

**Interreg
Danube Region**



Co-funded by
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MicroDrink

Output 3.1 MicroDrink Board

Drafted by Croatian Geological Survey

Elaborated with input provided by all project partners

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Project MicroDrink

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1. MicroDrink Board

Project MicroDrink was approved under the 1st call of the Interreg Danube Region Programme, beginning with implementation in January 2024 and ending in June 2026. Throughout project duration, 30 total institutions jointly collaborated with the goal of enhancing capacity building and strengthening governance at different levels for the management and prevention of microplastics pollution in drinking water resources of the Danube Region.

The MicroDrink Board was established at the start of project MicroDrink, representing a coordinated transnational network of experts with the aim of addressing microplastics (MP) pollution in drinking water resources across the Danube Region. Given the absence of harmonised methodologies for microplastic monitoring and analysis implemented at a large scale, as well as significant differences in institutional capacities and management practices across the Danube Region, the Board brought together 11 Project Partners (PPs) and 19 Associated Strategic Partners (ASPs) to coordinate the identification of best practices, facilitate the exchange of state-of-the-art knowledge, and guide the development of a harmonised approach for microplastic monitoring and management applicable in both EU and non-EU countries.













Throughout the project, the Board served as the principal platform for cooperation between scientific institutions, water utilities, public authorities, public health organisations, enterprises, and other institutions. Through regular meetings, workshops, consultations, roundtable discussions, feedback loops and stakeholder engagement activities, the Board collected and evaluated evidence on MP occurrence, monitoring methods, analytical techniques, and institutional capacities across the Danube Region. This collaborative process directly supported the development and refinement of the harmonised approach described in Output 1.1 "MP approach harmonized at EU & non-EU level" "Output 1.1 " MP approach harmonized at EU & non-EU level", the implementation and results thereof provided in Outputs 2.1 "Microplastics in drinking water obtained from karst water resources in Danube region", 2.2 "Microplastics in drinking water obtained from intergranular water resources in Danube region" and 2.3 "Microplastics in drinking water obtained from surface/river bank filtration water resources in Danube region", as well as several project solutions and tools valuable as a basis for action planning and decision making in the region and beyond, including the MicroDrink Knowledge Base, Decision Making Support Tool, Roadmap Towards MP Strategy, Project Monograph, and more. All of the project results which were elaborated by members of the MicroDrink Board are available publicly on the MicroDrink official project website: <https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/microdrink>.









To ensure long-term impact, the Board focused on sustainability and durability from project start, playing a central role in ensuring that project knowledge was transferred beyond the partnership. It facilitated the identification and dissemination of best practices, promoted synergies with related European projects, and supported the creation of open-access resources, as mentioned above.

These activities serve to strengthen institutional capacities and enable the wider uptake of project outputs and results among water operators, authorities, researchers, and other stakeholders.

Within this context, Output 3.1 presents the overview of all activities within the MicroDrink Board, including regularly held meetings, key findings and recommendations, and future outlook.

MicroDrink Board Members – Institution		Contact person
LP	Croatian Geological Survey https://www.hgi-cgs.hr/en/	 Dr. sc. Jasmina Lukač Reberski, jlukac@hgi-cgs.hr
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PP3	University of Ljubljana https://www.uni-lj.si/en/university	 Dr. sc. Anja Torkar, anja.torkar@ntf.uni-lj.si
PP4	Public company Kovod Postojna, water supply, sewerage, a limited liability company, Postojna https://www.kovod.si/	 Edi Šibenik, edi.sibenik@kovod.si
PP6	Environment Agency Austria https://www.umweltbundesamt.at/en/	 Helga Lindinger, helga.lindinger@umweltbundesamt.at
PP7	T. G. Masaryk Water Research Institute https://www.vuv.cz/en/	 Zbynek Hrkal, hrkal@vuv.cz
PP8	Eurofins Environment Testing Kft. https://www.eurofins.hu/en/	 Dr. sc. Gábor Bordós, Gabor.Bordos@etcee.eurofins.com
PP9	University of Belgrade, Faculty of Mining and Geology https://rgf.bg.ac.rs/eng/index.php	 Dr. sc. Ljiljana Vasić, ljiljana.vasic@rgf.bg.ac.rs
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PP12	Friedrich-Alexander Erlangen-Nürnberg https://www.fau.eu/	Universität		Dr. sc. Gabriele Chiogna, gabriele.chiogna@fau.de
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ASP8	General Directorate of Water Management Hungary https://www.ovf.hu/en			Norbert Csatari, csatari.norbert@ovf.hu
ASP9	Rižanski water supply Koper I.l.c. https://www.rvk.si/			Tilen Filipičič, tilen.filipcic@rvk.si
ASP10	Public company KRAŠKI VODOVOD SEŽANA I.l.c. https://www.kraski-vodovod.si/			Tjaša Korošec, tjasa.korosec@kraski-vodovod.si
ASP11	Public company Komunala Ilirska Bistrica, I.l.c. https://kp-ilb.si/			Špela Barba, spela.barba@kp-ilb.si

ASP12	Water supply company Zadar https://www.vodovod-zadar.hr/	 Vodovod d.o.o. Zadar	Hrvoje Patrk, hrvoje.patrk@vodovod-zadar.hr
ASP13	Zadar County https://www.zadarska-zupanija.hr/	 Zadarska županija	Zvonimir Dorkin, zvonimir.dorkin@zadarska-zupanija.hr
ASP14	Public Health Institute Crna Gora https://www.ijzcg.me/	 INSTITUT ZA JAVNO ZDRAVLJE CRNA GORA	Sanja Šćepanović, sanja.scepanovic@ijzcg.me
ASP15	International Commission for the Protection of the Danube https://www.icpdr.org/	 ICPDR IKSD International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River	Igor Liska, igor.liska@icpdr.org
ASP16	Fejérvíz ZRt. https://www.fejerviz.hu/	 FEJÉRVÍZ ZRT. A Nemzeti Vízművek Csoport tagja	Katalin Szigetvári, szigetvarik@fejerviz.hu
ASP17	Magyar Víziközmű Szövetség https://maviz.hu/	 MAVÍZ	Erdei-Kasperkievicz Kinga, kasperkievicz.kinga@maviz.org
ASP18	Agency for watershed of the Adriatic Sea https://avpjm.jadran.ba/		Ana Sudar, asudar@jadran.ba
ASP20	Public utility company "Water supply and Sewerage" Gornji Vakuf – Uskoplje https://vikgvu.com/	 GORNJI VAKUF-USKOPLJE	Martin Šekerija, vod.kan.doo@bih.net.ba

During the project, two changes in the MicroDrink Board participants occurred. Near the start of the project, Project Partner 5 Technical University of Munich (TUM) withdrew as project partner as the experts involved in project MicroDrink working at TUM transferred to another institution – Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU). A major change thus occurred within the project, and FAU was added to the partnership, and took over all of TUM's responsibilities, including leading Specific objective 1 "Developing transnational knowledge base on microplastics in Danube region drinking water resources".

Furthermore, a change in one project Associated Strategic Partner occurred, with Public utility company "Čapljina", LLC withdrawing as ASP19, and Public utility company "Water supply and Sewerage" Gornji Vakuf – Uskoplje joining the consortium as ASP20 in their place.

Throughout the entire project lifetime, MicroDrink Board activities were overseen by the Lead Partner (LP) of the project, Department of Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology of the Croatian Geological Survey. The Lead Partner supported the entire consortium in carrying out planned activities, both thematic and financial, and ensuring timely fulfilment of all responsibilities and tasks. Specific objectives were coordinated by appointed leaders, who provided templates, collected national reports, and drafted synthesis reports and publicly shared final outputs.

Specific objective 1 (SO1), “Developing transnational knowledge base on microplastics in Danube region drinking water resources”, ultimately resulting in the publication of the [MicroDrink Knowledge Base](#) and the Output 1.1 “Microplastics approach harmonised at EU and non-EU level”, was coordinated by PP12 Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg.

Specific objective 2 (SO2), „Occurrence of microplastics in the water environment used for drinking water supply”, was led by PP8 Eurofins Environment Testing Hungary Kft. as the most experienced project partner in the field of microplastics sampling and analysis. During the [International joint sampling training session](#), organized alongside the 2nd MicroDrink Board Meeting and documented on the project YouTube channel, Eurofins experts transferred their expertise to project partners as well as external participants and professionals in the water management and public health sector. Based on this training, each partner implemented independent national monitoring campaigns for the occurrence of microplastics in drinking water resources in the Danube Region, which are described in detail in related outputs available on the [project webpage](#).

Specific objective 3 (SO3), “Capacity building for management of microplastics in drinking water facilities (from source to tap)” focused entirely on identifying key findings and transferring them to crucial actors the field of water management across the Danube River Basin and beyond. This objective, led by PP3 University of Ljubljana, resulted in the development and publication several documents and tools, including the [Project Monograph](#) which documents in detail the implementation of a harmonised approach to microplastics in drinking water sampling and analysis, the [Decision Making Support Tool](#), a software offering scenarios, best practices and guidance for informed decision-making to mitigate and solve microplastics problems at different levels, the [Roadmap Towards Microplastics in Drinking Water Strategy](#) which provides a structured approach for countries to progress from knowledge gathering to the full integration of microplastic monitoring and management in drinking water systems.

Communication and dissemination activities were coordinated by the appointed Communication Manager (CM), PP9 University of Belgrade, Faculty of Mining and Geology. The Communication Manager also managed the project communication channels: official project website, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn pages (Figure 1).



Figure 1. QR codes providing easy access to the official project website, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn pages.

2. MicroDrink Board Meetings

Members of the MicroDrink Board met regularly, both in vivo and online, throughout the entire duration of project lifetime.

Regular MicroDrink Board Meetings were held in vivo, every 6 months, to present implemented activities and discuss upcoming tasks.

Technical meetings were held on an at-need basis, either with the entire Board, or between specific members to address outstanding situations or questions.

To facilitate smooth project management, a Quality and Risk Management Board (QRMB) was formed and met regularly throughout project lifetime.

Meetings were also regularly held with associated strategic partners, also members of the MicroDrink Board, and frequent updates were provided on the latest progress on project activities.

1.2. Regular In-vivo MicroDrink Board Meetings

Five regular Board meetings were planned and successfully conducted, at 6-month intervals (Figure 2). Lead Partner Croatian Geological Survey supported the host partners throughout the entire organisation process, including managing registration lists, assisting with drafting the agenda, and providing meeting minutes after event conclusion.

Table 1. MicroDrink Board meetings schedule.

Meeting	Place and date	Organised by
1 st MicroDrink Board Meeting and Kick-off conference	Zagreb, Croatia, 6. – 8.3.2024.	Croatian Geological Survey, Lead Partner
2 nd MicroDrink Board Meeting	Budapest, Hungary, 8. – 10.10. 2024.	Eurofins Environment Testing Kft, Specific objective 2 leader

Meeting	Place and date	Organised by
3 rd MicroDrink Board Meeting	Neufahrn bei Freising, Germany, 19. – 21.3. 2025.	Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Specific objective 1 leader
4 th MicroDrink Board Meeting	Postojna, Slovenia, 14. – 16.10.2025.	University of Ljubljana, Specific objective 3 leader
5 th MicroDrink Board Meeting and Final conference	Belgrade, Serbia, 19. – 22.5.2026.	University of Belgrade, Faculty of Mining and Geology, Communication Manager



Figure 2. Regular in vivo MicroDrink Board meetings.

1.3. Technical Meetings

Members of the MicroDrink Board held technical meetings when needed, primarily with the purpose of discussing upcoming tasks or clarifying specific financial or administrative management situations (Figure 3). A total of 12 meetings were held throughout project lifetime (Table 2).

Table 2. Technical MicroDrink Board meetings.

No.	Place and date	Meeting purpose
1	Online, 26.1.2024.	Inaugural meeting between Lead Partner, Specific objective leaders and Communication Manager – discussions on project starting activities.
2	Online, 11.4.2024.	Lead Partner, Specific objective leaders and Communication Manager – presentation of preliminary version of MicroDrink Knowledge Base.
3	Online, 24.9.2024.	Lead Partner and Project Partner Institute of Public Health Zadar – allocation of tasks and responsibilities for the organization of the upcoming Croatian national stakeholder workshop.
4	Online, 18.11.2024.	Specific objective 1 leader (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg) and Specific objective 2 leader (Eurofins Environment Testing Hungary Kft) – preparation for upcoming project webinars.
5	Online, 29.11.2024.	Lead Partner and Project Partner Environment Agency Austria – discussion on laboratory analysis results of samples received during joint sampling.
6	Online, 13.12.2024.	Lead Partner and Project Partner Institute of Public Health of the Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina – discussion on process for purchasing sampling equipment.
7	Online, 18.12.2024.	All Partners – presentation of first analysis results and discussion of analytical challenges encountered.
8	Online, 20.12.2024.	Lead Partner and Project Partner T. G. Masaryk Water Research Institute – clarification of administrative matters and establishing a timeline for finalization of reports.
9	Online, 6.6.2025.	Lead Partner and Project Partner Environment Agency Austria – discussion on sampling equipment and adjustment of planned dates for sampling.
10	Online, 3.9.2025.	All Partners – preparation of the project monograph, overview of the chapters and allocation of tasks.
11	Online, 16.9.2025.	Lead Partner and Specific objective 2 leader (Eurofins Environment Testing Hungary Kft) – preparation for upcoming tasks and outputs.
12	Online, 30.3.2026.	All Partners – timeline for finalization of project monograph and overview of current status, remaining tasks and deadlines.

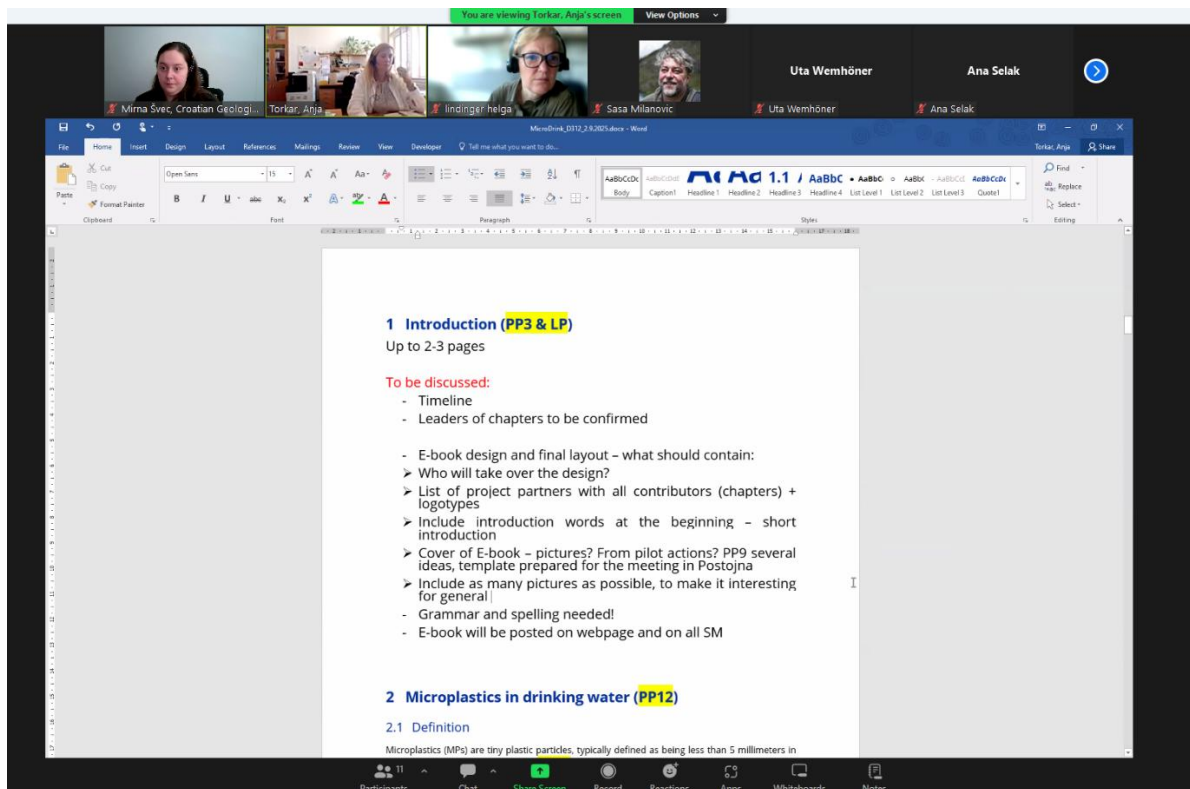


Figure 3. Technical MicroDrink Board meeting.

1.5. Quality and Risk Management Board Meetings

MicroDrink Board closely cooperated with the Quality and Risk Management Board (QRMB). The QRMB was chaired by the Lead Partner Croatian Geological Survey, and composed of representatives of: the Lead Partner, an external consultancy firm IT Praxis subcontracted by the Lead Partner for assistance with project financial and administrative management, and the Quality Assurance Manager, and an external expert providing critical evaluations and objective opinions and recommendations for enhancing project outputs quality.

The QRMB was formed at project start, comprised of Lead Partner Representatives, with additional members (Quality Assurance Manager – QAM, and representatives of consultancy firm IT Praxis) joining in the months after project start (Table 3). Twelve total QRMB meetings were conducted (Figure 4, Table 4). The Quality and Risk Management Board also drafted the Quality and Risk Management Plan (QRMP), as an internal handbook used by all partners as a reference on effective project management, minimization of risks and actions in the event risks are triggered. Alongside the QRMP, an xls-based financial monitoring system (FMS) and project status deliverable evaluation system were developed as tools to effectively monitor project implementation.

Table 3. Quality and Risk Management Board members.

Role	Name of representative	Contact email
LP representative	Jasmina Lukač Reberski	jlukac@hgi-cgs.hr
LP representative	Ivana Boljat	iboljat@hgi-cgs.hr
LP representative	Ana Selak	aselak@hgi-cgs.hr
LP representative	Mirna Švec	msvec@hgi-cgs.hr
QAM	Darija Čupić	daria.cupic@voda.hr
External expert	Karolina Horvatinčić	karolina.horvatincic@it-praxis.hr
External expert	Sonja Priščan	sonja.priscan@gmail.com

Table 4. Quality and Risk Management Board meetings.

No.	Place and date	Meeting purpose
1	Zagreb, 7.5.2024.	First meeting with Quality Assurance Manager – presentation of project activities and QAM responsibilities.
2	Zagreb, 27.8.2024.	First meeting between Lead Partner and IT Praxis external experts – establishing of roles and responsibilities.
3	Zagreb, 29.8.2024.	Follow-up meeting between Lead Partner and IT Praxis external experts – handover of project documentation and establishing of first tasks.
4	Zagreb, 16.9.2024.	Lead Partner and IT Praxis – first draft of financial monitoring system and preparation for the upcoming 2 nd MicroDrink Board meeting.
5	Zagreb and Online, 24.9.2024.	Lead Partner and IT Praxis – further detailing of the financial monitoring system and 2 nd MicroDrink Board Meeting, preparation of the 1 st project progress report.
6	Zagreb, 3.12.2024.	Lead Partner and IT Praxis – draft of the Quality and Risk Management Plan.
7	Zagreb, 10.12.2024.	Lead Partner and IT Praxis – allocation of tasks related to the budget reallocations for the purchase of sampling equipment.
8	Zagreb, 7.2.2025.	Lead Partner, IT Praxis and QAM – establishing of QAM responsibilities, preparation for First-Year Review and 2 nd project progress report.
9	Zagreb, 30.4.2025.	Lead Partner and IT Praxis – meeting with newly appointed QRMB member from IT Praxis replacing the previous expert.
10	Zagreb, 14.5.2025.	Lead Partner and IT Praxis – familiarizing new member with project activities, preparation for the 3 rd project progress report.
11	Zagreb, 11.9.2025.	Lead Partner and IT Praxis – preparation for the 3 rd project progress report, overview of upcoming activities and deadlines.
12	Zagreb, 19.1.2026.	Lead Partner and QAM – delivery of first project outputs and review of quality assurance templates.

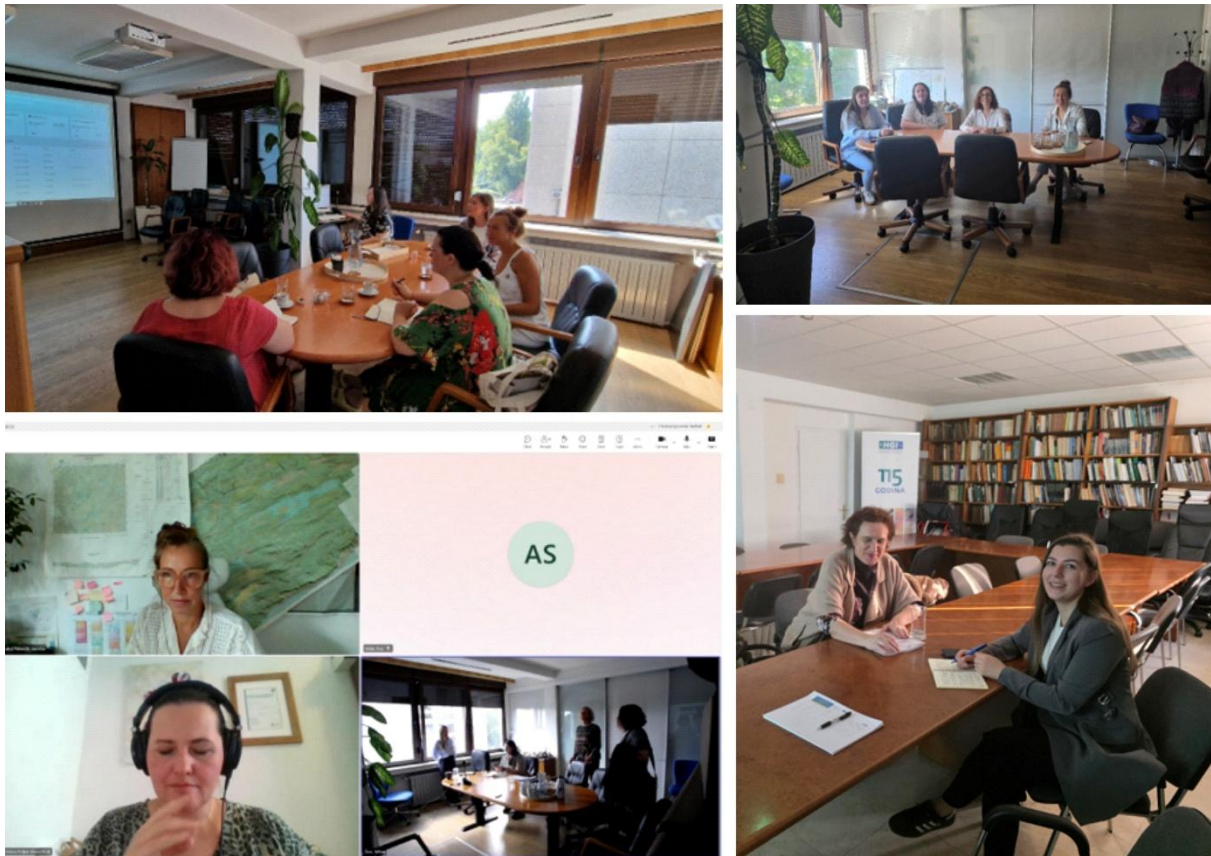


Figure 4. Quality and Risk Management Board meetings.

3. Key findings of MicroDrink Board

Throughout project lifetime, the MicroDrink Board gathered numerous findings and improved the knowledge of all Board members as well as, via knowledge transfer efforts, external institutions and professional networks.

The first MicroDrink Board Meeting, organised concurrently with the project Kick-off Conference in Zagreb, served as the foundation for project implementation. The project timeline, responsibilities, and governance structure was established, and the importance and value of the project was highlighted. The meeting confirmed the need for a harmonised transnational approach that would allow comparable monitoring results and support evidence-based decision making across both EU and non-EU countries.

The International joint sampling training session marked the first major knowledge transfer milestone, achieved during the 2nd MicroDrink Board meeting. The event was organised and conducted by Specific objective 2 leader Eurofins Environment Testing Hungary Kft., experts in the

field of sampling and analysis of drinking water for the detection of microplastics (Figure 5). Participants gained hands-on experience with novel sampling methods in full alignment with the recent recast of the methodology prescribed in the Commission Delegated Decision 2024/1441, that was subsequently tested at nine MicroDrink pilot sites throughout one year. The monitoring is described in detail in MicroDrink outputs, available on the project website.



Figure 5. International joint sampling training session and live demonstration.

The third MicroDrink Board meeting took place shortly after the organisation of first national stakeholder workshops and the initiation of national monitoring campaigns. This enabled project partners to present first results to the consortium, and facilitated discussions on key considerations during sampling and analysis, improvements of methodologies, stakeholder needs, and more, summarized below.

Similarly, the fourth MicroDrink Board meeting presented the opportunity to delve in further detail on the national monitoring campaigns. Project Partner Environment Agency Austria conducted functionality tests of the equipment used in the project and presented their findings. Laboratory technicians tasked with analysing the MicroDrink samples also provided professional feedback on

their experiences with the equipment. This enabled the partnership to identify several challenges that may become relevant during wide scale application and implementation of microplastics in drinking water monitoring.

Finally, the fifth MicroDrink Board meeting, which included the final conference, was the opportunity for members of the Board to sum up their findings throughout project lifetime and transfer them in a summarized and readily understandable format to stakeholders. The main findings are summarized below.

Key findings of the MicroDrink Board:

- During sampling, equipment manufacturer guidelines should be closely followed, particularly pertaining to water pressure.
- Guidelines on handling sampling equipment are necessary, along with the provision of open-access reference documentation and resources on sampling and analysis methodologies.
- Sampling equipment should be designed with no plastic parts. SBR rubber (e.g. for inlet/outlet hoses) should preferably be avoided as well, as particles may be released, clogging or damaging the filter mesh.
- Before legally mandating monitoring drinking water for the occurrence of microplastics, threshold values and impacts on human and environment health should be determined.
- While awareness of the potential effects of microplastics in drinking water is rising, the level of monitoring is limited mainly to isolated research or pilot actions.
- Stakeholders consistently highlighted two contrasting opinions: the first is that so long as monitoring for microplastics in drinking water facilities is not obligatory, it will not be implemented; and the second that despite the lack of obligation, preparedness should nevertheless be ensured. However, in both opinions, stakeholders emphasized the need to know what they are paying for, and what the purpose of conducting the monitoring is.
- The perspective of academics and researchers is that observing microplastics is likely not sufficient and more focus should also be placed on nanoplastics.
- While there is a recognized and significant need for harmonised monitoring, the technical and operational reality presents several constraining challenges:
 - Sampling equipment is scarcely available,
 - Funding remains a limiting factor for water supply facilities,
 - There is a lack of trained personnel,
 - The capacity for conducting analyses is heterogeneous between countries and often lacking even in more developed regions,

- There is no standard for microplastics analysis,
 - Different instruments and software may produce variable results,
 - Results may not be comparable even when using the same sampling and analysis methodologies.
- Crucial actors such as water operators, public health workers, decision makers and water management professionals must have clear definitions of their roles and responsibilities to ensure preparedness and fast response in the event of potential implementation of monitoring for microplastics in drinking water.
 - Should the challenges described herein aim to be addressed and resolved, transnational cooperation is of utmost importance in microplastics research. Single studies and individual pilots present variable results, limiting comparability and transferability across countries.

The findings were gathered throughout entire project lifetime and discussed at each of the aforementioned international events represent the collective effort of the entire MicroDrink Board, informed by repeated knowledge exchanges, discussions and consultations with key actors via stakeholder workshops, targeted meetings and interviews, feedback and responses to surveys, participation of MicroDrink Board members at key international events, initiatives and conferences, and synergistic activities with national and EU-funded projects oriented at water and microplastics management.

Significant effort was put in transferring this knowledge as well. Aside from workshops, publications, presentations and the consortium's online presence through updates on official as well as partner web and social media pages, two webinars were conducted as well: Micro(knowledge) transfer webinar on general state of the art of microplastics in drinking water and Micro(knowledge) transfer webinar on sampling, laboratory instruments and analytical techniques. Both are available on the [MicroDrink project YouTube channel](#).

3.1. Establishing and maintaining synergy

MicroDrink Board put significant efforts in establishing synergies with other projects with the purpose of capitalizing on the expertise of researchers and professionals in the field of microplastics and water management, and cross-fertilizing MicroDrink results, ensuring transferability and durability of project outputs and results within and beyond the Danube Region.

MicroDrink Board members were invited and participated at several key workshops organized by representatives of water management EU-funded projects. One such highly valuable event was the Aquatic Plastic project Microplastics workshop conducted in June 2024, which provided an opportunity for MicroDrink Board members to gain practical experience with microplastics

sampling and analytical techniques employed by other projects and utilized for samples gathered from various media. MicroDrink additionally held a presentation at a later RiverSaver workshop, also conducted and organized by Aquatic Plastic in Hungary.

A targeted synergy meeting was organized in March of 2025, which saw active participation of representatives of Interreg Danube Region Programme projects: DanubeSediment_Q2, Danube Water Balance, GeoNetSee, MicroDrink, and Tethys (Figure 6). Special emphasis was placed on developing a strategic approach to enhancing the impact of project results at both regional and transnational levels, as well as aligning efforts to achieve the overarching Programme objectives.



Figure 6. Synergy meeting of Croatian project partners in Interreg Danube Region Programme projects.

Two dedicated roundtable discussion consultation sessions were held in May and June 2025, where representatives of key microplastics initiatives were invited to deliver brief presentations on their work and discuss the current state and future outlook of microplastics research. A highly valuable contribution to the roundtable was the participation of Dr. Claudia Cella, representative of the Joint Research Centre (JRC), who delivered a presentation on the JRC's process for establishing the sampling and analytical methodology for microplastics in water intended for human consumption that was eventually included in the Commission Delegated Decision 2021/1441 (Figure 7).

A key conclusion from the roundtable discussion is that there remains a question when considering collaboration opportunities. On the one hand it's difficult to establish a strong community due to the inherent nature of competition for 3rd party funding, yet on the other hand experts in the field of microplastics should combine forces to in order to achieve goals and get better not only at analytics but also assessing impact on human health and the environment.



Figure 7. Presentation by Dr. Claudia Cella, JRC, at the MicroDrink roundtable consultation session.

In September 2025, MicroDrink Board members met with representatives of the Institute for Hydro Engineering Sarajevo (Figure 8), during which time the participants agreed to establish a joint working group on microplastic monitoring and analysis in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will coordinate research activities and facilitate data sharing. They also decided to prepare a joint scientific publication or policy brief summarizing the regional situation regarding microplastics. Furthermore, the participants proposed developing a new collaborative research project focusing on the movement of microplastics through surface and groundwater systems, with the aim of applying for regional or European funding. To formalize their partnership, the institutes agreed to draft a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the scope and principles of future cooperation.



Figure 8. Meeting between MicroDrink Board members and representatives of the Institute for Hydro Engineering Sarajevo.

An important initiative was the development of the [Interreg Joint Newsletter](#), initiated and coordinated by the Lead Partner of project MicroDrink Croatian Geological Survey, and timed to launch and commemorate Danube Day, on June 29 2025 (Figure 9). The Newsletter reflected a shared dedication to sustainable, transnational water and sediment management throughout the Danube Region. The Newsletter highlighted early results of eight international projects (AQUATIC PLASTIC, Danube Water Balance, DanubeSediment_Q2, MicroDrink, Microplastics, RESTORIVER, Safety4TMF, and Tethys) and provided a platform for future cooperation to jointly enhance impacts of all involved projects across the Region and beyond.



Figure 9. Front page of the Joint Newsletter.

Lastly, the final conference served as a milestone event where all of the achievements of project MicroDrink were presented to MicroDrink Board members as well as external participants. During this occasion, representatives of projects Plasticheal, Microplastics, AQUATIC PLASTIC and DALIA showcased the results and findings from their own projects, fostering discussions on future research priorities, policy developments, and capacity-building needs for improved management of water resources across the Danube Region and beyond.

Project synergies were further strengthened through a series of targeted meetings, workshops, and knowledge-exchange events organised throughout the project duration. Regular cooperation was maintained with initiatives such as GWMicroPlast (represented by the Geological Survey of Slovenia), AquamuPlaS and ADRIPLAST (represented by the Institute for Biological Research "Siniša Stanković"), DALIA (represented by Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg), and other relevant projects and institutions. These interactions enabled the exchange of methodologies,

experiences, and best practices, while helping to align ongoing efforts related to microplastics monitoring, governance, and water resource management at both regional and European levels.

4. Recognition of project achievements

The success of the MicroDrink Board in implementing the project and disseminating knowledge was recognized several times by key EU initiatives. This type of recognition was achieved without intervention or request from MicroDrink representatives, which emphasizes the high impact and visibility of the project, highlighting the success of the consortium's collaborative dissemination efforts.

External recognition includes the following:

- [Recognition of MicroDrink project by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region](#) Priority area 4 Water Quality under the Flagship processes on emerging substances (Figure 10).
- [Conference on Microplastics in drinking water – from source to tap](#), organised by EU Strategy for the Danube Region Priority Area 4 “To maintain and restore the quality of waters” and conducted on October 3rd 2024 in Budapest, Hungary. Project MicroDrink was invited to give a keynote lecture (Figure 11).
- [Post on European Commission official website, “Microplastics in Danube Region Drinking Water”](#), published March 10th 2025, as part of the #WaterWiseEU campaign. The publication details the project, it's importance and overarching goal to enhance the preparedness of the entire Danube Region and beyond for the implementation of the Drinking Water Directive 2020/2184 and the supplemental Commission Delegated Decision 2024/1441.
- [Video contribution for the 1st Water Resilience Forum](#) organized and hosted jointly with the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, the Forum marks a major milestone in the EU's commitment to ensuring long-term water security for all Europeans. MicroDrink project was contacted by a representative of the European Commission's Sustainable Freshwater Management unit in Directorate-General for Environment with an inquiry to provide a short video contribution that was shown to over 300 stakeholders on large screens in the venue communal area. The video is available on the official [MicroDrink YouTube channel](#).
- [MicroDrink project representatives were invited as speakers](#) to present the progress during the interim assessment titled „Austrian Action Plan Microplastics 2022-2025: From Pollution to Solution“, conducted on June 5th 2024 by the Ministry for Climate Action (BMK) and Environment Agency Austria.

- Project MicroDrink was recognized by the Interreg Danube Region Programme as a highly successful project on several occasions:
 - Lead Partner representatives were invited to participate at the [2nd call Lead Partner Seminar](#) in Bucharest, Romania, and to deliver a presentation on good management practices, sharing their approach to effective project coordination and providing practical advice to fellow participants.
 - [Project MicroDrink was featured alongside several other key and plastic pollution related projects](#) in a post on the main page of the Interreg Danube Region Programme highlighting the value of the projects and the importance of transnational cooperation.
 - The [MicroDrink monograph](#) was featured on the 'In the spotlight' section of the Interreg Danube Region Programme main webpage, with a cross-link to the monograph on the official MicroDrink webpage.



Figure 10. Certificate for EU Strategy for the Danube Region Flagship Processes on Emerging Substances, which recognized project MicroDrink as a high importance project relevant for improving water quality in the Danube Region.



Figure 11. Presentation at the EUSDR conference "Microplastics in drinking water - from source to tap".

Involvement of EUSDR and ICPDR in project activities proved highly valuable in ensuring impact of project results, as they readily shared MicroDrink outputs and results with their stakeholders and professional networks and enhanced the impact thereof (Figure 12).

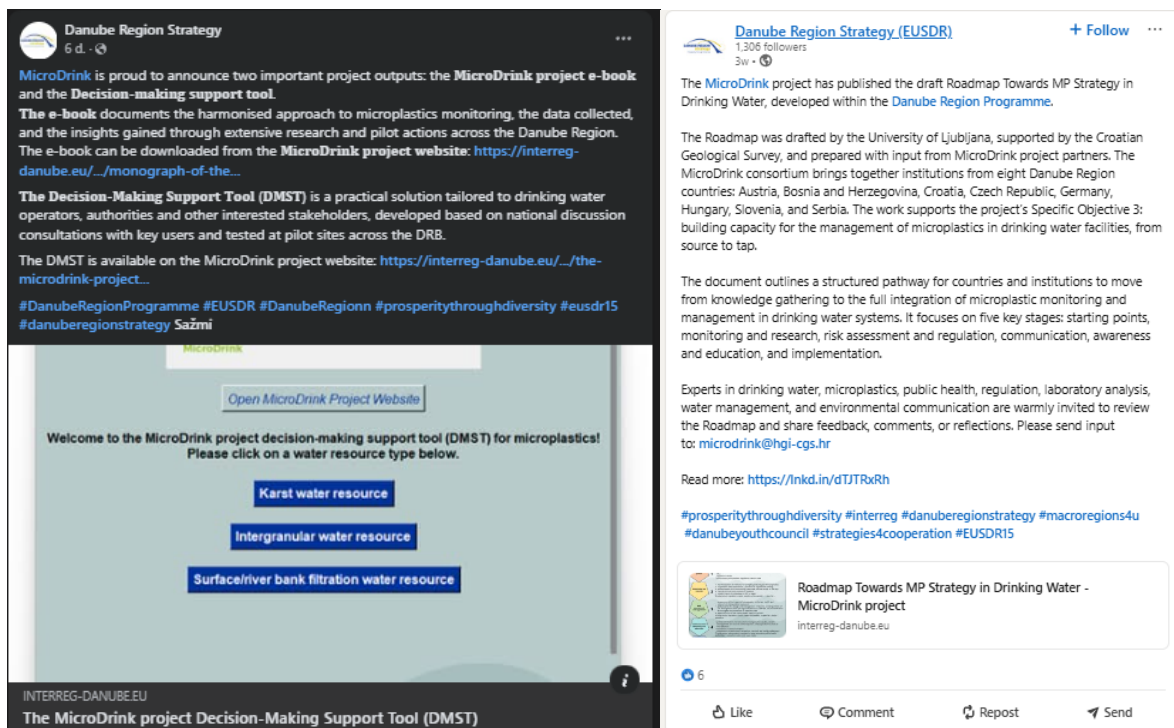


Figure 12. Posts by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region disseminating project MicroDrink outputs.

Overall, the MicroDrink consortium efforts were recognized and very well received both by the European Commission and relevant macroregional strategies, as well as Interreg Danube Region Programme, which co-funded project MicroDrink with support from the European Union.

5. Conclusion

The findings generated through the MicroDrink project constitute a valuable contribution not only to the Danube Region but also to the wider international scientific and professional community. As microplastics in drinking water remain an emerging and relatively underexplored topic globally, the harmonised methodologies, monitoring results, management tools and policy recommendations developed within MicroDrink provide an important basis for future research, regulation and practical implementation.

One of the most important achievements of the MicroDrink Board was the establishment of a durable transnational expert network. Through regular cooperation, knowledge exchange and joint problem solving, project partners developed a shared understanding of microplastics challenges and management needs across the Danube Region. This network significantly strengthened institutional capacities and created favourable conditions for future cooperation, follow-up initiatives and further advancement of microplastics monitoring and management at regional, European and international levels.

Even after project closure, the members of the MicroDrink Board intend to continue cooperation and support future initiatives through the application of the knowledge, experience and lessons learned during project implementation.