsibilities, phases, monitoring, etc..

Signing of the River Contract

Implementation of the action program in 3-5 years

Monitoring

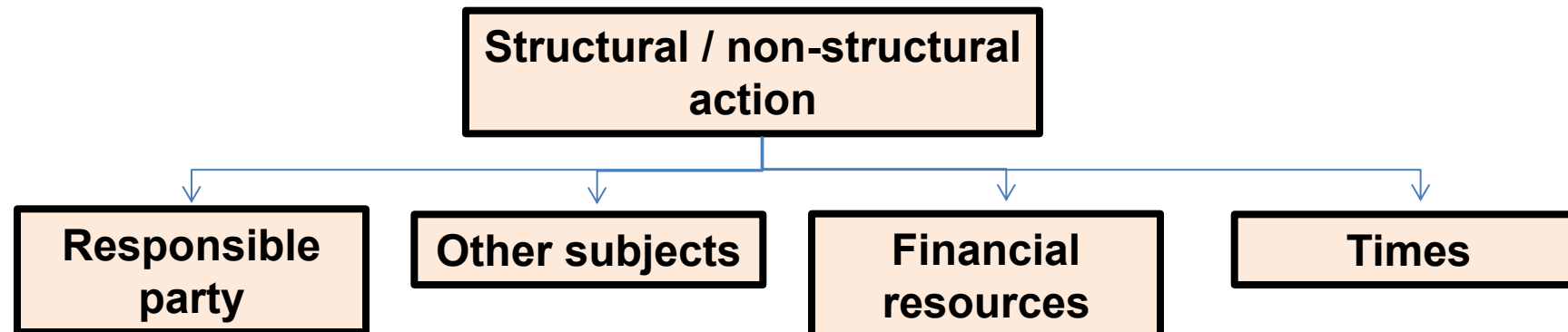
Contract implementation period



The Action Plan

The Action Plan, which is an integral part of the Contract, **consists of all the actions agreed upon by the signatories** to achieve the identified objectives.

Following the signing of the Contract, actions (structural or non-structural) consistent with the needs identified during the process must be implemented. It is structured as a collection of plans that will be constantly updated and enriched, consistent with the ongoing nature of the Contract's negotiated programming process.





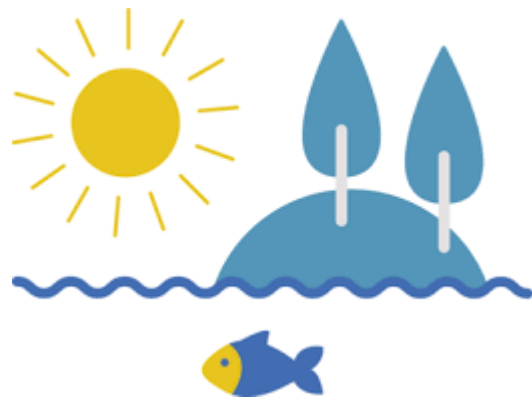
River Contract

*INTERACT SESSION
20th January 2026*

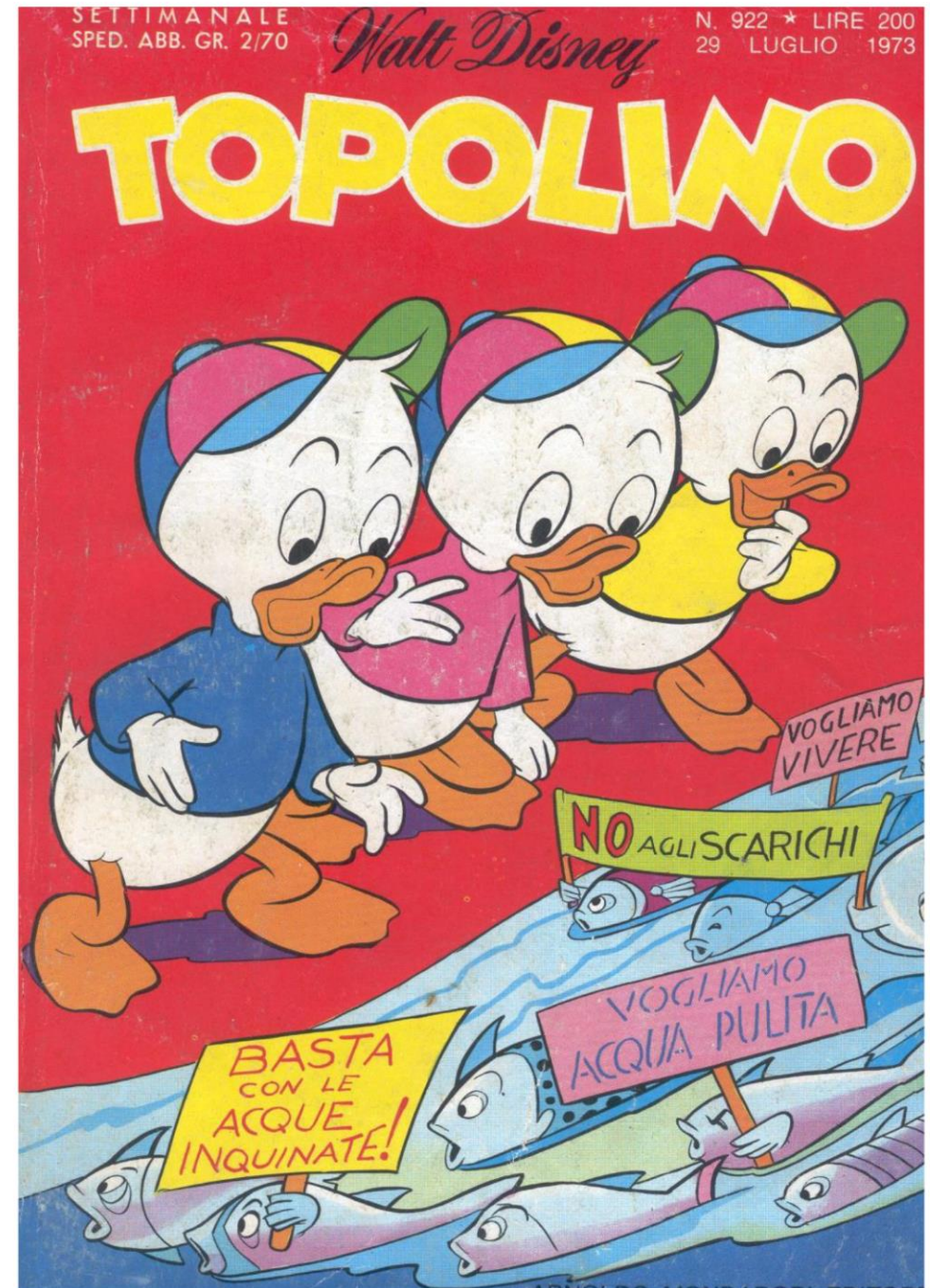
THANK YOU

*Diego Santalana
Upper Adriatic Technology Park*

H₂O vs Topolino



MedLab Thematic Week | Focus on Water
20/01/2026



How many names
does water have?

when we say “water”,
are we really talking
about the same thing?

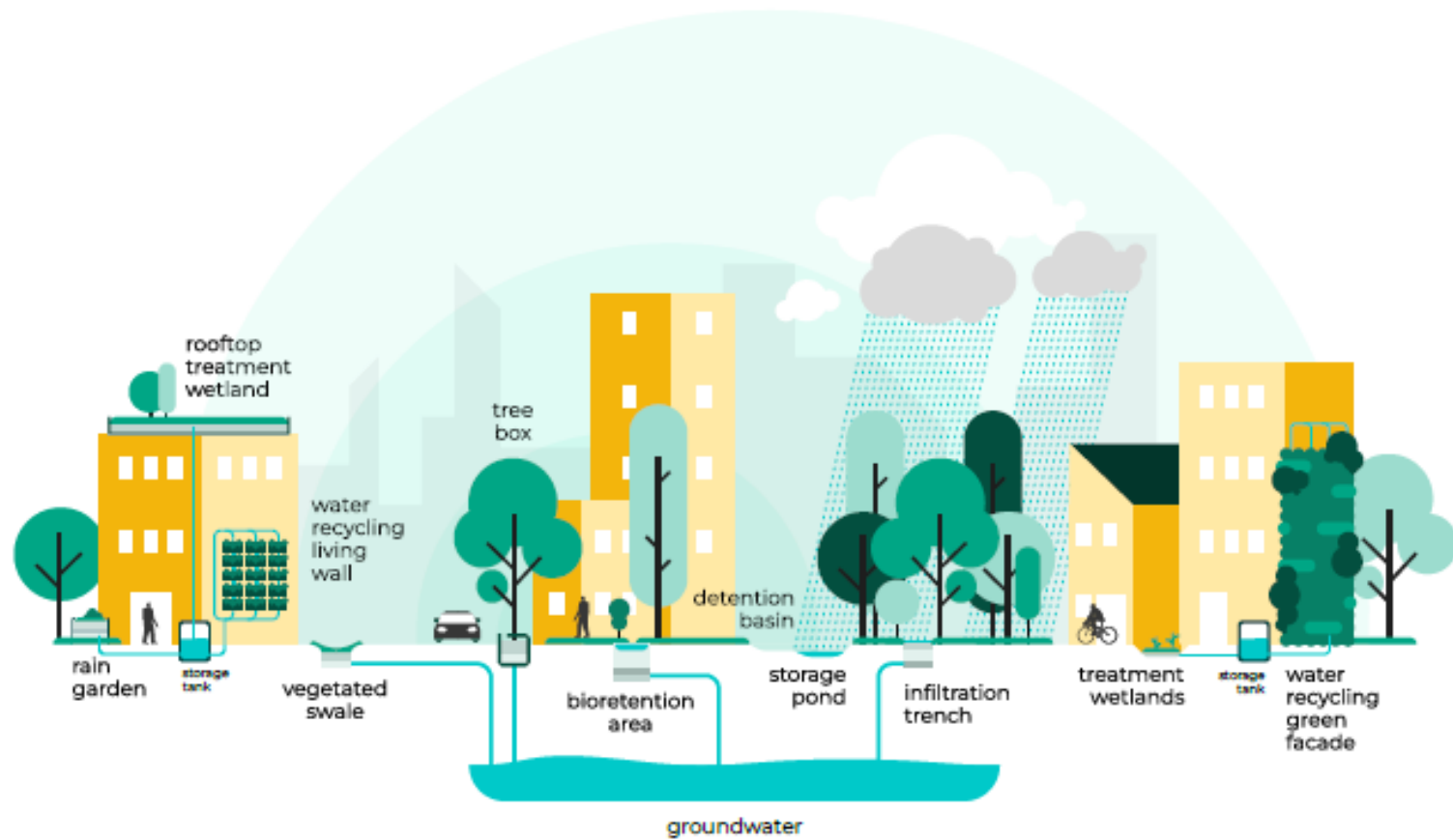


ENPI CBC MED – SWMED project – Ramallah 2013

Water is never abstract.
It is always local.

Water cooperation rarely fails because of a lack of solutions.
It fails when we stop translating questions into local
contexts

WATER SMART NBS





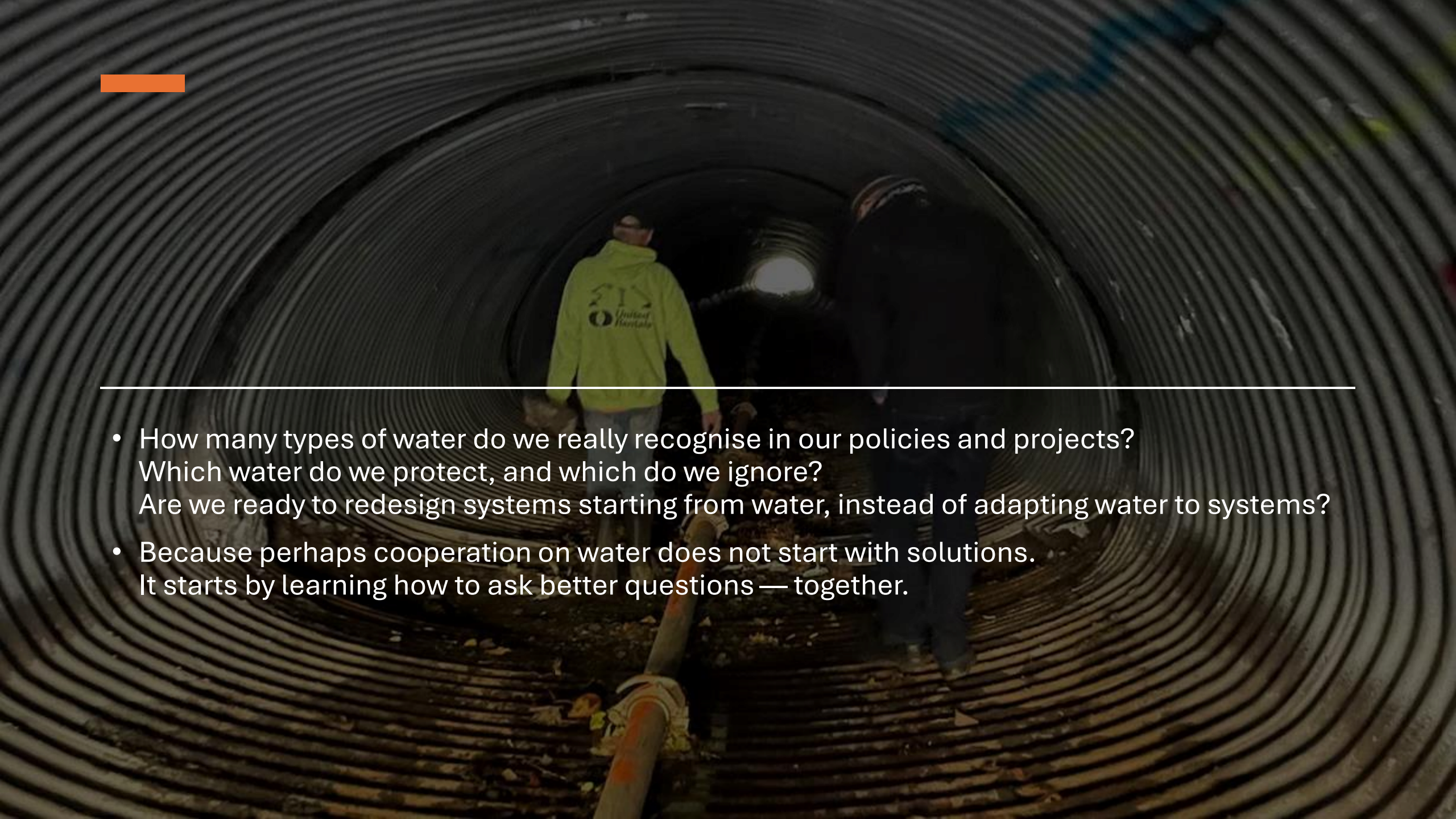
this does not shock us



this shock us

how we manage water,

how we relate to it.

- 
- How many types of water do we really recognise in our policies and projects? Which water do we protect, and which do we ignore? Are we ready to redesign systems starting from water, instead of adapting water to systems?
 - Because perhaps cooperation on water does not start with solutions. It starts by learning how to ask better questions — together.



Have we always looked inside the pipe?

Are we ready to look around it, too?

Barbara Sarnari
Vice-President
SVI.MED.

www.SVIMED.EU

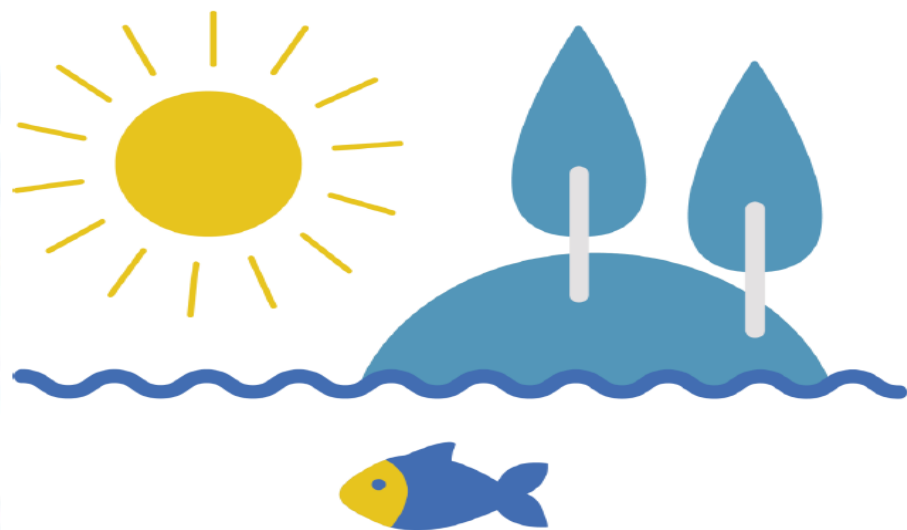
b.sarnari@svimed.eu





acquedotto pugliese

l'acqua, bene comune



MedLab Thematic Week

Connecting Mediterranean practitioners
for better synergies

January 20, 2026 Managing a Shared Resource: Water Governance Across the Mediterranean

Challenges and opportunities by Interreg Programmes: the experience of Acquedotto Pugliese

Institution: Acquedotto Pugliese S.p.A

Lecturer: **Eng. Nicola Tselikas¹** & **Eng. Stefano Marino¹**

¹DIRAM – Department of Environmental & Energy
(Acquedotto Pugliese S.p.A.)

Outline

A worldwide issue: the water scarcity

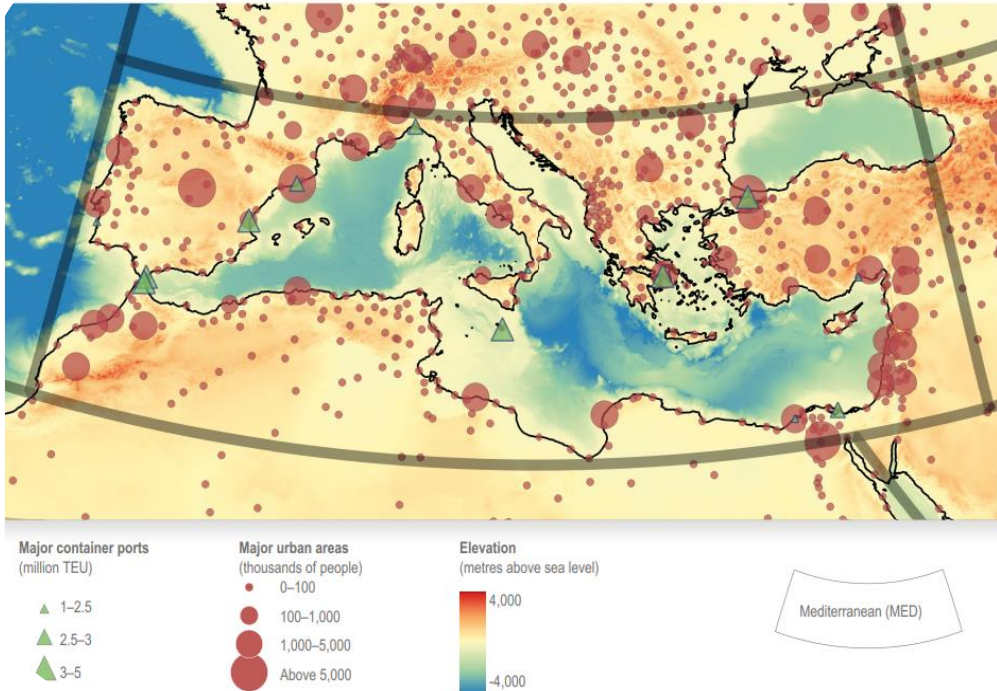
What solutions from Acquedotto Pugliese SpA

- ECO FLOW
- AQUA

Let's Discuss!

A worldwide issue: the water scarcity

Mediterranean region



Source: *The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) -United Nations*

The Mediterranean region now hosts more than 500 million people with a high concentration of urban settlements and industrial infrastructure close to sea level.

Climate change strongly interacts with other environmental problems in the Mediterranean Basin, resulting from urbanization, land use change, overfishing, pollution, biodiversity loss and degradation of land and marine ecosystems.

Identified regional key risks by climate change include increased water scarcity (notably in the south and east) and droughts (in the north), coastal risks due to flooding, erosion and saltwater intrusions, wildfire, terrestrial and marine ecosystem losses, as well as risks to food production and security, human health, well-being and cultural heritage.

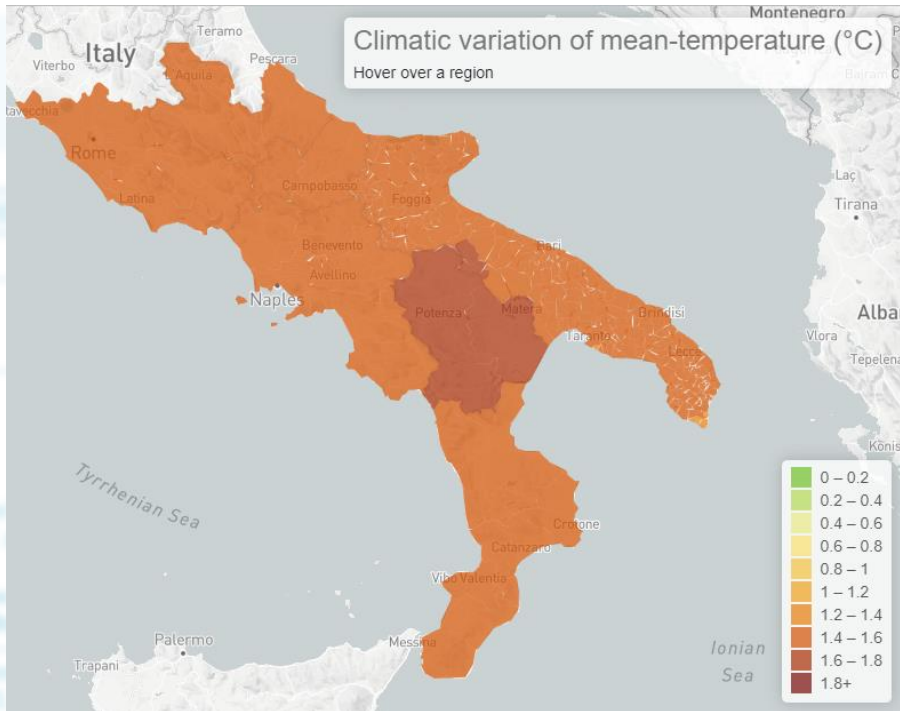
One third of the EU territory suffers from water stress and water scarcity and this is a concern for many EU Member States.

According to climate change projections, the problem will increase across the EU in the next decades.

Reduced availability of fresh water negatively affects EU citizens and economic sectors (agriculture, tourism, industry, energy and transport).

A worldwide issue: the water scarcity

Effect of climate change on the territories of interest of Acquedotto Pugliese



Piattaforma WEB DataClima

<https://www.dataclime.com/servizi-dataclime/>

can contact: clime@cmcc.it

Future Period: 2021-2050
Scenario: RCP4.5

Variation of average-flows (%)
Hover over a region

Legend for Variation of average-flows (%):
-24 - -20
-20 - -16
-16 - -12
-12 - -8
-8 - -4
-4 - 0
0 - 4
4 - 8
8 - 12
12 - 16
16 - 20
20 - 24
24+

Temporal Scale:
Field: Freshwater resource security
Reference Period: 1981-2010
Future Period: 2021-2050
Scenario: RCP4.5

Target: Territory
Component: Hazard
Indicators: WD-Warm-dry days (days)
Climate Data: CORDEX EUR-11
Temporal Scale: DJF (WINTER)
Representation Type: Map
Area: bacino distrettuale aggregato

Legend for wd (days):
0 - 2
2 - 4
4 - 6
6 - 8
8 - 10
10 - 12
12 - 14
14 - 16
16 - 18
18 - 20
20 - 22
22 - 24
24+

download

A worldwide issue: the water scarcity

THE AQP CHALLENGE (AND ALSO MEDITERRANEAN BASIN): WATER SCARCITY!

INTERREG GREECE-ITALY	identified as a "Lighthouse Project" REWATER (2017-2020)	ongoing ECOFLOW (2025-2027)
INTERREG IPA ADRION	ongoing AQUA (2024-2027)	NOTUS ENWADRION
INTERREG IPA SOUTH ADRIATIC	Study visit organized after the end of the project CROSSWATER+ (2024-2025)	ongoing RESILIENCE (2023-2027)
INTERREG NEXT MED		LEAKAGE

*Circular economy and bio-economy
through the reuse of treated
wastewater*

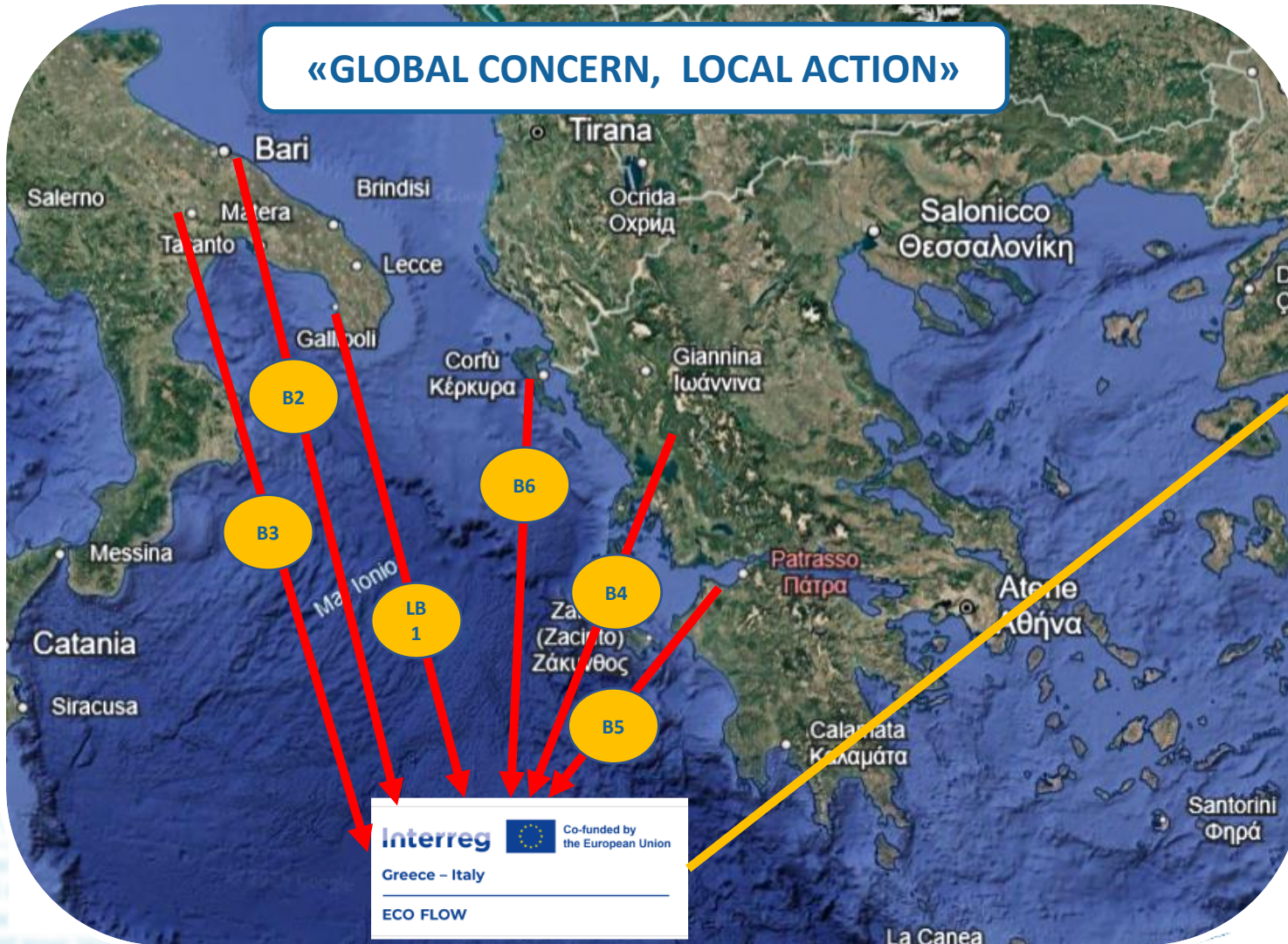
*Water management, water
resource conservation and
digital transition*

Governance/Capacity building

*Water management and water resource
conservation through leakage reduction*

SOLUTIONS

What solutions from Acquedotto Pugliese SpA – ECO FLOW



ECO FLOW

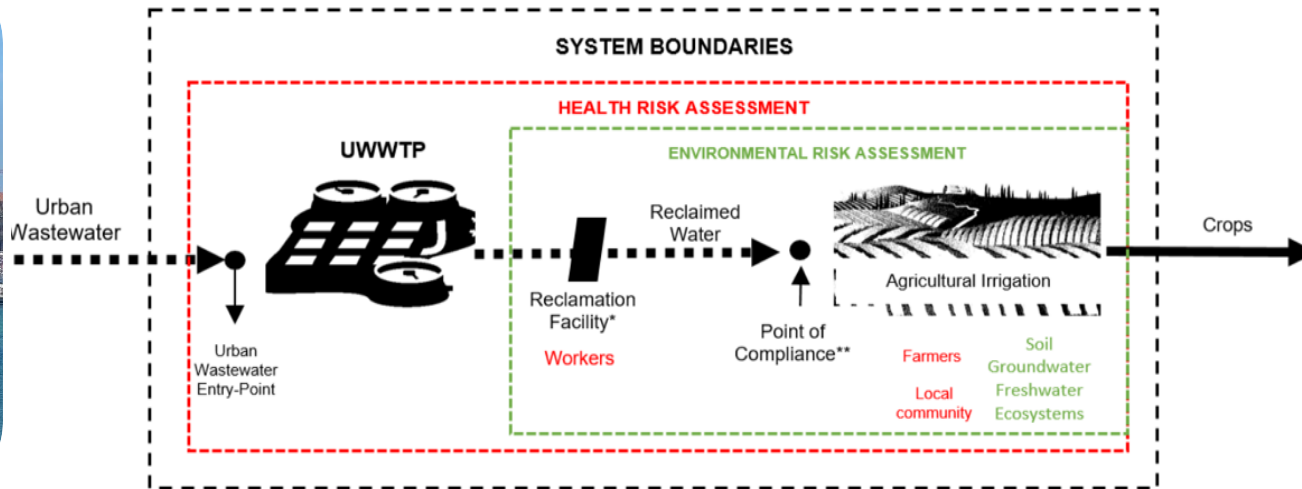
A tool to share experiences, best practices, challenges and opportunities by ongoing water crisis and new EU Regulations

- **LB1** ACQUEDOTTO PUGLIESE
- **B2** REGIONAL AGENCY FOR IRRIGATION AND FOREST ACTIVITIES
- **B3** ACQUEDOTTO LUCANO
- **B4** MUNICIPAL WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE COMPANY OF ARTA
- **B5** MUNICIPAL WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE COMPANY OF DYMAION
- **B6** INTERMUNICIPAL WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE COMPANY OF MUNICIPALITIES OF CENTRAL CORFU AND DIAPONTIAN ISLANDS AND SOUTH CORFU

What solutions from Acquedotto Pugliese SpA – ECO FLOW

REGULATION (EU) 2020/741: minimum requirements for the reuse of water for irrigation purposes

Source: Technical Guidance Water Reuse Risk Management for Agricultural Irrigation Schemes in Europe (JRC)



RISK-BASED MANAGEMENT IN WATER REUSE



What solutions from Acquedotto Pugliese SpA – ECO FLOW

From REWATER to ECO FLOW



RE-WATER has obtained recognition from the Italian Agency for Territorial Cohesion as a "lighthouse project" for promoting the introduction of environmentally sustainable technologies and processes for the management of wastewater disposal systems.

A patent application has been obtained in December 2023,

ECO FLOW project aims to give continuity to the implemented actions, applications and obtained patent and is based on the possibility of replicating the pilot plant successfully implemented in previous project Re-water, in other urban wastewater treatment plants in the Programme Area. ECO FLOW actions allow to test and experiment potential new applications for treating water with a higher pollutant load and application of the technology to treat of localized groundwater pollution.

What solutions from Acquedotto Pugliese SpA – AQUA

AQUA – “Enhancing Water Management for Climate Change Resilience in the Adriatic-Ionian Area” <https://aqua.interreg-ipa-adrion.eu/>

Interreg VI-B IPA Adriatic Ionian IPA- ADRION00297



MANAGING AUTHORITY

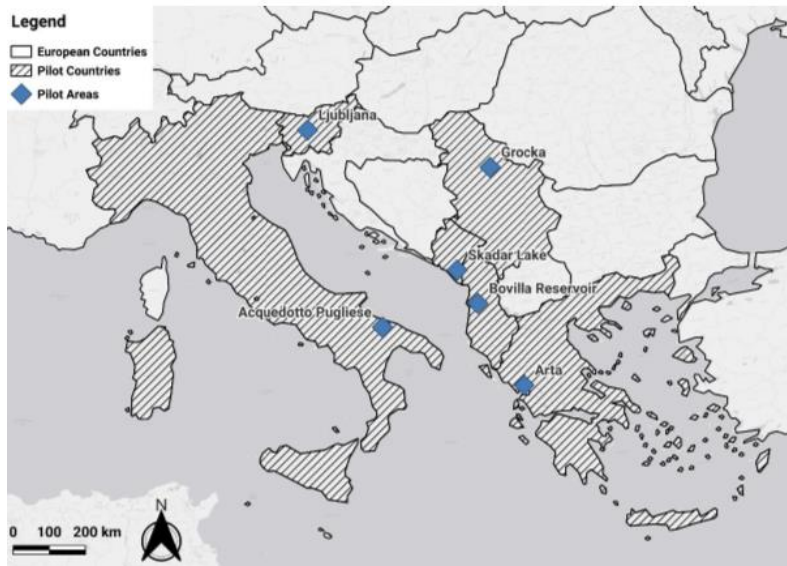
 Regione Emilia-Romagna

The main goal of the **AQUA project** is to enhance resilience to climate change of water utility companies in the Adriatic-Ionian area. By developing a joint action plan and strategy and user-tailored tools, the project aims to improve water resource management, increase capacities for climate change adaptation, and mitigate the impact of natural and man-made disasters. What sets the AQUA project apart is its innovative approach and emphasis on collaboration.

What solutions from Acquedotto Pugliese SpA – AQUA

AQUA – “Enhancing Water Management for Climate Change Resilience in the Adriatic-Ionian Area”

Interreg VI-B IPA Adriatic Ionian IPA-ADRION00297



The **AQUA project** is led by a consortium of 7 partners:

- Acquedotto Pugliese S.p.A. (**Lead Partner LP**)
- Fondazione centro Euro Mediterraneo sui Cambiamenti Climatici CMCC (PP2)
- Public Company Vodovod Kanalizacija Snaga (Slovenia, PP3)
- Municipal Water Supply and Sewerage Company of Arta (Greece, PP4)
- UKT Tirana water and Sewerage Utility (Albania, PP5)
- LLC Regional waterworks for Montenegrin Coast (Montenegro, PP6)
- Administration of the City Municipality of Grocka (Serbia, PP7)



What solutions from Acquedotto Pugliese SpA – AQUA

WP1 Project specific Objective

The AQUA project aims to improve water resource management and weather-induced risk mitigation in the context of climate change. This is pursued through the development and enhancement of an integrated suite of tools (monitoring, modeling, decision support), which form the backbone of what are now commonly referred to as digital twins. This framework is then expected to address specific needs across different pilot areas.



LET'S DISCUSS!




OPEN DISCUSSION POINTS

ECO FLOW

-  **1. Strategic Vision & Circular Economy Transition**
 - How effectively does ECO FLOW support the shift toward a circular water economy in Italy and Greece?
 - What long-term policy changes are needed to sustain treated wastewater reuse beyond the project timeline?
 - How can the project influence regional water-scarcity strategies?
-  **2. Wastewater Reuse Models & Safety Standards**
 - Which reuse applications (agriculture, industrial, environmental) should be prioritized in pilot areas?
 - How will Italy and Greece harmonize quality standards for treated wastewater?
 - What monitoring protocols ensure safe, reliable reuse?



AQUA

-  **3. Digital Innovation & Digital Twins**
 - What are the minimum data requirements for building effective digital twins of water systems?
 - How will AQP and partners ensure interoperability of digital tools across countries?
-  **4. Climate Change Adaptation Measures**
 - Which climate scenarios will be used to model future water scarcity and flood risks?
 - How will the project quantify improvements in resilience?
 - What indicators will measure success in reducing vulnerability to extreme weather events?
-  **5. Pilot Sites & Demonstration Activities**
 - Which regions or systems will serve as pilot areas?
 - What criteria will determine scalability of pilot solutions?
 - How will pilot results be communicated to stakeholders?

LET'S DISCUSS!

OPEN DISCUSSION POINTS

Sustainability & Long-Term Impact

- How will results be maintained after funding ends?
- Can the project influence regional policies or investment plans?
- What indicators will show real change?



Transnational Value

- How will results be maintained after funding ends?
- Can the project influence regional policies or investment plans?
- What indicators will show real change?

THANK YOU FOR THE ATTENTION!

References:

- <https://www.greece-italy.eu/project/ecoflow/>
- <https://re-water.chemeng.upatras.gr/>
- <https://aqua.interreg-ipa-adrion.eu/>
- <https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/sa-resilience-strategic-project-kick-off-meeting-in-tirana>
- <https://www.dataclime.com/servizi-dataclime/>

Lecturer: **Eng. Nicola Tselikas¹ & Eng. Stefano Marino¹**
mail: n.tselikas@aqp.it st.marino@aqp.it



acquedotto
pugliese

l'acqua, bene comune

Acquedotto Pugliese Spa
con Unico Azionista Regione Puglia

Italy - 70121 Bari, Via Cognetti 36

www.aqp.it



Relevant Events

- The Cairo Water Week CWW 12th-16th October 2025:
<https://www.cairowaterweek.eg/cww2025/>
- UfM, Regional Platform on Water, Barcelona, 5-6 November 2025, prepare the ground for the Second UfM Ministerial Meeting on Water, scheduled for 24-25 March 2026 in Rome, Italy:
[https://ufmsecretariat.org/15th-ufm-regional-platform-water/?ct=t\(Newsletter_EN_Dec2025\)](https://ufmsecretariat.org/15th-ufm-regional-platform-water/?ct=t(Newsletter_EN_Dec2025))
- EC Water resilience forum, Brussels 8 December 2025:
https://environment.ec.europa.eu/events/water-resilience-forum-2025-12-08_en
- Malta: National Water Conference 22 January 2026
<https://energywateragency.gov.mt/nationalwaterconference/>
- Arab Water Forum within Saudi Water Week (5-8 April) Jeddah-KSA
- EuroMED Water Forum Rome (29 September-2 October)

Additional Links

- Material on evolutions that lead to the Lake, Mouth, Lagoon, Aquifer and Coast contracts. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qbFINAIwSU>
- Join SWAMrisk LinkedIn link: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/swamrisk> and follow the project's Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61564897307822&locale=hr_HR
- Visit: Medwaycap platform, NCW Best practices inventory : <https://www.bpinventory.com>
- <https://www.dataclime.com/servizi-dataclime/>
- Further projects addressing water issues: <https://interreg-hr-ba-me.eu/project/project-library/mowaclim/>, <https://programming14-20.italy-croatia.eu/web/secure>, <https://programming14-20.italy-croatia.eu/web/most>
- Join Interreg EuroMED Wetland4Change LinkedIn page <https://www.linkedin.com/company/wetland4change/posts/>
- Complexity of dimensions of water is reflected also in the new strategic territorial projects in the framework of the Natural Heritage Mission of the Interreg EuroMed program, WATHER , focusing on traditional water management practices and REDEEM, focussing on the NEXUS dimensions. Read more: <https://natural-heritage.interreg-euro-med.eu/#:~:text=The%20Natural%20Heritage%20Mission%20of,of%20the%20Euro-Mediterranean%20area>. Learn about the project results here: <https://natural-heritage.interreg-euro-med.eu/#:~:text=The%20Natural%20Heritage%20Mission%20of,of%20the%20Euro-Mediterranean%20area>.
- Strategy for the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus in the Mediterranean Source to Sea Continuum: https://www.wes-bca.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/WES-BCA-C1_HOR-1-Action-Plan-for-Med-WEFE-Strategy.pdf

Cooperation works

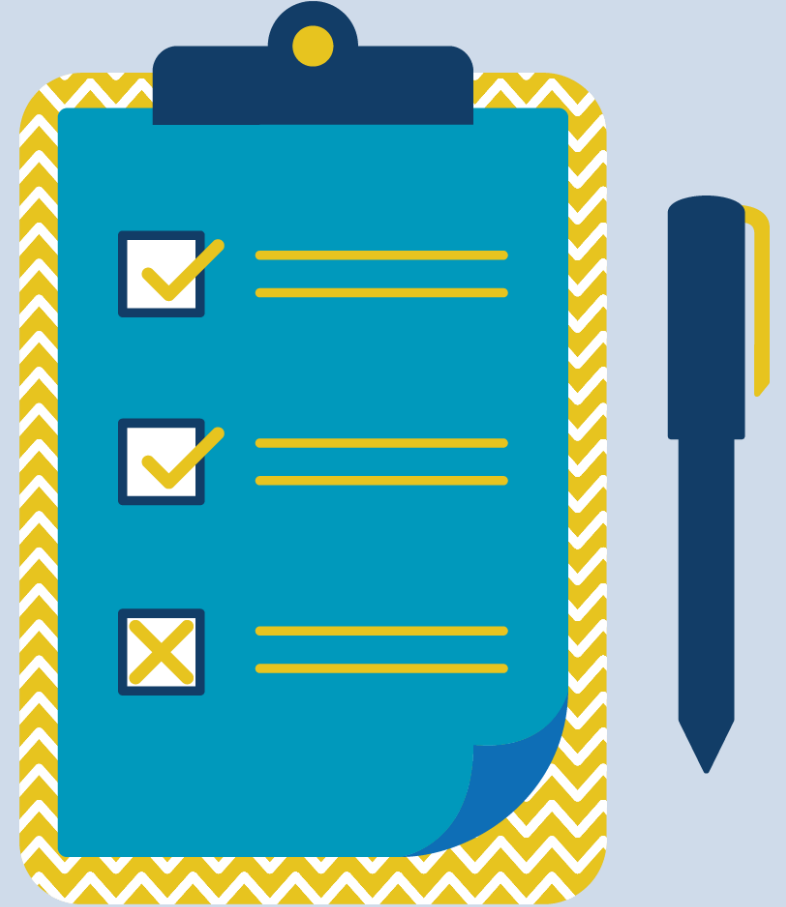
All materials will be available on:
Interact.eu/Library

Want to discuss it? Join our MS Teams environment!
Portal.Interact.eu | Programme and Project Management

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Your opinion matters to us.

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Primary knowledge area

Synergies and cooperation | MedLab

Author(s)

Mercedes Acitores

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