



# ***WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL EUROPE***



**Wetlands**  
INTERNATIONAL



# WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

**OUR PURPOSE:** Solving the interlinked planetary crises of climate change, freshwater and nature loss.

**OUR MISSION:** We inspire and mobilise society to safeguard and restore wetlands for people and nature.

**WHO WE ARE:** We are the only network organisation in Europe bringing together influential NGOs who are passionate about wetlands.

**WHAT WE DO:** We advocate for ambitious EU and global policy and enable action on the ground in Europe and beyond with our members and wider network by linking policy, science and practice.



# WHY WETLANDS?

Wetlands are our planetary superheroes. Coastal salt marshes, seagrass meadows and tidal mudflats link to rivers and streams that are fed by upstream lakes, bogs and floodplains. This system running from “source to sea” holds many of the keys to transition towards a prosperous, carbon neutral society with healthy waters and a biodiverse environment.



**CLIMATE MITIGATION.** Wetlands such as peatlands, salt marshes and seagrass meadows store more carbon per square metre than forests.

**WATER SECURITY.** Wetlands are crucial for limiting floods and increasing supplies of water and improving water quality through their sponge function.

**RICH BIODIVERSITY.** Wetlands support 40% of the world's biodiversity. Including migratory waterbirds and freshwater fish, aquatic mammals and amphibians.

Despite being superheroes of nature, wetlands are the world's most threatened ecosystems and continue to be lost – nearly 70% or more in some countries in the past century.

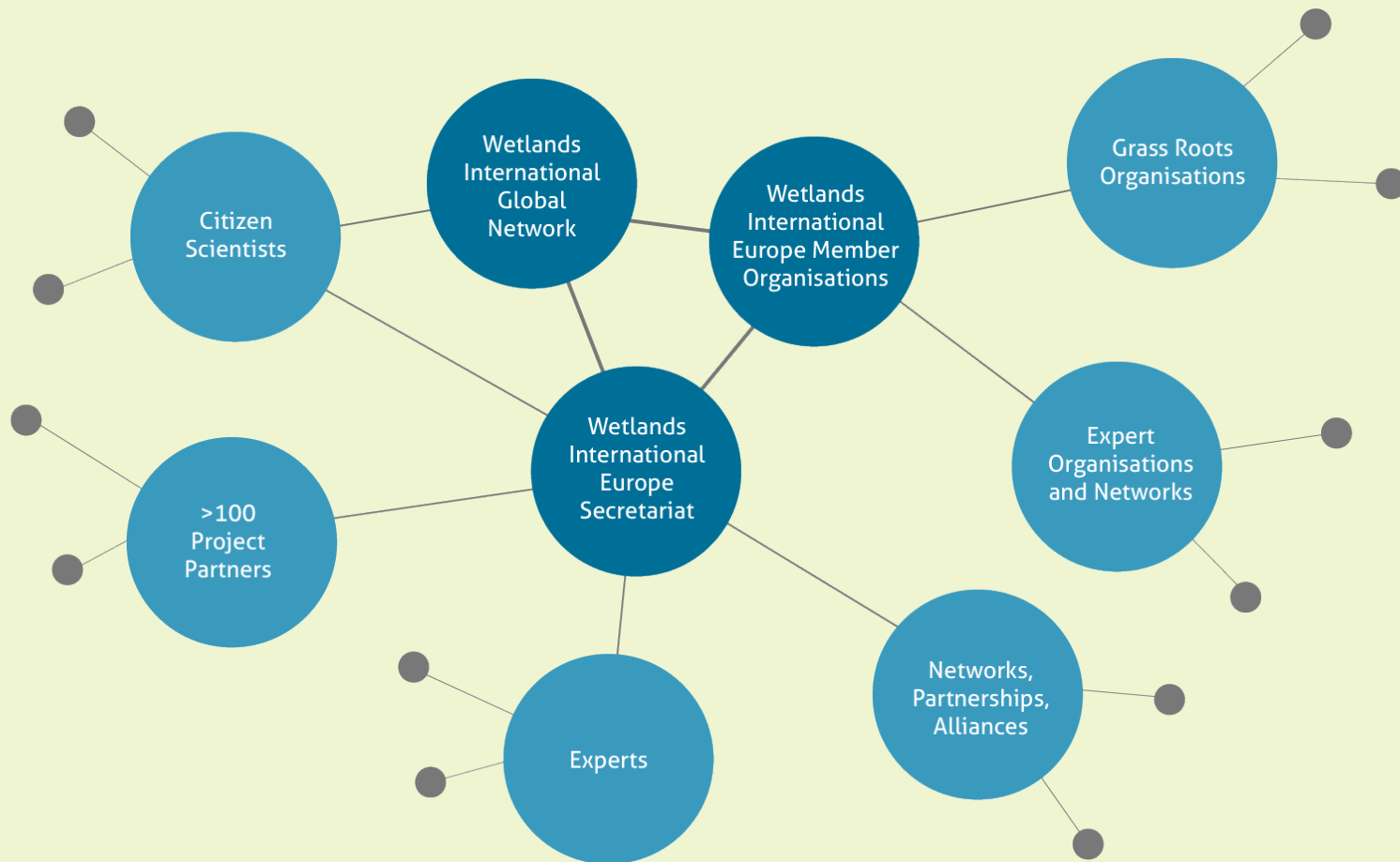
*We cannot become more water resilient or meet ambitious targets for climate mitigation and adaptation, or halt and reverse biodiversity loss, without dramatically scaling up the protection and restoration of wetlands.*





# OUR NETWORK

Wetlands International Europe is a network of non-governmental, government, knowledge and private sector organisations and experts. At its heart is an Association comprising a Secretariat and NGO members that sets the organisation's direction and implements its work through projects, partnerships, alliances, networks, grassroots cooperation and a 15,000 strong citizen science network.



A photograph of two wading birds, possibly curlews, in a shallow wetland. One bird is in the foreground, facing left, with its long yellow beak touching the water. The other bird is further back, also facing left. Both birds have brown and white mottled plumage. Their reflections are visible in the calm water.

# RECOVERING MIGRATORY FISH AND BIRDS TO RESTORE BIODIVERSITY

*European migratory freshwater fish populations have declined by 75% since 1970 driven by high fragmentation of our rivers by barriers.*

**Our ambition is to contribute to the recovery of migratory freshwater fishes.**



We have created key tools to mobilise action including the Trans-European Network for Swimways partnership, a strategy, programme, and a first map of Europe's swimways.

We want to safeguard and restore a network of Swimways of European Importance through policy implementation inspired by practical landscape scale action.

*Over 250 migratory waterbird species rely on wetlands in the African-Eurasian Flyways for food, rest and breeding.*



**Our ambition is to restore waterbird populations through conservation and restoration across the African-Eurasian flyways.**

Our 60 years of waterbird data collection and analysis by 15,000 citizen scientists and 80 international organisations underpins the implementation of EU Birds Directive and African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement.

We catalyse flyway-scale waterbird and wetland conservation initiatives for species in decline and make the international waterbird census fit to support another 60 years of action.



An aerial photograph of a person in a yellow kayak on a vibrant turquoise river. The river flows between grey, rocky banks. The water has a swirling, textured appearance.

# RECONNECTING FREE-FLOWING RIVERS AND RESTORING SPONGE LANDSCAPES TO REDUCE FLOOD RISK

*Loss of river connectivity is a leading cause of the poor health of Europe's waters with an estimated 150,000 obsolete barriers clogging Europe's rivers and new barriers threatening remaining pristine ones.*

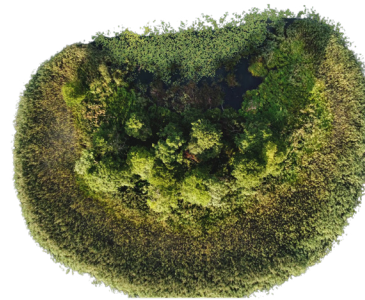
**Our ambition is to accelerate obsolete barrier removal and prevent new ones on our remaining free-flowing rivers.**



We helped enact a European target to restore 25,000 km of river by 2030 as part of the EU Nature Restoration Law.

We want to mobilise government, private sector and non-government organisations to achieve the free-flowing river restoration target.

*Drainage of wetlands has drastically reduced the water absorption capacity of our landscapes and is a root cause of droughts, wildfires and floods.*



**Our ambition is to catalyse the large-scale restoration of wetland sponge landscapes to make Europe's climate and water resilient.**

We pioneered the concept of natural sponge restoration backed by peer-review research and 'living labs' in a growing number of countries.

We want to lead landscape scale restoration, scaling up successful pilots, creating local champions and mobilising financing from government, business and the finance sectors.





# RE-WETTING PEATLANDS TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE

*Peatlands cover 268 000 km<sup>2</sup> but half are severely degraded and releasing up to 600 Mt. of carbon dioxide annually due to drainage for agriculture, forestry and energy in EU.*

**Our ambition is to restore and safeguard peatlands to combat climate change, ensure water security and protect biodiversity.**



We successfully advocated for including peatland targets in the EU Nature Restoration Law and embedding sustainable uses like paludiculture in the Common Agricultural Policy.

We are empowering European governments and private sector partners to take transformative actions incentivising re-wetting and achieving restoration targets.



# PUTTING WETLANDS AT THE FOREFRONT OF EU'S EXTERNAL ACTION

*Wetlands are critical ecosystems for global climate and biodiversity goals, yet the EU's international agenda remains under represented in these areas.*



**Our ambition is that EU institutions make wetland ecosystems central to their water and climate diplomacy efforts and ambitions.**

We ensure that the EU's water and green diplomacy acknowledges the critical role of wetlands in climate and biodiversity actions by systematically integrating wetlands into many of its Regional and Annual Action Plans.

We want the EU and member states to unlock incentives for large scale restoration and conservation projects while supporting empowerment of local communities and their socio-economic development through a new cooperation mechanism called Wetland Partnerships.



# ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We need to dramatically scale up the protection and restoration of wetlands to become more water resilient, meet ambitious targets for climate mitigation and adaptation, and halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

**To deliver our goals we need to strengthen our capacity. Our priorities are:**

**Strengthened and enlarged membership** to increase our influence on policy development and implementation and reinforce our mandate.

**Diversified and strengthened finances**, making us resilient to the rapidly changing political climate and financing landscape.

**Strengthened core Secretariat functions** in communications, membership coordination and programme implementation capacity.



**HELP US GROW TO MEET  
THIS CHALLENGE!**

# SUPPORT OUR ORGANISATION

To learn more about us and our programmes, and how to support us, please contact our Director Chris Baker:

[chris.baker@wetlands.org](mailto:chris.baker@wetlands.org)



Our vision is a world where wetlands are treasured and nurtured for their beauty, the life they support and the resources they provide. Our mission is to inspire and mobilise society to safeguard and restore wetlands for people and nature.

*For further information please visit our website or contact our office*

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