

**Interreg
Danube Region**



Co-funded by
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Getting to know D-CLEAN

Webinar 1
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D-CLEAN summary in words

“Improving Water Quality in the Danube River Basin: Nature-Based Solutions for Sustainable Wastewater and Stormwater Management in Small Settlements”



The D-CLEAN project aims to address the pressing issue of wastewater and stormwater pollution in the small settlements in Danube River Basin by rising awareness, building capacity, and identifying, testing and showcasing practical solutions. Our aim is to improve water quality within the DRB by promoting the use of sustainable WW and SW management practices resilient to climate change (NBS) and providing stakeholders with the necessary tools.

D-CLEAN summary in numbers

A map of Europe with the Danube river basin highlighted in dark blue. The basin covers parts of Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, and Romania. The rest of Europe is shown in light green.

1 river basin

3 years

5 pilot actions

7 countries

10 partners

11 associated partners

20+ webinars and learning sessions

2.107.600 EUROS

1 vision

A cleaner, healthier Danube through innovative, collaborative, and sustainable wastewater and stormwater management practices that leave no community behind.

D-CLEAN Key Messages

D-CLEAN wants to **demonstrate** that Nature-based solutions (NBS) offer a practical and cost-efficient solution for wastewater and stormwater management in small settlements. They are adaptable to local conditions and deliver multiple environmental, social, and economic benefits.

D-CLEAN wants to **empower** stakeholders with the knowledge and tools needed to plan and implement sustainable, decentralized wastewater and stormwater solutions. Through hands-on training, co-design in pilot areas, and the development of a practical planning guide, the project strengthens local capacity and supports long-term environmental resilience in the Danube River Basin and beyond.

D-CLEAN plans to **contribute** to the implementation of EU water policy by supporting countries in meeting the requirements of the revised Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive and the Water Framework Directive, with a particular focus on small and rural settlements. It also supports the development of regional strategies and water policies, providing targeted policy advice for small communities.

Why D-CLEAN?

Policy Background

The European Union's water policy, including the **Water Framework Directive** (WFD; 2000/60/EC), and the **Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive** (UWWTD; 91/271/EEC with revision 2022), places ambitious requirements on EU Member States. These **obligations require significant investment** in wastewater (WW) and stormwater (SW) infrastructure, effective management, and cost-recovery mechanisms.

*The revised UWWTD now explicitly addresses the challenges faced by small settlements with less than 2000 PE. Previously, the directive focused primarily on larger urban agglomerations and settlements above 2000 PE. Under the new provisions, however, **all communities with 1000 inhabitants or more will be required to set up wastewater collection systems!***



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Why D-CLEAN?

Territorial Characteristics and Stakeholder Needs

In most countries of the DRB, **rural WW management is a major challenge** (see “Rural wastewater treatment workshop, ICPDR, IAWD, 2021: Beyond utility reach? How to close the rural access gap to wastewater treatment and sanitation services”).

The discharge of untreated WW from small settlements significantly **affects water quality** in the middle and lower DRB, especially in the Tisa, Sava, and Mura-Drava sub-basins.

Local utilities face difficulties due to **insufficient management skills, financial resources**, and decentralized **settlement needs**. *The uptake of sustainable WW and SW management is hampered by a lack of expertise and financing, inconsistent planning, policy, and institutional frameworks.*



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Why D-CLEAN?

Strategic Opportunity

These needs and challenges are also recognized by:

the **EUSDR** - In line with the **PA4 objective** of the Danube Strategy to reduce nutrient levels in the Danube, the elimination of dispersed WW pollution from small settlements needs to be urgently addressed and implemented.

ICPDR objectives: work of specific expert groups + Slovenian Presidency of the **ICPDR** which prioritizes river and community resilience.

EU Water **Resilience Strategy**.

A joint approach on the management of WW originating from small settlements is needed at transnational level in the DRB.



D-CLEAN Partnership

Lead partner: *GWP CEE – Slovakia*



Partners

- *UNI LJUBLJANA – Slovenia*
- *BOKU – Austria*
- *IAWD – Austria/International*
- *LIMNOS – Slovenia*
- *ROMANIAN WATERS- Romania*
- *KOTIVIZIG – Hungary*
- *RRA SREM – Serbia*
- *RWA – Romania*
- *MEDJIMURSKE VODE - Croatia*

Associated Partners

- *ICPDR – International*
- *FOSTER EUROPE– International*
- *Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Hungary*
- *Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests – Romania*
- *Chamber of Public Utilities – Slovenia*
- *Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection – Vojvodina, Serbia*
- *General Directorate of Water Management – Hungary*
- *AquaSan – Bosnia and Herzegovina*
- *Vrbovce Municipality – Slovakia*
- *Razkrizje Municipality – Slovenia*

D-CLEAN Specific Objectives

SO1 - Analyse

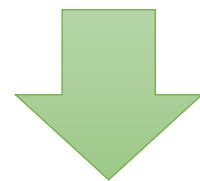
Analyzing needs and challenges of WW and SW management in DRB to prioritize sustainable solutions
(April 2025 – June 2026)

Activity 1.1: Analysis of regional status quo

Activity 1.2: Zoom-in on pilot areas

Activity 1.3: Identification of Stakeholder needs

Activity 1.4: Prioritization of sustainable WW and SW solutions



1. List of solutions based on regional and stakeholder needs

SO2 - Train

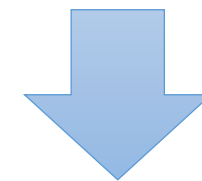
Enhancing capacity of stakeholders: technical and conceptual understanding of sustainable WW
(June 2025 – March 2028)

Activity 2.1: Development of training materials for co-design

Activity 2.2: Training of stakeholders in WW and SW management

Activity 2.3: Co-design testing of decentralized solutions in pilot areas

Activity 2.4: Developing transnational roadmap for WW/SW implementation



2. Knowledge Transfer and training
3. Roadmap for Experts and Practitioner

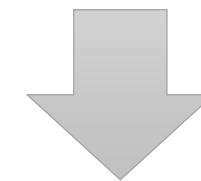
SO3 - Upscale

Mainstreaming SW and WW in the region - improved policies and Knowledge Transfer
(April 2026-March 2028)

Activity 3.1: Establishing policy dialogs; analysis of policy needs, challenges

Activity 3.2: Develop climate change-adapted regional WW and SW management strategy for small settlements

Activity 3.3: Transnational Knowledge Hub on Sustainable WW and SW for the Danube Region



4. Transnational strategy for Sustainable WW and SW management in DRB

Follow us and engage!



<https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/d-clean>



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/d-clean0/>



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Thank you!
Hvala!
Хвала!
Danke!
Mulțumesc!
Ďakujem!
Köszönöm!



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