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EU4Environment
Water and Data in Eastern Partner Countries

EU4Environment in Eastern Partner Countries: Water Resources and Environmental Data

SUMMARY REPORT

SITE VISITS

Examples of NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Date: 29 June 2023	Venue: 4 locations in and north of Vienna, Austria	Time: 08h30 – 18h45 <i>(by bus)</i>
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Background: This full day of site visits aimed to present EU good practices and inform how Nature-based Solutions (NbS) can be effectively implemented. It was organised by the Environment Agency Austria (UBA).

[Meeting Agenda](#) | [List of Participants](#)

The Summary Record and the meeting documentation were prepared by the Implementing Partners (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Austrian Environment Agency, the Austrian Development Agency and The International Office of Water).

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MAIN RESULTS

Site visit objectives

Four sites were visited on 29 June 2023 in order to present examples of different types of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and discuss the practical experience of their identification, financing, designing and implementation. These examples could serve to inspire NbS diffusion in EaP countries. All four examples were co-financed by the European Union through its LIFE programme.

Site visit logistics

The Environment Agency Austria (UBA) and the OECD jointly organised the trip programme, which 31 participants attended. The total route was 135 km. At each stop, guides from local institutions explained the background and character of the nature-based solution (details are given below).

NbS SITE 1: Restoration of the Liesing urban creek in south-west Vienna

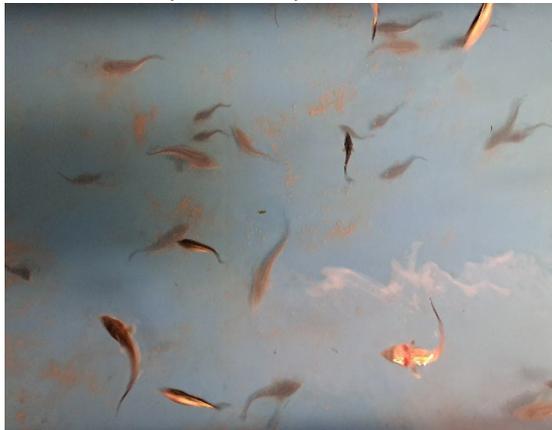
Mr Alexander ZINKE of UBA welcomed the participants and introduced the two guides, Dipl. Ing. Isabella SCHILD and Mr. Thomas OFENBÖCK from the Vienna City Municipal Department 45 - Water Management. They explained how the City of Vienna rebuilt the heavily engineered creek bed to improve flood protection, biodiversity, and recreational qualities. A 1 km walk from the 18 km long project area showed the canalized creek before (left, below) and soon after reconstruction (right below) and in the upper section after 20 years. The result attracts local people and even school classes. Discussed topics during the visit included the design, financing, and challenges of measures and lessons learned.



NbS SITE 2: Re-introduction of sturgeon into the Danube River

Ms Heidrun Ulrike EICHHORN (Institute of Hydrobiology and Aquatic Ecosystem Management (IHG): BOKU - University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna) informed that all sturgeon species are threatened by extinction in Europe in the Black Sea region. Government, academic, and NGO partners

started years ago to cooperate on EU-LIFE funded conservation measures for 4 sturgeon species in Austria and Hungary. At the Danube Island in the city, the breeding station for releasing young fish (here: young sterlet fish) back into the wild served to explain the special character and life cycle of these species.



The Danube Island in Vienna is another NbS where lunch was taken at the so-called Info Point which hosts also the sturgeon hatchery. This 42 kilometres long artificial island right in the middle of a European metropolis separates the New Danube (a new water body serving flood retention) and the Danube River. The island is a most popular recreation area and became a key habitat for plants and animals alike.

NbS SITE 3. Fish migration over hydrodam

Ms Dipl.Ing. Barbara GRÜNER, water ecologist from the VERBUND Hydro Power GmbH (Austria's leading electricity company operating 129 hydropower plants) informed that they invest into ecological measures such as fish passes to secure and improve biodiversity at their power plants.

According to the EU Water Framework Directive, fish migration must be restored over dams and weirs. In Austria, this requires over 1000 bypass structures: The bypass facility at the big Danube hydrodam Greifenstein upstream Vienna is 4 km long and surpasses 14 m. VERBUND gained much experience at dozens of such fish migration structures over the last 25 years. She explained how they design and build them and how they monitor its operation and effect.



Nbs SITE 4. Groundwater recharge

Mr. Harald WEYERMAYR, director of operation at the Marchfeldkanal company in Deutsch Wagram, first provided the group a comprehensive in-door presentation. The Marchfeld canal supplies a large region north-east of Vienna dominated by intensive agriculture that has often been subject to droughts and floods. Today, growing communes and industry also demand stable water supply. For over 20 years, this canal allows direct water abstraction by farmers, targeted aquifer recharge as well as improved recreation for local people and restored ecology. Weyermayr explained the institution's tasks and multi-purpose services. At the Stallingerfeld site, the group was shown the aquifer recharge in operation.



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