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MicroDrink

Newsletter 05

MicroDrink

Capacity building for management and governance of MICROplastics in DRINKing water resources of Danube Region

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5th Partner Meeting of the MicroDrink project held in Belgrade, Serbia

The 5th Partner Meeting of the MicroDrink project was held from May 19th to 22nd, 2026, in Belgrade, Serbia, hosted by University of Belgrade, Faculty of Mining and Geology, with support from the Lead Partner Croatian Geological Survey.

The meeting brought together project partners and associated strategic partners to discuss project progress, review achieved results, and ensure finalization of all obligations prior to the upcoming project closure.

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5th Partner Meeting of the MicroDrink project held in Belgrade, Serbia

The first day of the meeting was dedicated to reviewing the progress and results achieved within all three Specific Objectives of the MicroDrink project. Partners presented key findings from national sampling campaigns and discussed the development of common approaches for monitoring and managing microplastics in drinking water resources, including the testing of the Decision-Making Support Tool (DMST).

The session also addressed stakeholder engagement, capacity-building activities, and the preparation of strategic and dissemination outputs aimed at strengthening regional capacities to tackle microplastics pollution.

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5th Partner Meeting of the MicroDrink project held in Belgrade, Serbia

As part of the meeting, a field trip was organized to one of the two Serbian pilot sites – the Pavliš groundwater source, which serves as an important drinking water resource for the city of Vršac.

Participants visited the water treatment plant and gained valuable insights into groundwater resource management, water abstraction, treatment processes, and drinking water supply practices.

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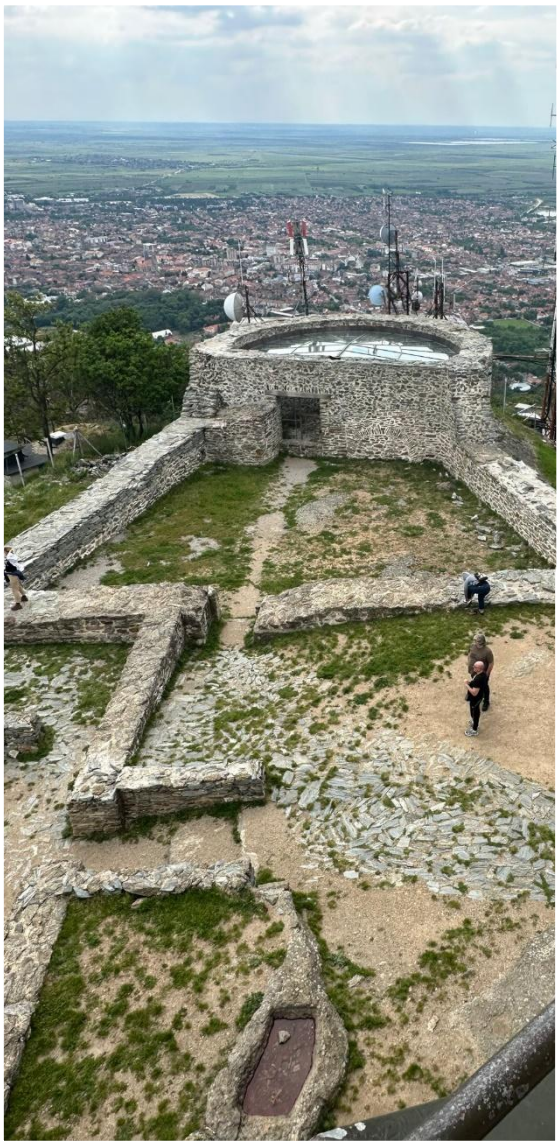
5th Partner Meeting of the MicroDrink project held in Belgrade, Serbia

During the excursion, participants also visited the Vršac Tower (Vršačka kula), one of the most recognizable landmarks of the region. During the visit, participants learned about the historical significance of the site and enjoyed panoramic views of the surrounding landscape, making the excursion a valuable combination of professional exchange and cultural heritage experience.



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5th Partner Meeting of the MicroDrink project held in Belgrade, Serbia

The final day of the meeting included the Steering Committee session, during which the Lead Partner presented an overview of the project management and financial status.

Overall, the 5th Partner Meeting highlighted the strong commitment of all partners to advancing research on microplastics in drinking water resources and strengthening transnational cooperation throughout the Danube Region.

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MicroDrink Final Conference

On May 20th, 2026, the ***MicroDrink Final Conference*** was convened at the Faculty of Mining and Geology, University of Belgrade, bringing together 61 experts from 29 relevant institutions and organizations working on the topic of microplastics in drinking water resources. The event featured presentations of MicroDrink achievements, keynote lectures by experts in the field of microplastics research, as well as a session dedicated to synergy with other EU-funded projects targeting plastic and microplastics water pollution.

The conference provided a valuable platform for presenting project achievements, exchanging knowledge and experiences, and discussing current challenges and future approaches to the management of microplastics in drinking water systems across the Danube Region.

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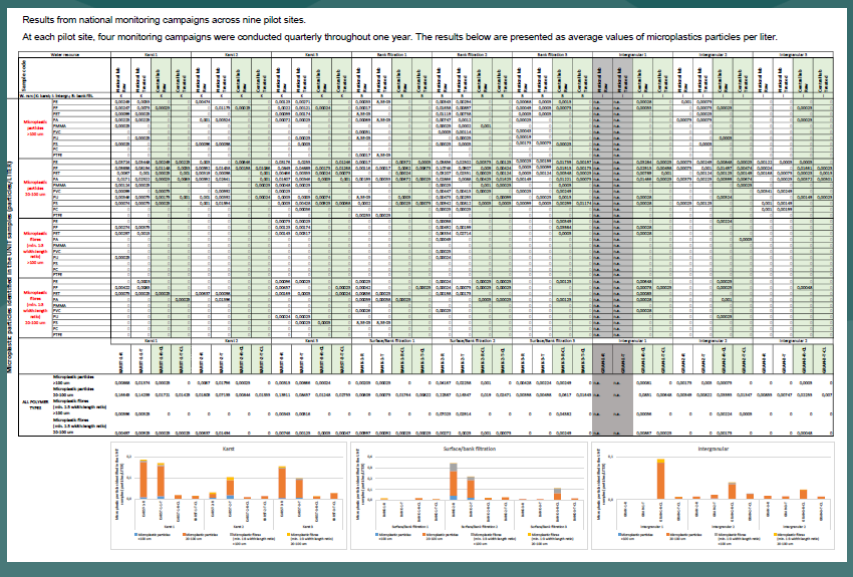
National sampling campaigns

National sampling campaigns were conducted in nine pilot sites across the Danube River Basin, where project partners together with their associated strategic partners applied a harmonised approach to sampling and analysis of drinking water for the detection of microplastics quarterly throughout one year. Sampling was carried out across multiple drinking water resource types, including **karst** systems, **intergranular** aquifers, **surface water and riverbank filtration** systems, covering both raw and treated water. The applied sampling systems followed the provisions of the Commission Delegated Decision 2024/1441.

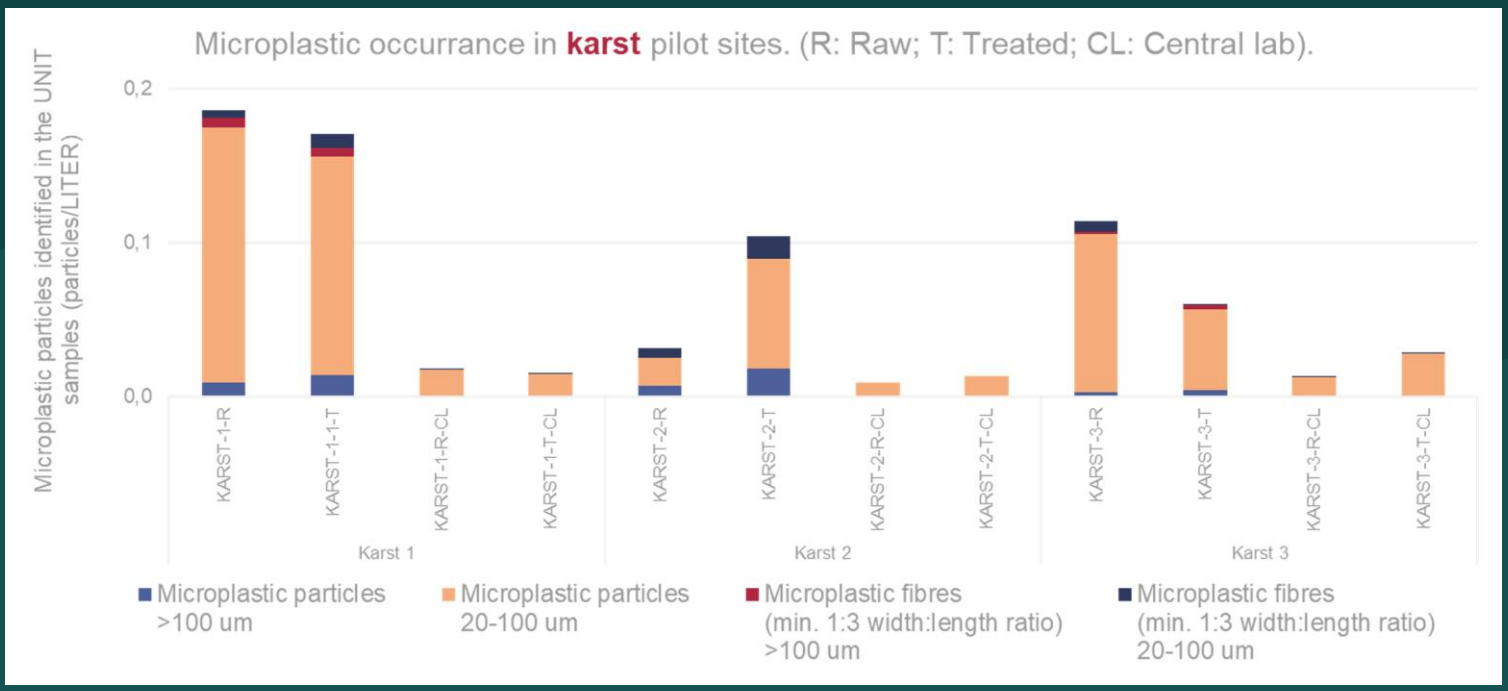
Large water volumes were processed to support detection of low microplastic concentrations. To analyse the samples, **FTIR and Raman spectroscopy** were applied. These methods are recommended in the Delegated Decision and recognized as suitable for identification of polymer types in drinking water matrices.

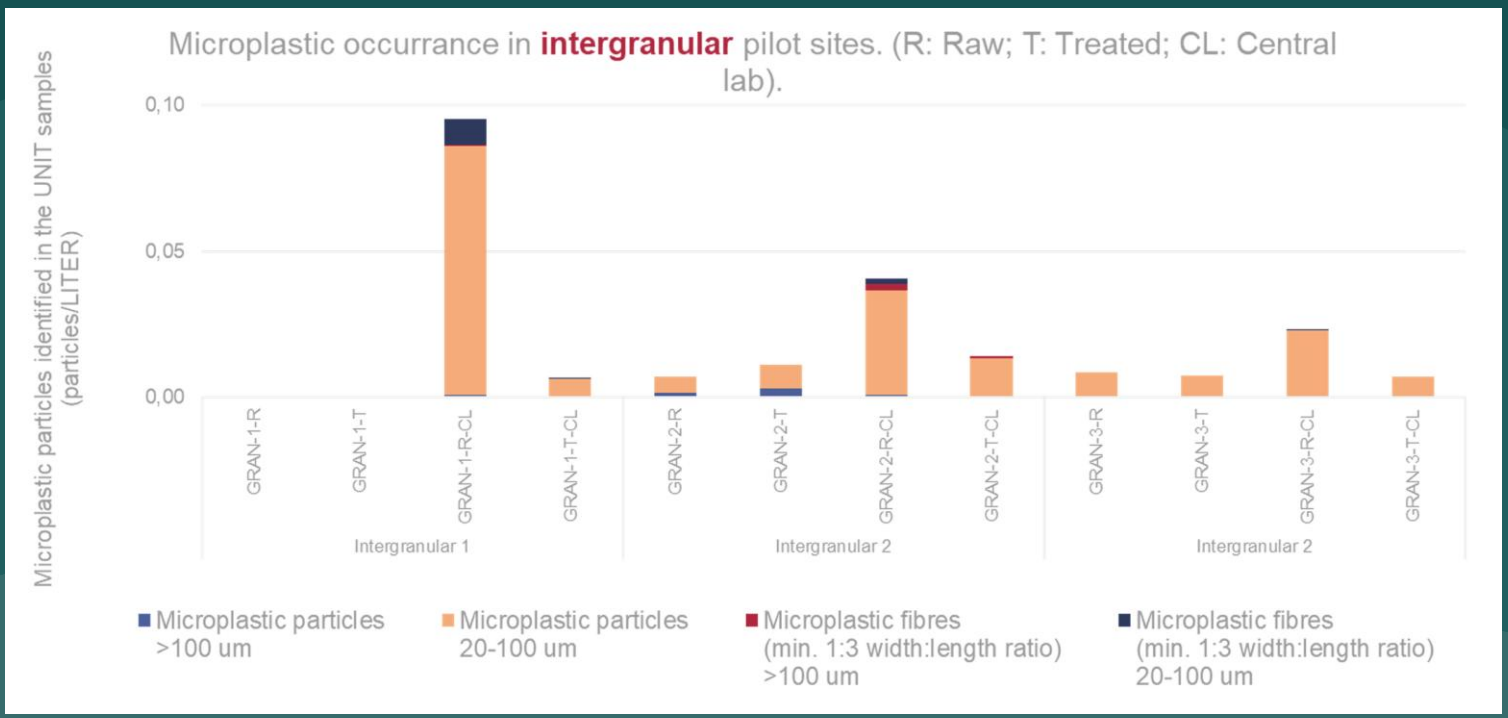
The full monitoring results can be seen in the MicroDrink project 🔗 **Transnational Monitoring Database**.

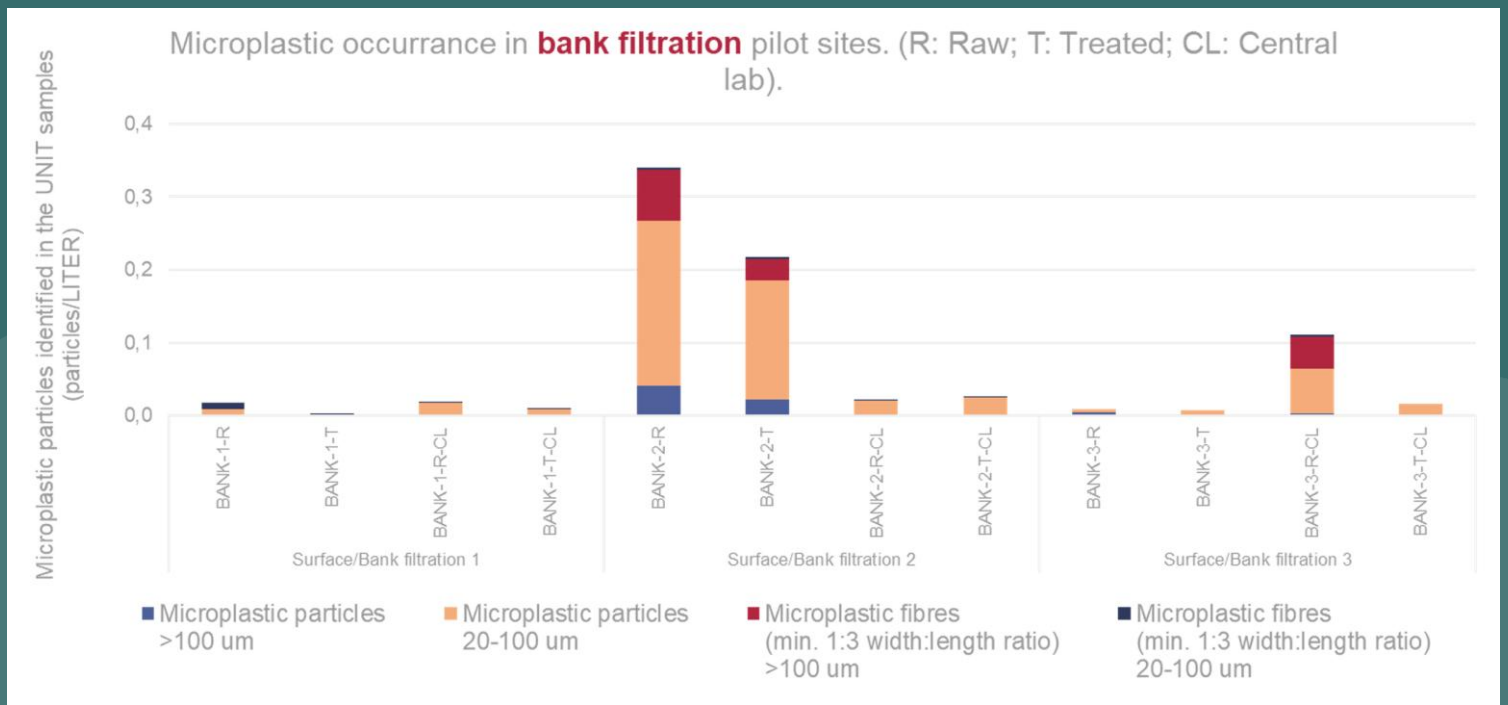

Results from national monitoring campaigns across nine pilot sites.

At each pilot site, four monitoring campaigns were conducted quarterly throughout one year. The results below are presented as average values of microplastics particles per liter.

Results


Microplastic occurrance in karst pilot sites. (R: Raw; T: Treated; CL: Central lab).
Microplastic particles identified in the UNIT samples (particles/LITER)
0,2
0,1
0,0
KARST-1-R
KARST-1-1-T
KARST-1-R-CL
KARST-1-T-CL
KARST-2-R
KARST-2-T
KARST-2-R-CL
KARST-2-T-CL
KARST-3-R
KARST-3-T
KARST-3-R-CL
KARST-3-T-CL
Karst 1
Karst 2
Karst 3
Microplastic particles >100 um
Microplastic particles 20-100 um
Microplastic fibres (min. 1:3 width:length ratio) >100 um
Microplastic fibres (min. 1:3 width:length ratio) 20-100 um


Microplastic occurrance in intergranular pilot sites. (R: Raw; T: Treated; CL: Central lab).
Microplastic particles identified in the UNIT samples (particles/LITER)
0,10
0,05
0,00
GRAN-1-R
GRAN-1-T
GRAN-1-R-CL
GRAN-1-T-CL
GRAN-2-R
GRAN-2-T
GRAN-2-R-CL
GRAN-2-T-CL
GRAN-3-R
GRAN-3-T
GRAN-3-R-CL
GRAN-3-T-CL
Intergranular 1
Intergranular 2
Intergranular 2
Microplastic particles >100 um
Microplastic particles 20-100 um
Microplastic fibres (min. 1:3 width:length ratio) >100 um
Microplastic fibres (min. 1:3 width:length ratio) 20-100 um


Microplastic occurrance in bank filtration pilot sites. (R: Raw; T: Treated; CL: Central lab).
Microplastic particles identified in the UNIT samples (particles/LITER)
0,4
0,3
0,2
0,1
0,0
BANK-1-R
BANK-1-T
BANK-1-R-CL
BANK-1-T-CL
BANK-2-R
BANK-2-T
BANK-2-R-CL
BANK-2-T-CL
BANK-3-R
BANK-3-T
BANK-3-R-CL
BANK-3-T-CL
Surface/Bank filtration 1
Surface/Bank filtration 2
Surface/Bank filtration 3
Microplastic particles >100 um
Microplastic particles 20-100 um
Microplastic fibres (min. 1:3 width:length ratio) >100 um
Microplastic fibres (min. 1:3 width:length ratio) 20-100 um

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National Capacity-Building Training Courses

Capacity-building training courses for stakeholders within the MicroDrink project were successfully held across 8 participating countries, bringing together a diverse and highly engaged group of experts, water practitioners and researchers.

Country	Date and venue	Organizers
Croatia	12th March 2026 Zagreb, Hotel Esplanade	Croatian Geological Survey, Institute of Public Health Zadar
Slovenia	5th March 2026 Ljubljana, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering	University of Ljubljana, Kovod Postojna Ltd.
Austria	13th March 2026 Online	Environment Agency Austria
Germany	26th February 2026 Online	Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg
Serbia	27th February 2026 Belgrade, Faculty of Mining and Geology	University of Belgrade Faculty of Mining and Geology, PUC „Drugi oktobar" Vršac
Czech Republic	26th March 2026 Brno, VUV TGM	T. G. Masaryk Water Research Institute
Hungary	6th March 2026 Online	Eurofins Environment Testing Kft.
Bosnia & Herzegovina	13th March 2026 Mostar, Institute for Public Health FBiH	Institute for Public Health of the Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina

A central highlight of the training courses was the presentation and testing of the Decision-Making Support Tool (DMST) developed within the project. The tool is designed to assist institutions and decision-makers in planning and implementing measures for managing microplastics in drinking water systems. Participants had the opportunity to explore the beta version and provide constructive feedback for further improvement.

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MicroDrink Project Achievements: Resources and Tools

Throughout two and a half years of project lifetime, the MicroDrink Board (project partners and associated strategic partners) worked diligently on gathering and sharing knowledge, conducting pilot actions and building stakeholder capacity in the Danube Region. This effort resulted in the production of several resources, all intended to equip the Danube Region with the necessary tools to better handle management of microplastics in drinking water resources.

Technical and guidance documents

Video guidelines for future sampling

Instructional video showing the sampling methodology applied within the MicroDrink project, designed to support future monitoring activities and facilitate the consistent implementation of best practices for microplastic monitoring.

Project Monograph

This e-book documents all MicroDrink activities and findings, including the harmonised approach to microplastics monitoring, results, and insights gained through extensive research and pilot actions across the Danube Region.

Roadmap Towards Microplastics in Drinking Water Strategy

The Roadmap outlines a structured and forward-looking pathway toward the development of coordinated action, building on the project's research findings, pilot actions, and stakeholder consultations.

Transnational strategic guidelines for microplastics management in drinking water

These guidelines provide practical recommendations for integrating microplastics into drinking water management, supporting water utilities and authorities in implementing harmonised monitoring, risk-based action, and future EU regulatory requirements.

MicroDrink Project Achievements: Resources and Tools

Outputs

Output 1.1 Microplastics approach harmonised at EU and non-EU level	A harmonised approach is essential for generating reliable and comparable data on microplastics in drinking water. **Output 1.1 details the monitoring methodologies** aligned with Commission Delegated Decision 2024/1441 and applied within the MicroDrink project, supporting consistent sampling, laboratory analysis, and reporting across the Danube Region while contributing to the future implementation of EU monitoring requirements.	
Outputs 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 Microplastics in karst /intergranular /surface water and river bank filtration	**Outputs 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 present the results of the MicroDrink pilot monitoring activities** investigating microplastic occurrence in karst, intergranular, and surface/river bank filtration drinking water resources across the Danube Region. Together, these publications provide one of the first harmonised assessments of microplastics across different hydrogeological settings, generating valuable evidence to support future monitoring programmes, scientific research, and implementation of the EU Drinking Water Directive.	
Output 3.1 MicroDrink Board	**Output 3.1 presents the work of the project's transnational expert network, documenting its meetings, key findings, synergies, and recommendations.** The publication highlights how coordinated cooperation between project partners and stakeholders strengthened capacity, supported knowledge exchange, and helped shape future action on microplastics in drinking water across the Danube Region.	
Output 3.2 Decision-making support tool for microplastics	**Output 3.2 presents a practical software solution that translates the MicroDrink project's scientific findings into everyday decision support.** Designed for water suppliers, public authorities, laboratories, and policymakers, the tool helps users assess microplastic-related challenges and supports harmonised, evidence-based management of drinking water resources.	
Outputs 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 Testing of DMST in karst / intergranular / surface and river bank drinking water resources	**Outputs 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 present the testing of the MicroDrink Decision-Making Support Tool** across karst, intergranular, and surface/river bank filtration drinking water resources. Together, they demonstrate how the tool can support water managers in assessing microplastic-related challenges, identifying suitable management responses, and strengthening preparedness across different water supply contexts in the Danube Region.	
MicroDrink Knowledge Base	**The MicroDrink Knowledge Base is a comprehensive open-access online database on microplastics in the water environment**, covering sampling methods, analytical methods, instruments, projects, laboratories, and relevant legislation. It supports knowledge sharing and helps stakeholders access comparable information in one place.	

MicroDrink Project Achievements: Resources and Tools

While scientific excellence formed the core of the MicroDrink project, ensuring that its results reached a wider audience was equally important. To complement its technical outputs, the project produced a series of educational videos that communicate complex topics related to microplastics in drinking water in a clear, engaging, and accessible way.

Educational videos and training materials

1st MicroDrink promotional video	The first promotional video **introduces the project's objectives, partnership, and objectives** to address microplastics in drinking water across the Danube Region.		
Joint sampling video	This video shows the **on-field demonstration of the harmonised sampling methodology** compliant with the Commission Delegated Decision 2024/1441, applied within the MicroDrink project.		
Micro(knowledge) transfer webinar on general state of the art of microplastics in drinking water	This webinar explores the **occurrence of microplastics in drinking water resources**, current legislative developments, monitoring challenges, and the role of the MicroDrink Knowledge Base in supporting research and knowledge exchange.		
Micro(knowledge) transfer webinar on sampling, laboratory instruments and analytical techniques	This webinar presents the **harmonised sampling methodology, laboratory instruments, and analytical techniques** used within the MicroDrink project to monitor microplastics in drinking water resources.		
Water Resilience Forum video	This video was prepared on request from the European Commision for the first Water Resilience Forum, delivering a **short outline of the project's key goals, achievements and findings.**		
2nd MicroDrink promotional video	The second promotional video highlights **key MicroDrink achievements, showcasing its main results, practical outputs, and contribution** to advancing the management of microplastics in drinking water across the Danube Region.		

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Project closure
Final remarks from the Lead Partner

The MicroDrink project officially concludes on **30th June 2026**, but its journey does not end here. The MicroDrink Board will continue its cooperation through follow-up activities, ensuring that the partnership, expertise, and momentum built over the past two and a half years continues to drive progress in microplastics research and sustainable water management across the Danube Region.

The project's impact has already been recognised by key European initiatives, including the European Commission, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), and the Directorate-General for Environment of the European Commission, as well as by the wider water research and management community. This recognition reflects not only the quality of the project's scientific outputs, but also its contribution to advancing cooperation and innovation in addressing one of today's key emerging environmental challenges.

As Lead Partner, the Department of Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology of the Croatian Geological Survey is proud to have coordinated such a committed and collaborative consortium. While the project may be coming to a close, the knowledge created, partnerships established, and foundations laid through MicroDrink will continue to support future research, policy development, and practical action towards safer drinking water and a more resilient Danube Region.

Ph.D. Jasmina Lukač Reberski,

Senior scientific assistant at the Department of Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology, Croatian Geological Survey

MicroDrink Project Leader

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Project closure
Final remarks from the Communication Manager

The MicroDrink project demonstrates how strategically planned communication contributes to the successful implementation of an EU-funded international project. Communication served as an essential management tool, supporting coordination among partners, ensuring effective information exchange, and aligning project activities with stakeholder needs. Clear objectives, appropriate communication channels, and tailored messages contributed to achieving the project's strategic goals.

Stakeholder engagement was a key element throughout the project. By involving researchers, public institutions, policymakers, civil society organizations, and the public, MicroDrink created an open environment for collaboration and knowledge sharing. Digital platforms, social media, the project website, events, conferences, and promotional materials ensured effective dissemination of project activities and results. This increased project visibility and raised awareness of microplastics in drinking water and the importance of sustainable water management.

The communication strategy strengthened the project's recognition at the European level by extending the impact of scientific results beyond the research community. Continuous dissemination, transparent information sharing, and stakeholder involvement improved cooperation, built trust, and encouraged wider discussions on environmental protection.

MicroDrink shows that communication management is a strategic component that enhances project impact, strengthens stakeholder relationships, and ensures the long-term value and sustainability of international collaborative initiatives.

Ph. D. Saša Milanović
Associate Professor at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Mining and Geology
MicroDrink Communication Manager

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FUTURE OUTLOOK

Project MicroDrink has created a strong foundation for the management of microplastics in drinking water resources. However, microplastics remain an emerging contaminant characterised by significant scientific uncertainties, evolving regulatory requirements, and varying levels of institutional preparedness across countries.

Looking ahead, continued efforts will be needed to support the implementation of evolving EU requirements, particularly in relation to the harmonised monitoring methodology introduced by Commission Delegated Decision (EU) 2024/1441. Future activities should focus on **strengthening laboratory capacities**, **improving comparability of analytical results**, and **expanding long-term monitoring programmes** to generate robust datasets for risk assessment and decision-making.

A further priority will be the integration of microplastics into broader water management and resource protection strategies. Project findings indicate that the occurrence of microplastics is influenced by land use, wastewater management practices, infrastructure conditions, and catchment characteristics. Future management approaches should therefore **move beyond end-of-pipe monitoring and increasingly focus on prevention and source control measures**.

The project also highlighted the importance of maintaining and expanding transnational cooperation. Microplastic pollution is inherently transboundary, particularly within the interconnected water systems of the Danube River Basin. Future initiatives should build upon the partnerships established through MicroDrink and **strengthen collaboration between water utilities**, **research institutions**, **environmental agencies**, **public health organisations**, and **policymakers**.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Lead Partner, Department of Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology of the Croatian Geological Survey, extends its sincere gratitude to all Project Partners and Associated Strategic Partners for their unwavering commitment, expertise, and collaborative spirit throughout project implementation. Their constructive collaboration, and continuous engagement helped achieve project objectives and created a lasting foundation for future cooperation in the Danube Region.

We express our appreciation to **Mr. Gusztáv Csomor,** Senior Priority Officer of the Monitoring Authority/Joint Secretariat of the Interreg Danube Region Programme, for his continuous guidance, professionalism, and unwavering support throughout the project. His readiness to provide advice, address questions, and assist the consortium at every stage of implementation has been invaluable, greatly contributing to the successful delivery of the MicroDrink project.

Our sincere thanks also go to the **EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)** and the **International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)** for their continuous support, active participation in project activities, and efforts in promoting and disseminating MicroDrink results. We are grateful for the strong cooperation established throughout the project and hope that the knowledge, tools, and outcomes developed through MicroDrink will continue to support and complement their important work towards protecting the Danube Region's water resources.

We wish to pay special tribute to **Prof. Dr. Mihael Brenčič** (1967-2026), whose vision and original idea laid the foundation for the MicroDrink project. His enthusiasm and dedication shaped the project from the very beginning, and his legacy will live on through the partnerships and friendships forged by MicroDrink.

PROJECT PARTNERS

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https://www.umweltbundesamt.at/en/

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Public company Komunala Ilirska Bistrica, l.l.c.
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Zweckverband Wasserversorgungsgruppe Freising-Süd
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https://www.wasserzv.de/

Water supply company Zadar
Croatia
https://www.vodovod-zadar.hr/

Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung
Austria
https://www.ktn.gv.at/

Zadar County
Croatia
https://www.zadarska-zupanija.hr/

Ivančice Water Supply and Sewerage Association
Czech
https://www.svazekivancice.cz/

Publich Health Institute of Montenegro
Montenegro
https://www.ijzcg.me/

Fernwasserversorgung Franken
Germany
https://www.fernwasser-franken.de/

International Commission for the Protection of the Danube
Austria
https://www.icpdr.org/

Serbian Environmental Protection Agency
Serbia
https://sepa.gov.rs/

Fejérviz ZRt.
Hungary
https://www.fejerviz.hu/

Public Company „Vodovod i kanalizacija“
Serbia
https://www.pivoda.rs/

Magyar Víziközmű Szövetség
Hungary
https://maviz.hu/

General Directorate of Water Management Hungary
Hungary
https://www.ovf.hu/en

Agency for watershed of the Adriatic Sea
Bosnia and Herzegovina
https://avpjm.jadran.ba/

Rižanski water supply Koper l.l.c.
Slovenia
https://www.rvk.si/

Public utility company "Water supply and Sewerage" Gornji Vakuf – Uskoplje
Bosnia and Herzegovina
https://vikgvu.com/

Public company KRAŠKI VODOVOD SEŽANA l.l.c.
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This project is supported by the Interreg Danube Region Programme co-funded by the European Union.