

SWARE

Interreg Europe



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

Sustainable heritage management of Waterways REgion



SWARE mission

Launched in 2016, **SWARE - Sustainable heritage management of Waterway REgions** - is the project funded by the European Commission under the Interreg Europe 2014-2020 programme.

The SWARE Project invites to rethink the economic and cultural development of the territories of the **6 partner regions** starting from waterways and inland basins, to make these places great opportunities for niche local economies, **relaunching forgotten or emerging identities**, proposing actions and programs able to enhance them.

SWARE aims to promote the **integrated management of natural, cultural and infrastructural heritage** in European regions characterized by waterways and navigable basins, in order to create a better balance between the protection and sustainable use of precious natural resources, sites of historical interest and local traditions.

The Partners of the project

- **Vereniging Regio Water** (NL) NETHERLANDS - (Lead Partner)
- **Province of Zuid Holland** (NL) NETHERLANDS
- **Metropolitan City of Milan** (IT) ITALY
- **Tipperary County Council** (IE) IRELAND
- **Vidzeme Planning Region** (LV) LATVIA
- **PONS Danubii European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation** (SK) SLOVAKIA



The waterway regions involved in the project all share a **unique natural and cultural heritage**: protected areas with a rich **biodiversity** and a set of charming **historical cities** and buildings connected to water.

Characteristics that make them increasingly attractive for leisure activities, with the result of an **increasing number of visitors** (increase of 30-50% in the last 10 years) that nevertheless influences aspects related to the conservation and protection of heritage.

All SWARE partners recognize that **the socio-economic future** of their regions strongly depends on the search for synergies between **the preservation of cultural and natural values** to be handed down to future generations, and at the same time on the importance of assuming a controlled management of visitors and services offered.

Hence, the need to foster awareness of available resources and have public policies that support the development of a **sustainable leisure industry** that knows how to enhance European inland waterway regions.

SWARE Project goals

With the awareness of having a priceless heritage, in the first phase of the project the SWARE partners have collected the best practices of **valorization of tangible and intangible assets** of the international territories to build together with the stakeholders (public and private) a shared action plan.

By promoting an **integrated management of cultural and natural heritage** in regions crossed by waterways, the SWARE Project promotes the establishment of new **participatory governance** schemes able to enhance the implementation of efficient policies for a sustainable regional development, thanks to a shared **vision among** policy-makers, local associations, companies and residents.

A shared vision aimed at a widespread, broad and transversal cooperation, able to:

- Promote an aware and responsible culture in all those involved;
- Increase sustainable tourism and soft mobility in balance with the protection of cultural and environmental heritage through the creation of green areas dedicated to leisure and the rehabilitation of waterways.

SWARE Project activities

The project was developed in two phases. In the first one the partners carried out a series of activities on the territory and abroad to involve local stakeholders and exchanged experiences and points of view by visiting the 5 waterway regions involved.

3 Knowledge Exchange Sessions were carried out.

The closing activity of the Phase 1 was the elaboration of the 5 regional Action Plans addressed to bring significant changes in the planning of regional and local policies.

In the second phase the partners monitored the implementation of their respective Action Plans, held meetings and kept in contact with stakeholders already involved in phase 1.

The activities of the international partners bring to the attention of the institutions the need to develop projects aimed at improving the tools and resources of their policies through tourism attractiveness and new economic investments.

SWARE actions aim to improve or promote:

- The balance between the protection and exploitation of the environmental, artistic and cultural heritage;
- A more effective and integrated management of regional heritage;
- The involvement and commitment of stakeholders and inhabitants with respect to the enhancement and sustainable protection of their heritage, through the establishment of the "Stakeholder Institutional Learning Group";
- The exchange of practices through the KES "Knowledge Exchange Session".

The "Stakeholder Institutional Learning Group"

Each partner region has formed and has become an active part of a stakeholder group composed of public, private and "third sector" actors, in single or aggregate form, and they may be:

- Operating in their own territory or, in any case, having a link with the waterways that cross it and, in different ways, influencing the management or use of inland waterways;
- Carrying out activities or having statutory purposes compatible with the themes and objectives of SWARE.

The activity of the Stakeholder Institutional Learning Group was and is aimed at exchanging, learning, transferring good practices, planning actions involving all relevant stakeholders; encouraging the participation of stakeholders remain a relevant topic, even once SWARE is completed, its aims:

- Spreading and promoting a culture of sustainable development that enhances the natural and cultural heritage, the environment and the landscape of the waterway territories, also through information and training initiatives;
- Encouraging the participation and the creation of territorial networks between associations and civil society organizations, public and private bodies for the construction of projects in line with the aims of SWARE.

Starting from the inputs received in the meetings with stakeholders during the Stakeholder Institutional Learning Group, the partners have questioned the purposes of their actions with respect to their own territories:

What are the priorities on which to focus the development programs able to achieve the general objectives of the project?

Each regional partner identified their priorities and transferred them into their own action plans.

TCC: How to improve the green and blue infrastructures within **Tipperary CC** and maximize the social and economic environmental benefit that can be obtained from increased protection and management of these resources?

MCM: How to exploit the potential of natural and cultural heritage to enhance the attractiveness of the **Navigli** system and their navigability? How to obtain sufficient economic resources through appropriate systematic actions by public authorities with municipalities and local stakeholders?

VRW/PZH: How to improve the blue and green living environment of **Zuid Holland** province by collecting, combining and sharing ambitions and knowledge?

VPR: How to facilitate integrated management and sustainable development of natural and cultural heritage in the **Vidzeme Planning** region with the aim of improving regional tourism development policy?

PD: How to facilitate the sustainable development of the cross-border **Danube** region as a common tourist destination united by the river?

3 Knowledge Exchange Sessions

Together with the collaboration activities established with regional stakeholders through the Stakeholder Institutional Learning Group, SWARE partners participated in 3 Knowledge Exchange Sessions.

During the KES, the partners of the delegations from Ireland, the Netherlands and Italy had direct experiences of best practices and economic and tourism development along their inland waterways, respecting the articulated historical and cultural heritage of their territory.

These are the conclusions they reached.

Knowledge Exchange Session - Tipperary County Council (IRELAND)

- Although the territorial contexts of the partners are different from each other, the social ones are quite similar. Therefore, good practices presented have aspects that can be useful to all partners;
- The importance of a good structure for local involvement in decision making and data collection;
- It is important to have a network with which stakeholders are familiar with and through which stakeholders can have real representation in policy changes;
- There is not one specific way in how to involve stakeholders/locals. They can differ widely - from public forums and questionnaires to individual talks. For better stakeholder involvement is important bringing them passion, energy, knowledge;
- It is necessary that the authorities facilitate the network by financing it (and other needs), but they don't interfere with the process and outcomes;
- There is also a need for efficient cooperation between municipalities and civil organizations regarding project planning considering various aspects of green/blue investments.

Knowledge Exchange Session - Metropolitan City of Milan (ITALY)

- The strategy of knowing how to combine tourist activities with the infrastructure and the historical and cultural heritage of the territory, combining multiple uses - cultural, sports, artistic, educational, navigation - of the sites available along the inland waterways;
- The need to promote collaborative and effective governance between the public, private profit and non-profit spheres for the sustainable development of the territory;
- Establishing a common vision at all levels from which a strategy of linear and shared execution can result;

- The ability to influence the funding mechanisms to obtain the necessary economic support, relying on the visibility and active cooperation of the government entities involved.

Knowledge Exchange Session – Province of Zuid Holland (NL) NETHERLANDS

- The importance of branding your destinations, of having a good marketing (built upon the true authenticity of your region) to attract tourists;
- Many initiatives/projects take place because of a shared dream/vision among many different stakeholders, it is important that there is collaboration at every level;
- Understanding the many purposes/functionalities the waterways and its surrounding areas have;
- The usage of public transport (Waterbus) for example Serves to bring tourists to key destinations in an effective way and day-to-day-users (such as students) to their final destination. It also is an innovative solution to problems such as traffic jams and air pollution;
- The reuse of heritage buildings along inland waterways shows how this (reuse) can stimulate the awareness and the economical utilization of the potential of the area;
- The importance of enhancing key figures such as entrepreneurs and volunteers by providing them with all the necessary support from the authorities so that they can contribute to the sustainable development of regional development plans in economic-tourist terms;
- Building the strategy of community involvement on what happens in their territories, considering also social interactions, the identification of the players hired and the energies at stake.



5 action plans

On the basis of the lessons learned during the international discussion sessions, and in collaboration with the stakeholder networks of their territories, the 6 partners have drawn up their action plans aimed at boosting their respective regional development plans. It should be remembered that Interreg funds are directed to the study, comparison/exchange of good practices and the promotion of regional policies.

The SWARE Action Plans therefore bring to the attention of the political referents targeted interventions, aimed at improving the tools and resources of their regional development policies that support the attractiveness of tourism and new infrastructural and cultural investments along the waterways.

Here, again, interventions aimed at:

- Improving the balance between the protection and exploitation of the environmental, historical and cultural heritage of regions with inland waterways;
- A more effective and integrated management of this heritage;
- Stimulating the involvement and commitment of stakeholders and residents with regard to the enhancement and sustainable protection of their territories.

PARTNER: Association Regio Water with Province of Zuid-Holland

Their action plan aims to influence the regional policy instrument "Programme Space" and the implementation of a series of new investment projects that rationalize the recreational use and protection measures along watercourses. As part of the action plan, the Regio Water Association and the province of Zuid-Holland aim to disseminate knowledge and improve the efficiency of protection measures.

PARTNER | Tipperary County Council

An Action Plan that aims to influence the regional policy tool "Development Plan for Tipperary County" and to reach a higher percentage of visitors for a greater awareness of the cultural heritage of the area. The Tipperary County Council plan proposes to implement the Green and Blue actions, and to improve the ability to involve stakeholders through participatory actions and dissemination of the plan itself.

PARTNER | Metropolitan city of Milan

Action Plan aims to influence the regional policy instrument "ROP Lombardia ERDF 2014-2020" and to increase the number of institutionalized territorial networks of stakeholders related to the public

heritage of the Navigli with particular reference to the area of Naviglio Martesana. Moreover, the Milan Metropolitan City Plan has also indicated the restoration of the waterways derived from the river Adda, the creation of a Map of the most important places along the Naviglio Martesana, the enhancement of public and tourist use of the historical, cultural and natural heritage along the waterways of the metropolitan area: Ville di Delizia and Strada delle Abbazie.

PARTNER | PONS Danubii European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

Goals: to give new impetus to the policy instrument "Interreg V-A Slovakia-Hungary Cooperation Programme" and increase the number of hectares of best preserved habitats through the improvement of heritage management structures. Within the action plan Pons Danubii also aims to create a sustainability handbook based on the new projects implemented and to promote the objectives of the Cooperation Programme.

PARTNER | Vidzeme Planning Region

Objectives: programmatically influence the regional policy tool "National Operational Programme Growth and Employment" and increase the number of new integrated services that contribute to the sustainable development of public heritage. The Vidzeme Action Planning Region aims to improve the tools to preserve, protect and develop an important cultural and natural heritage and to strengthen cooperation and local development strategies.



THE MONITORING PHASE - the results of SWARE

In Phase 2 of the project, the Monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plans highlighted, for all partners, the success in influencing their respective Regional Development Policy Instruments, co-financed by European ERDF funds. Meetings with regional policy makers were promoted to give continuity to the interventions indicated in the Action Plans.

Thanks to the activities carried out during the project, results have been achieved also with regard to specific local projects that go in the direction proposed by SWARE.

ARW/PZH | Because of the continued involvement of the province of Zuid, of ARW and regional stakeholders, municipalities and organizations, several "quick-win" projects have been carried out. Small projects for leisure and recreational use of waterways (waterrecreation) were financed and more are ready to be implemented in the coming year(s).

PD | During the Sware project there has been the creation of 3 Cultplay parks, in the frame of the Cult project. Cultplay interactive thematic park in Komárom has the main goal of demonstrating a cultural heritage of Slovakia, the New and Old Castle of Komárno. In the PD region, there is still an active SIG within the framework of other territorial projects (Cultplay, KOMBI, Kn-Kn Impro Trans, TAPE).

VPR | Involvement of society in a joint and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage. In the Vidzeme Culture program 2020. A lot of the projects were submitted under the priority of the Vidzeme Culture program 2020, and they were funded. The results in 2019 were inspiring. Further priority was given to obtain funding for the projects which are focused on the natural and cultural heritage, including public involvement in the management of them.

MCM | The regional regulation, recognition and financing of ecomuseums, a deeply rooted reality in the metropolitan city of Milan, has been achieved. A feasibility study has been elaborated for the creation of cycle-stations integrated with social initiatives along the Naviglio Martesana. It can also be included the funding of Initiatives have been launched for the recovery and promotion of the Road of The Abbeys to obtain its publication in national and international guides of historical and religious routes. In 2019 the complex of the Panperduto dam, this perfect synthesis between functionality and landscape value, obtained the precious ICID recognition that sets it in the World Heritage of Irrigation Structures. In addition, in 2020 the structure was nominated to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Among the results of the project, we also include the positive feedback obtained at a subsequent Alpine Space Interreg, in which Metropolitan City participates as leader with the project LUIGI - Linking Urban and inner-Alpine Green infrastructure aimed at strengthening green infrastructure in urban and peri-urban areas of large European cities in the Alpine context. A project that that

benefits from the skills base developed with SWARE including the stakeholder engagement activities of territorial networks.

Finally, for the requalification of the canals and their navigability, a dedicated sheet has been proposed to the financing bodies to access the financing of the national recovery plan.

TCC | The enhancement and expansion of Suir Blueway has had broad positive environmental, social and economic impacts, thus contributing significantly to health, wellbeing and quality of life. The Roadmap actions cover a wide range of ecological, heritage, recreation and amenity and tourism areas to maximise the promotion and development of green & blue infrastructure, including protection, conservation, awareness, education and accessibility.

Funding has been achieved at national level to deliver related actions.

In 2019 140,000+ walkers and cyclists used the Suir Blueway.



The SWARE legacy

SWARE leaves a valuable witness to the next projects, local, national or European. Because it has highlighted several keys to development and sustainable governance of the territories. Because water is an increasingly precious and rare good for the whole world and not only for Europe: they are now known for all the global effects of thaw and pollution, it is increasingly true that the flow rates of rivers are increasingly scarce ...

SWARE has given visibility to a correct intuition that should by now be the basis of national and supranational efforts towards a growing culture of sustainability and that therefore needs to be fostered.

Inland waters are a valuable opportunity for economic and cultural development for the territories and in particular for large metropolitan areas.

Widely underestimated and often overshadowed by urban and infrastructural development of cities, this heritage increasingly appears to be one of the key elements of sustainable development of territories.

An element of life and key to economic and social growth, water must become the focus of spatial planning projects to show its full potential, among rivers, canals and forgotten basins.

An exclusive potential that SWARE has the merit of having rediscovered in its ability to put together many themes in the perspective of sustainability and liveability of the cities themselves:

- **LANDSCAPE**
- **ENVIRONMENT**
- **INFRASTRUCTURE REQUALIFICATION**
- **AGRICULTURE**
- **NAVIGABILITY**
- **CYCLE - TOURISM**
- **SPORT - OUTDOOR**
- **SOCIAL INCLUSION**
- **HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**
- **GREEN JOBS**
- **PARTICIPATION**

The results of SWARE make it clear that creating good governance to direct technical and economic resources, both public and private, local, national or European, means making multidisciplinary interventions of great scope and universal value.

This project, which has reached its conclusion, teaches European regions and their societies to appreciate the value of water, repositioning it at the center of the development of territories, giving it back the exclusive role and image it deserves.



SWARE – Joint Policy Recommendations

The SWARE project helps to move towards a better balance between protection through revitalization and the sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources. A special recommendation is the revitalization of inland navigation. As economic development of inland waterways continues, the need to maintain that balance increases. There is much potential to integrate natural and cultural heritage of waterway regions into social and economic policy.

During the course of the projects' exchange of experience phase, the partnership identified:

Policy opportunities within the European member states, which can be strengthened by European action and programmes;

Sustainable strategies that can greatly contribute to the prosperity - economic and social - of the European inland waterway regions and the standard of living of its inhabitants

The EU institutions are responsible for the drafting and implementation of an overarching policy on an interregional level. It is to them we aim our attention when making these recommendations, which more than often comprise integral policies (sustainability, green and blue, housing, urban development, social inclusion, inland navigation, etc.). It is important to allocate not only priority, but also funding to programmes that take the recommendations below into account. It is in our view that the EU can greatly contribute to strengthening the partner regions.

Recommendation I: on EU cooperation policy, structures and programmes

- 1.** The SWARE partnership recommends strengthening the interregional cooperation projects that stimulate the exchange of experience and contribute to influencing policy change. This can be done by continuing funding for programmes such as INTERREG Europe. Regions may differ greatly in their geographical scope, but they have the same chances and opportunities in and along the waterways. Cooperation therefore is necessary. Recommends the support for common, cross-region and cross-border touristic promotion and cooperation by regional authorities and funding through cooperation programmes;
- 2.** Recommends a common EU-strategy and EU-guidelines for sustainable heritage challenges, leaving room for regional interpretation, that stimulates initiatives to improve the quality of life in inland waterway regions. In this perspective recommends the support for shorter, fewer, clearer and simplified rules to deregulate and empower the regions;
- 3.** As sustainability impacts several sectors, recommends to stimulate and fund cross sectorial approaches and good practices within cooperation programmes.

Recommendation II: on dissemination and EU-awareness

1. Recommends to make use of regional knowledge and experiences, and to highlight and broadcast these on a European platform. In light of this [...] recommends making better use of the already existing policy learning platform to intensify peer reviews and sharing of good practices and experiences.
2. Recommends to make the more than 500 million European citizens more aware of regional impact in inland waterways. And make them more aware of the territorial resources and heritage present in those regions, by supporting and funding good local and regional initiatives.

Recommendation III: on investing in the future

1. Has identified many opportunities for youth in relation to the sustainable heritage management of waterway regions. In this perspective [...] suggests to support local and regional initiatives that initiate in connecting youth and the management (and experience) of inland waterway regions;
2. Recommends to invest, through support and funding, in blue/green jobs for starters, in an expanding economic pillar, in investing in the revitalization of navigation along the inland waterways which would stimulate people and stakeholders to build on a system of touristic and cultural purposes and goals under the motto: Water Unites. Moreover, in investing on the valorization of regional water heritage in relation to the UNESCO recommendations about the civilization of water;
3. Recommends to stimulate programmes educating students through didactic initiatives in the classroom and in the field;
4. Recommends to change the point of view of seeing panoramas "from" water and not only "towards" water. That means that navigation is important as a vehicle of cultural tourism;
5. Recommends to link the adaptation of climate change to the sustainable heritage management of waterway regions initiatives.

It is recognized that there is not one governance structure or model for inland waterways that fits the needs of all regions and countries. However, waterway regions are cross-border in nature and therefore it is important to stimulate the usage and protection on an interregional scale.

SWARE

Interreg Europe



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

