

Scaling up for impact: Europe regional strategy 2015 - 2025



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Wetlands International

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Cover photo: Sava river. Photo by Romy Durst.

Wetlands International European Regional Strategy 2015 - 2025

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Introduction

Wetlands are ecosystems where water and land meet. Wetlands are highly variable and dynamic: they are freshwater, brackish or saline, inland or coastal, seasonal or permanent, natural or man-made. As defined by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands¹, they include rivers, lakes, floodplains and flooded forests, mangroves, (peat) swamps and marshes, rice-fields and even coral reefs. Due to their dynamic nature, at the crossroads between water and land, wetlands are often overlooked by policy makers and public opinion.

¹ According to the Ramsar Convention, "Wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres."

Wetlands International has a long history of working in Europe. In 2013, Wetlands International – European Association was established as a new office in the Wetlands International network, bringing together 8 European NGOs² dedicated to safeguarding and restoring wetlands for people and nature. We do this by raising awareness about wetland ecosystems and advocating the sustainable use of wetlands, in particular by linking science, policy and practice. All [our member organisations](#) focus on certain wetland ecosystems and their biodiversity, giving attention to particular threats, developing and trialling practical solutions and informing policies.

We know we cannot achieve all our objectives on our own or by following a single strategy. As part of our approach, we work with a wide range of networks, partners and organisations, ranging from environment and development NGOs to universities and knowledge institutes, practitioners networks and industry groups. We engage in activities as diverse as data gathering and processing, awareness raising, training, advocacy and on-the-ground implementation.

Wetlands International is the only global not-for-profit network organisation dedicated to the conservation and restoration of wetlands. Wetlands International works through its network of offices, partners and experts to achieve its goals, outlined in its Strategic Intent. This Regional Strategy outlines how Wetlands International’s work in Europe will contribute to implementing the [Strategic Intent 2015-2025](#).

Our vision and mission

Our vision is that of a world where wetlands are treasured and nurtured for their beauty, the life they support and the resources they provide.

Our mission is to sustain and restore wetlands, their resources and biodiversity.

Our approach

Wetlands International - European Association is driven by the knowledge that safeguarding and restoring wetlands is urgent and vital for water security, biodiversity, climate regulation, sustainable development and human health.

We work by **bringing together knowledge, policy and practice**: we build scientific and practical knowledge-bases on wetlands and use these to stimulate effective policies and practices.

We **connect local and regional actions to make a global difference**: we combine local experiences and successes to influence national, regional and global policies, practices and investments.

We **enable society to take action**: We work for the long-term in major wetland areas. We catalyse action to safeguard wetlands and support those that use or depend on them. We forge innovative and strategic partnerships to maximise our reach and impact.

² Centro Ibérico de Restauración Fluvial (CIREF), Centro Italiano per la Riqualificazione Fluviale (CIRF), Centrum Ochrony Mokradeł (CMok), EuroNatur, Tour du Valat, Sustainable Eel Group (SEG), Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), Zoological Society of London (ZSL)

We are **passionate about the positive change** we make for people and nature.

Why our work is needed

Wetlands are one of the world's most important environmental assets, containing a disproportionately high number of plant and animal species compared to other ecosystems. Throughout history they have been integral to human survival and development, providing valuable resources, protecting against extreme events and regulating our climate. They exist in every country and in every climatic zone, from the polar regions to the tropics.

Wetlands are vulnerable to over-exploitation due to their abundance of fish, fuel and water. When they are viewed as unproductive or marginal lands, wetlands are targeted for drainage and conversion. The rate of loss and deterioration of wetlands is accelerating in all regions of the world, and the pressure on wetlands is likely to intensify in the coming decades due to increased global demand for land and water, and due to climate change.

The most recent State of the Environment report by the European Environment Agency³ concluded that more than half of the river and lake water bodies in Europe are reported to hold less than good ecological status or potential and that species found in wetland ecosystems have among the highest share of 'unfavourable' conservation status assessments. The most frequently reported pressures on and threats to these ecosystems are associated with agriculture and changes to hydrology or hydromorphology.

The European Commission's State of Nature communication⁴ further highlights that wetlands, including mires, bogs and fens, are among the most threatened ecosystems in Europe, having been subject to major losses in recent decades (between 1900 and the mid-1980s Europe had already lost two thirds of its wetlands). While they only comprise about 2% of the EU's territory, and 4.3% of the Natura 2000 area, they are highly important for a wide variety of species. The conservation status assessments show that 51% of habitats related to wetlands have unfavourable-bad status. Human-induced changes in hydrology (such as drainage, loss of connectivity, canalisation, removal of sediment, eutrophication and pollution) are by far the most significant pressure. These pressures also lead to increased water scarcity and disaster risks, with increasing numbers of people in Europe (and abroad) being exposed to hazards such as floods, storms and droughts.

As a consequence of large-scale wetland deterioration across the EU, populations of some highly wetland-dependent species are declining. Many species associated with freshwater habitats, such as migratory birds or fish, are declining to a worrying extent – not only due to habitat deterioration in Europe, but also elsewhere along their migratory routes. Sustainable wetland management beyond the EU's borders is crucial to maintaining species groups such as migratory waterbirds, a fact that the EU's external policies and aid sometimes neglect.

³ European Environment Agency (2015), *The European environment — state and outlook 2015* (available at <http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer>)

⁴ Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: The State of Nature in the European Union (COM(2015)219 final), available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2015:219:FIN>

Europe, thus, is not the only continent where wetlands and its associated species are threatened and declining. Recently our member organisation Tour du Valat has contributed to the Ramsar Convention's "State of the Worlds Wetlands and their Services to People" briefing note⁵, which concludes that "the global extent of wetlands is now estimated to have declined between 64-71% in the 20th century, and wetland losses and degradation continue worldwide". Research by WWF and the Zoological Society of London (also a member of Wetlands International – European Association) for the Living Planet Report 2014⁶ found that populations of freshwater species declined more rapidly than marine and terrestrial populations (decline of 76% worldwide). In the Palearctic alone, fish populations have declined by 56% and amphibian populations by 13%.

Wetlands International – European Association focuses on EU-level advocacy because, as one of the biggest economies in the world, as well as the biggest donor of development aid, the EU can act as a driver of wetland degradation or as an agent of change, rehabilitation and sustainability, domestically and around the world.

Our strategy

The work undertaken by Wetlands International – European Association contributes and is complementary to the global Wetlands International strategy, summarised in the [Wetlands International Strategic Intent 2015-2025](#). The Strategic Intent is built around 5 streams of work, namely:

- **Healthy wetland nature** (goal: Halt and reverse loss of wetland habitats, sites and species)
- **Replenished water stores from mountains to sea** (goal: Conserve and restore wetlands to reduce water risks in the landscape)
- **Peatland treasures are safeguarded and restored** (goal: Conserve and restore peatlands as part of integrated landscape management, contributing to sustainable development, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and biodiversity)
- **Blue lifelines in the desert** (goal: Enable governments, decentralised institutions and communities to take action to sustain the flooding and natural resources of Sahelian wetlands, so that livelihoods, biodiversity and the economy can adapt to a changing environment)
- **Vibrant coasts and deltas** (goal: Conserve and restore mangroves and other wetland ecosystems along the coast as an integral part of resilient and productive coastal landscapes)

For each of these streams, Wetlands International – European Association will focus on a restricted number of strategic topics and initiatives in the period 2015-2025. The selected topics and initiatives cover all the thematic streams of the Strategic Intent and aim for a balanced representation of the organisation's strengths and geographical coverage, including in relation to our membership. The picture below shows which activities or topics will be addressed by Wetlands International –

⁵ Available at: http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop12_doc23_bn7_sowws_e_0.pdf

⁶ Available at http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/all_publications/living_planet_report/

European Association for each of the 5 Streams. Some initiatives are cross-cutting to two or more Streams.

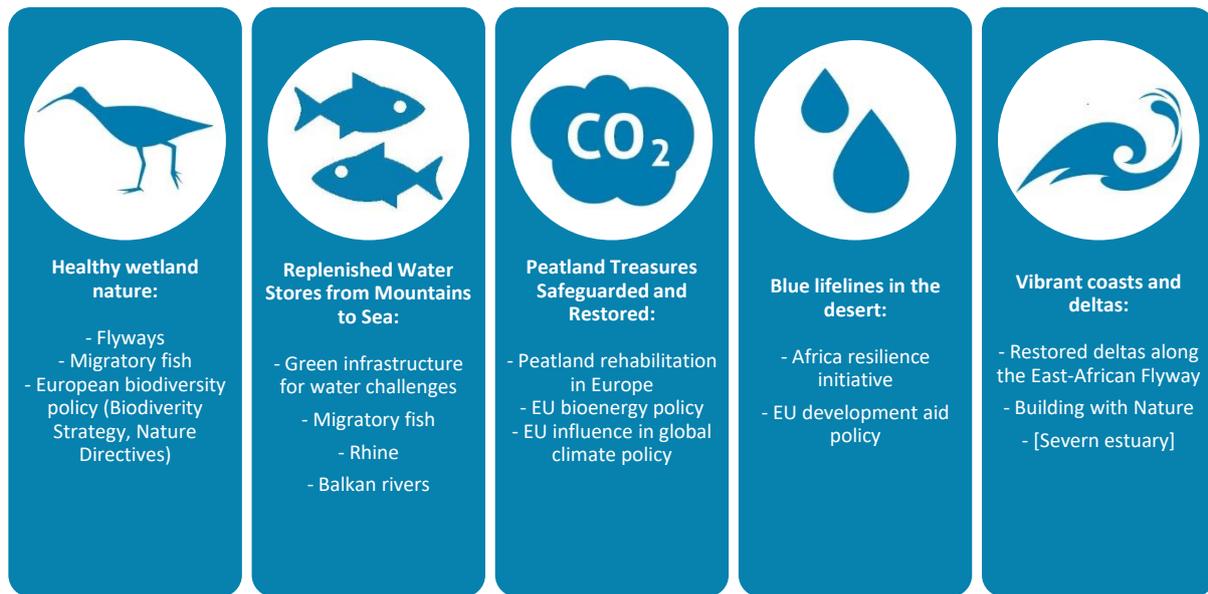


Figure 1: Strategic Intent streams and Wetlands International – European Association priority topics and initiatives for the period 2015-2025.

How we work in Europe

Wetlands International – European Association focuses on the development and implementation of European Union (EU) policy relating to these streams, and on its effects and impacts on European and global wetlands. We use the expertise of our members and of our global network to inform EU policy- and decision-makers, and we in turn inform our members and global partners on the implications for them of EU policy developments. Engaging with our global network and working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders simultaneously allows us to have a broad understanding of existing and upcoming global environmental issues and of the role of the EU in addressing or exacerbating them. Ultimately, we want to ensure that wetlands are safeguarded and restored for people and nature. We are convinced that in order to achieve this outcome, we must influence policies and practices, in a mutually reinforcing cycle:

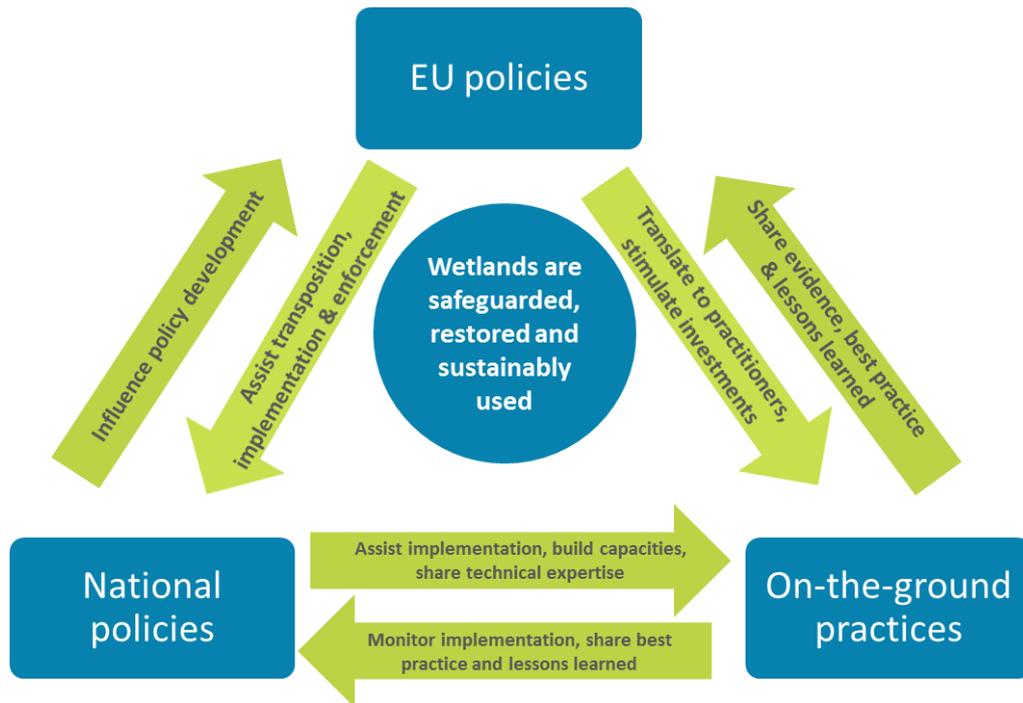


Figure 2: Wetlands International – European Association working model

By contributing to the amendment and/or development of Union policies, we can influence national investments and policies and their actual implementation on the ground, which in turn has an effect on wetlands. Simultaneously, by collecting and analysing case studies and experience from our member organisations across the European sub-regions, we can bring examples of best practice and lessons learned to EU policy- and decision-makers, or we can highlight instances when EU policy is not being correctly implemented or enforced. We also influence direct action on the ground by sharing technical expertise and building the capacity of stakeholder groups (those who use and benefit from wetlands, and those who drive impacts on wetlands).

Geographical focus

Wetlands International – European Association seeks to make a difference by working in different European wetland areas. We select our geographical areas of focus by combining criteria such as:

- importance of the wetland area in question in terms of biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- scale of the threat or impact;
- existing member or network expertise;
- existing partnerships or projects.

The picture below summarises the geographical areas where Wetlands International – European Association intends to work in the period 2015-2025. The map is not exhaustive:

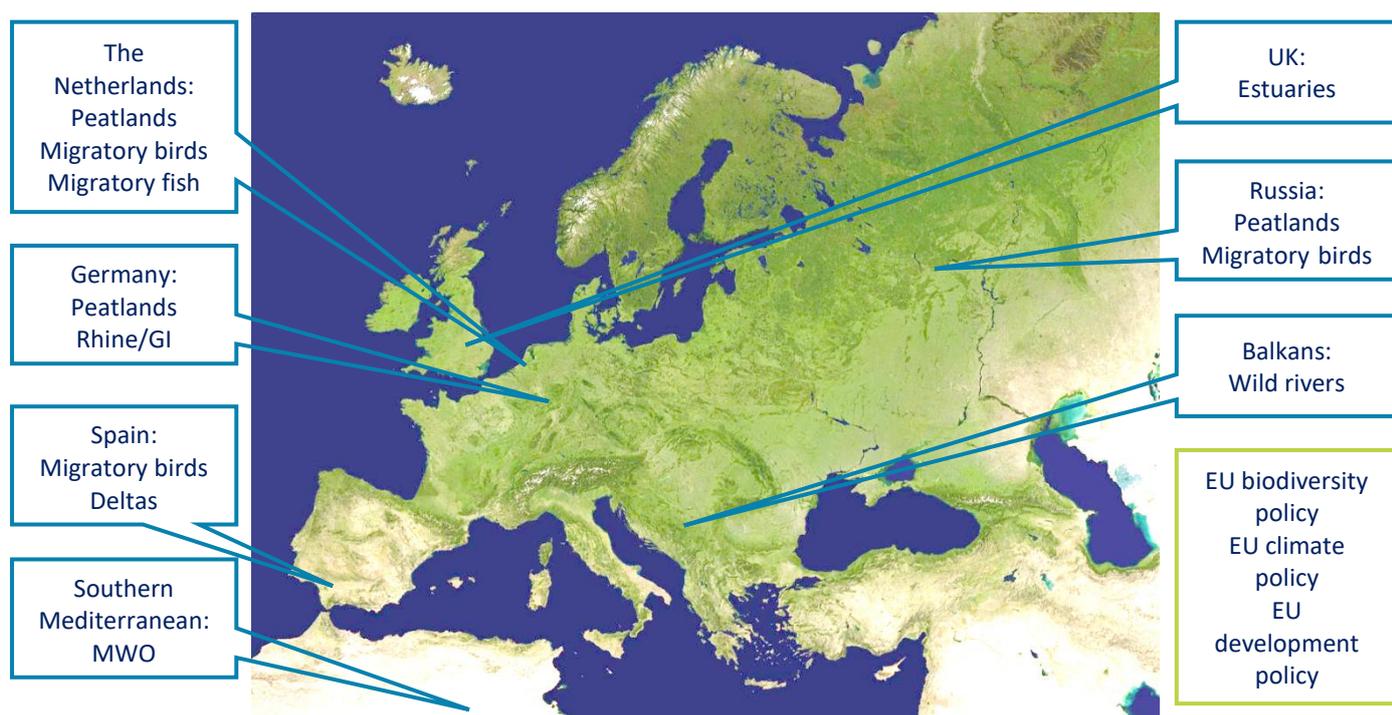


Figure 3: Geographical distribution of Wetlands International – European Association’s main efforts in 2015-2025.

Our niche and added value

Wetlands International – European Association uses knowledge as a tool to influence policy and practice. Our science-based work in partnership with universities and knowledge institutes, combined with a strong understanding of EU policies and the practical experience from our member organisations and their networks, makes us a credible advocate for improved policies and practices.

Some of our knowledge is derived from large-scale monitoring and/or citizen-science programmes, such as the International Waterbird Census, which Wetlands International has coordinated for the last 50 years, or eel and smelt monitoring programmes managed by the Zoological Society of London in the Thames. These programmes provide us with crucial information about wetland habitats and the species that rely on them, and allow us to reach and empower tens of thousands of EU citizens and raise their awareness of the need to safeguard and restore wetlands, and of the role of EU policy in doing so.

In addition to our strong knowledge-base, Wetlands International – European Association benefits from a strong and wide reach and diversity. Our member organisations and networks have different geographical focuses, working in the whole of Europe, from North to South, East to West, in EU countries and in neighbouring and candidate countries. Some of our work spans continents, using migratory routes of wetland species as the connecting thread: for instance, we cannot conserve European waterbirds without addressing pressure on their wetland habitats in Russia, Africa or the

Middle East. Our members and networks also work in different scales of operation and influence: from the global, to the EU, to the sub-regional, to the national or local level, engaging with different sectors, cultures and languages, in rural and urban settings. We also combine a rich variety of thematic foci and technical expertise, embodied in different networks and partnerships.

What binds all this richness and diversity together is our common focus on wetlands, our common goals, and our common understanding of the need to address water and biodiversity issues in an integrated manner.

Our target groups

In order to achieve our goal of safeguarding and restoring wetlands for people and nature by means of improved EU and national policies and practices, our work in the period 2015-2025 will target a wide range of stakeholders:

European institutions:

- The European Commission, in its multiple roles:
 - *Proposing policy and legislation*: with its power of initiative, the European Commission is a key player in ensuring that wetland and land-water interface issues are properly addressed in Union policy. We will engage with different Commission DGs (Environment, Agriculture, Development Cooperation, Climate, Humanitarian aid...) to support robust proposals.
 - *Guarding legislation and ensuring implementation and enforcement*: as the guardian of the Treaties and of secondary legislation, the Commission has the power to notify Member States or some individual operators when Union policy is not being correctly implemented, and to impose sanctions in case of non-compliance. We will bring specific cases to the attention of the Commission, based on the experience of our member organisations.
 - *Representing the EU in international negotiations*: as the coordinator and voice of joint EU positions in international conventions such as the UNFCCC or multilateral environmental agreements such as AEW, the Commission plays a key role in fostering the sustainable management of wetlands around the world.
 - *Influencing investments*: some Commission DGs, such as DG DEVCO, are substantial donors of grants and aid, with the potential for major impact on the status of wetlands in Europe and around the world. We will engage with these Commission DGs to help prevent potentially perverse investments and promote investments in multiple-benefit initiatives (eg green infrastructure).
- The European Parliament, in its multiple roles:
 - *Co-legislator*: we will engage with Members of the European Parliament during legislative and other policy processes, to ensure that wetland and water-related considerations are well integrated.

- *Democratically elected oversight body*: we will bring cases of best practices or insufficient implementation to the attention of MEPs, so that they can raise the issue, if needed, to other institutions such as the European Commission.
- *Awareness platform*: we will bring up emerging wetland issues and promote discussions with MEPs on how these should be addressed.
- The European Council, as co-legislator:
 - Via the Attachés to the Permanent Representations in Brussels, with whom we can have a dialogue on the positions of different countries in Council.
 - Via national governments, through the efforts of our member organisations, partners and networks.
- Other European institutions, such as the European Investment Bank (regarding the first projects under the Natural Capital Financing Facility).

Multilateral Environmental Agreements and international conventions:

- Agreements such as AEWA and conventions such as Ramsar, CBD and the UNFCCC are key to promote international action in support of EU policy objectives, and the EU can influence them as one of the largest economies and population blocks in the world.

National or transboundary authorities:

- Relevant national ministries, via our member organisations, partners and networks.
- River basin authorities, nationally or in a transboundary setting, such as the International Commissions for the Sava (ISRBC), Rhine (ICPR) and Danube (ICPDR).
- Local or regional authorities, such as water management authorities.
- In EU Member States and in candidate (eg in the Balkans) and neighbouring countries (eg in the Mediterranean basin), to prepare candidates for accession to the EU and to ensure that Union goals are not undermined by developments in neighbouring countries.

Other NGOs:

- Joint actions and campaigns regarding themes of common interest or with a relevance to wetlands.

Practitioners and industry:

- Those who can have an impact on wetlands, whether positive or negative, such as engineers, fishers, farmers, extractive industries, etc.
- Those who depend on and benefit from wetlands, such as water companies.

Knowledge institutes:

- Universities, consultancies, think tanks and other institutions which can provide the science and knowledge-base to support our advocacy efforts. We will collaborate closely with the Wetlands International Specialist Groups, which provide networking opportunities for species and wetland management experts. We will highlight emerging issues as well as issues in need of policy-relevant scientific input.

Citizens:

- We will involve citizens through our citizen science programmes, such as the IWC, (social) media and awareness campaigns.

Our theory of change and intervention logic

We are convinced that enhanced **awareness** of the wide range of ecosystem goods and services provided by wetlands and of the threats they are facing will lead to improved understanding by stakeholders of the drivers leading to wetland degradation and loss, as well as of the solutions to prevent, mitigate and reverse such loss. Such improved understanding will in turn lead to changes in attitudes and behaviours, reflected in changes in policies, investments and practices.

Therefore, based on our scientific knowledge, we will engage in strategic **communications** activities to enhance this awareness and understanding, and to promote changes in policies, practices and investments. We will make use of layers of information, whose level of detail will depend on the target audience; we will make use of visual information for social media campaigns, alongside more traditional information provision to media outlets such as newspapers and online publications.

We will base our communications and outreach on our science and evidence base, building upon **cases** that our members work on and that can generate policy messages of European relevance. These messages can stem from scientific studies or high impact publications summarising new and compelling evidence of the need for action.

We will derive **policy** positions from the combined experience and lessons learned from these cases, as well as from discussions with our members, experts, the Wetlands International network and other NGOs, networks and partners. The policy positions will be subject to the approval of our members and serve as a basis for our advocacy.

Our targeted **advocacy** efforts will be based on a model of dialogue. Wetlands International – European Association will play a brokering role in bringing together experts and stakeholders to generate commonly agreed solutions to joint challenges. We will focus on facilitating roundtables, workshops and forums rather than one-directional presentation-style events. We will advocate the integration of wetland-related concerns into relevant sectoral policies of the Union and promote synergies and policy coherence, by for example:

- Developing relationships with desk officers and positioning Wetlands International and its members in Brussels;
- Organising briefing meetings with the Commission, MEPs and Attachés;

- Ensuring national advocacy ties with EU and global level advocacy;
- Responding to European Commission consultation requests;
- Coordinating work with other (Brussels-based) NGOs.

We will use best practice examples and success stories to **inspire** action by policy-makers and citizens. We will also engage the latter via citizen-science programmes and public campaigns aimed at making the invisible visible: we will show the importance of wetland habitats and of the biodiversity they contain, for instance by means of flagship species of migratory birds or fish.

We will contribute to the **implementation** of EU environmental and climate policy and legislation by highlighting policy successes and failures and feeding best practice into national and EU policies and relevant practitioner networks, by for example:

- Collecting examples from members and jointly offering solutions and best practices to help improve implementation on the ground and change policies at EU level;
- Promoting and if possible initiating joint demonstration projects on the ground;
- Promoting investments for the conservation and restoration of wetland ecosystems;
- Investigating the impact of EU external aid policies in wetlands outside Europe, and investigating how developments outside the EU contribute to or detract from achieving Union environmental policy objectives.

We will provide a platform for **exchanging information, knowledge and ideas** among our members, and facilitate the communication of that information to the appropriate levels of European policy and decision-making, by for example:

- Convening knowledge and expertise – bringing experts together, producing reports and briefings, and disseminating key messages to decision-makers;
- Attending technical meetings (such as the Common Implementation Strategy meetings for issues such as the Water Framework Directive or the Biodiversity Strategy) and communicating the outcomes to our members, partners and networks;
- Organising events in the Member States to build capacity on the implementation of European policy and legislation;
- Organising and attending relevant policy events to highlight the importance of wetlands and of their ecosystem services, and to advocate for the development and implementation of legislation and policy that supports the delivery of those ecosystem services;
- Developing and disseminating information and education materials for different target audiences (national and European).

We expect that on the basis of these increases in awareness, capacities and commitments to consider wetland values we will engage in dialogues and develop practical recommendations for improving policies and plans which will result in enhanced conservation, rehabilitation and sustainable use of wetlands in the EU and in third countries.

Wetlands International's theory of change is further depicted in the figure below:

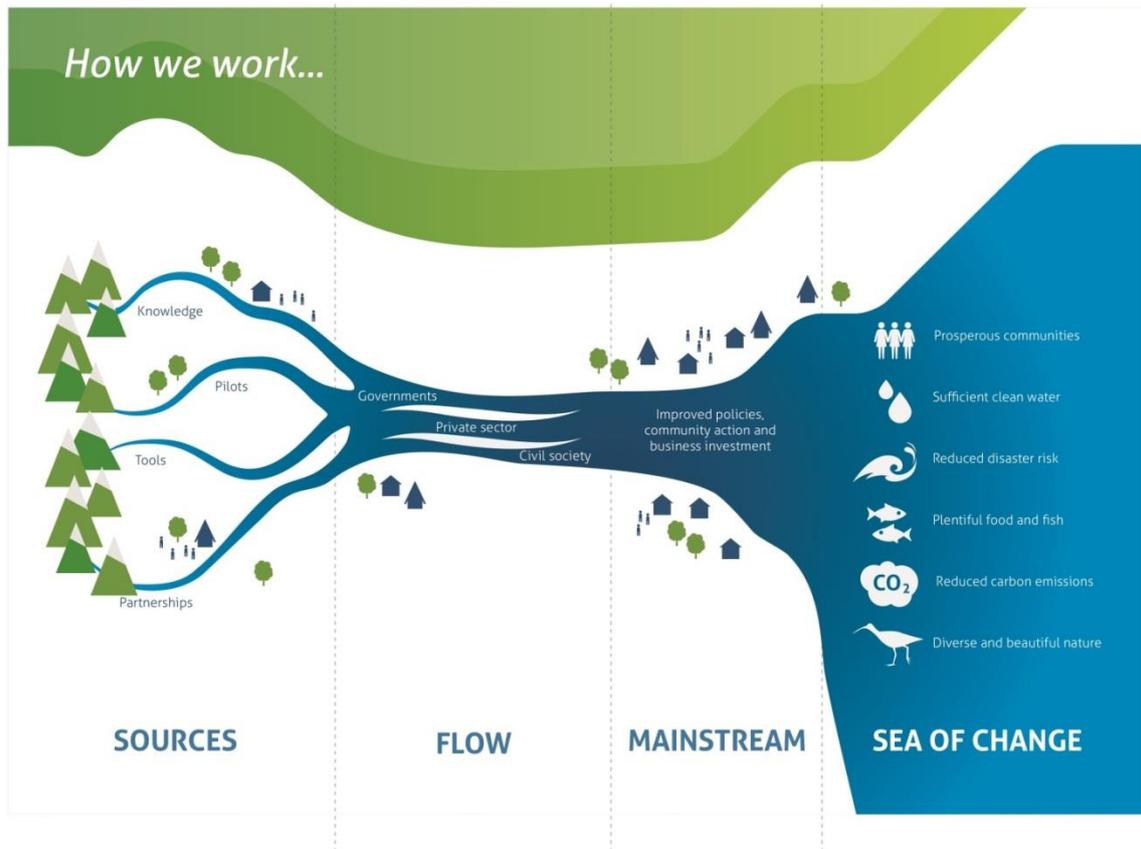


Figure 4: Wetlands International develops knowledge, pilots, tools and partnerships to influence government, private sector and civil society actors as a means to enable change on the ground. Wetlands matter because:

-  they act as water sources, sinks and purifiers,
-  they are a source for plentiful food & fish,
-  they support abundant and unique nature,
-  they are engines for the local economy,
-  they buffer and mitigate disaster risks and
-  they are the Earth's greatest natural carbon stores.

Main objectives

Wetlands International – European Association’s overarching goal is to support improved EU policy development and implementation as a means to improve practices and investments regarding wetland ecosystems and sustainable water management. In the period **2015-2020**⁷ we will pursue this overarching goal by focusing on the following main objectives:

Environmental objectives:

- Ensure that nature legislation (the Birds and Habitats Directives) provisions regarding wetlands are not weakened and that additional provisions are made to target the main pressures: agriculture and hydrological/hydromorphological changes.
- Foster a better integration between the Birds, Habitats and Water Framework directives and the Common Agricultural Policy and Regional Development Funds, e.g. by promoting conservation and restoration measures at larger scales.
- Contribute to the correct implementation of nature and water legislation in the Member States and of similar provisions in candidate or neighbouring countries.
- Secure increased investment in the conservation and restoration of European wetland ecosystems, in particular rivers (including estuaries) and peatlands.
- Secure increased investment in wetland conservation and restoration in third countries as a means to preserve European biodiversity (migratory species) and as a means to prevent or mitigate water-related disasters and foster sustainable development.
- Contribute to the achievement of Union environmental objectives by advocating the better integration of wetland-related concerns in the future Financial Perspectives, in particular when it comes to provisions relating to agricultural and structural funds.

Climate objectives:

- Ensure that the measures adopted under the climate and energy framework 2020-2030 take into consideration wetlands and organic soils as a hotspot of GHG emissions in the land sector.
- Promote a review of the Renewable Energy Directive that ensures that bioenergy produced on drained wetlands and organic soils is banned, and that conflicts between other types of renewable energy and wetlands are avoided or minimised.
- Contribute to the mid-term review of the CAP by highlighting the perverse climate effects of provisions relating to wetlands and peatlands.
- Contribute to the EU’s position on international climate negotiations.
- Contribute to the implementation of the EU’s climate change adaptation strategy by promoting ecosystem-based solutions (such as green infrastructure, including in urban settings, and coastal habitat restoration) to climate impacts such as more frequent and severe floods and droughts.

⁷ These specific objectives will be reviewed in **2020** to assess whether they are still relevant for delivering the Strategic Intent by 2025.

- Contribute to climate change adaptation efforts in developing countries by promoting the targeting of EU development and humanitarian aid to integrated approaches to disaster risk management.
- Contribute to the achievement of the EU's climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives by advocating the better integration of wetland-related concerns in the future Financial Perspectives, in particular when it comes to provisions relating to agricultural, structural and development aid funds.

Main expected impacts

The main expected immediate results and deliverables of our work in the period 2015-2020 include:

- Enhanced awareness of policy and decision makers regarding the value of wetland ecosystems and increased uptake of ecosystem-based management solutions;
- EU environment, climate and development policy and legislative initiatives take into consideration the key role of wetlands as functional links between ecosystems (specifically, EU nature legislation is strengthened and better integrated with other policies, in particular water and agricultural policies; and climate legislation bans bioenergy sourced from organic soils while promoting peatland conservation and rehabilitation);
- Enhanced awareness and policies result in the development and resourcing of new initiatives for the conservation, rehabilitation and sustainable use of wetlands (specifically, at least 1 new green infrastructure project and 1 new paludiculture project approved and at least 50.000 EUR in additional funds for IWRM in the Mediterranean basin raised);
- Extended expertise networks and new partnerships forged, and additional capacity created in NGOs, policy makers and private sector stakeholders;
- Communications impact of our knowledge reports, policy briefings, submissions, technical articles and awareness materials;
- Enhanced visibility of Wetlands International – European Association, its members and causes by means of meetings attended and organised, presentations given at key events, and press releases, videos, blogs and twitter posts as appropriate.

We expect that some results and impacts will materialise already in 2015-2020, but others will only be felt in the medium to long term. These include:

- Agricultural, structural funds, environment, climate and development aid allocations in the Financial Perspectives 2021-2028 include specific provisions regarding sustainable wetland and water management;
- Implementation of EU policy and legislation contributes to the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands;
- Enhanced knowledge contributes to improved conservation status of key species and their habitats, in and outside the EU;
- Enhanced civil society capacity results in additional initiatives for the conservation, rehabilitation and sustainable use of wetlands and their goods and services.

Resources and needs

Wetlands International – European Association is a new organisation, still in the phase of building up a portfolio of work and systems.

To implement our ambitions in the different policy areas and geographies mentioned in this strategy, we foresee that we would require the following team composition in the period 2015-2020 (all positions are FTE):

- A European Programme Manager to coordinate and oversee the work of the organisation and ensure coordination with the members and the Wetlands International network (*as of April 2016 – Cy Griffin*);
- A Technical Officer on data management for the International Waterbird Census (*currently this position is split between Tom Langendoen and Lammert Hilarides*);
- A Policy Officer on water, rivers and migratory fish (*as of June 2016 – Eef Sliver*);
- A Policy & Advocacy Officer on climate change and Disaster Risk Reduction (*as of June 2016 – Lea Appulo*);
- Specific project roles (eg a liaison and coordination officer for the Severn Vision project in collaboration with WWT – *as of August 2016 – Adam Kennerley*).

Additionally, pursuit of the strategies and target groups outlined above will require staff time dedicated to resource development, partner and donor outreach, proposal development, project management, financial management and visibility and communications activities. Depending on the resource situation, these support roles could either be fulfilled by European Association staff or staff at the Wetlands International Head Office. Conversely, fundraising, communications and advocacy activities conducted by the European Association and its staff can assist in the implementation of other regional strategies in the Wetlands International network.

Funding

The funding landscape is changing, presenting both challenges and opportunities. The position of Europe in the global political economy has changed, yet continues to be important, and at the forefront of innovation, for example on greener approaches to economic development, such as green infrastructure solutions. Public sector funding for NGOs is decreasing or changing, with increased emphasis on private sector partnerships, investments and loans rather than grants, and more integrated approaches. Communications, visibility and outreach are essential to ensure the sustainability of Wetlands International – European Association, in the face of increasing competition for more complicated financing mechanisms.

The SDGs have recognised the relevance of wetlands to sustainable development, emphasising the value of their biodiversity and ecosystem services in Goal 15 and their vital role in securing water supplies for all, in Goal 6. But improving the condition of wetlands is also vital to achieve other SDGs where wetland targets are currently missing, including goals 11, 13 and 14. The SDGs provide an unprecedented opportunity for raising the profile of wetlands, particularly in relation to but this requires advocacy, and leadership from European policy-makers. Recognition of the relevance of wetland condition to address the range of water risks we face has the potential to impact the

direction and nature of investments in Europe and in the developing world, in several sectors. Ecosystem-smart investments in bioenergy, climate, ecosystem restoration, habitat and biodiversity conservation, and integrated water resource management are an advocacy aim of Wetlands International – European Association but also could create opportunities for continuing and expanding our work.

In order to engage and maintain the team outlined above, and provide sufficient resources for support activities, an annual budget of around EUR 800.000 would be needed in the period 2015-2020 (probably starting at around EUR 750.000 in 2016 and building up to around EUR 950.000 by 2020). If such resources cannot be secured in any given year, activities and staffing will have to be scaled back accordingly.

Fundraising plans and strategies

In consultation with the members of Wetlands International – European Association, the following strategies have been identified to help us diversify our funding and ensure sustainability:

1. Seek types of funding that enable the European Association to sustain itself and grow:
 - a. unrestricted / general operating grants such as the LIFE Operating Grants. However, as sources of this type of funding are increasingly difficult, we will also pursue
 - b. multi-annual grants that will provide a more stable resource base to sustain our efforts and impact, and
 - c. leverage further resources to supplement and magnify the work we can achieve under the operating grant by seeking complementary project-based funds to achieve policy aims, which would enable the Wetlands International – European Association to dedicate a larger proportion of the operating grant to essential core operations such as policy advocacy, fundraising, visibility and outreach.
2. Target the existing donor base of the members, emphasising the added value of our collaboration across the region. Some donors fund several of the members, and might be interested in a joint application, as collaboration amongst grantees is often encouraged.
3. Visibility and communications: increased visibility and communicating our cases and successes, connecting our work with that of others, helps the organisation to be more effective in policy influencing, lobby and advocacy, and also aids fundraising.
4. Strategically expand the membership base to add power and reach to the association: Actively cultivate new members, with similar values, and who bring complementary expertise, but also add skills, for example in outreach and marketing. NGO members who have their own strong networks and membership base are also favoured.

The goal is to raise at least a similar level of funding for 2017-2018 as expected in 2016 (circa 785.000 EUR), mainly using funding from sources other than the member organisations. Some of those funds may come from EU sources (eg Horizon 2020), meaning they are not eligible as co-funding for the LIFE NGO operating grant, but they contribute to the overall financial sustainability of

the organisation, in addition to providing us with additional knowledge, materials and networks that can be used to pursue our policy objectives.

Target donor groups:

1. Foundations and trusts, particularly for issue-related campaigns and organizational support. We currently have a grant from 1 foundation and we have identified or approached 4 other possible donors in this category.
2. Public and institutional funds, particularly for knowledge development and on-the-ground implementation projects. We currently have two strategic partnerships with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and one Horizon 2020 project. We are in contact with local authorities for pilot projects and engaged in 2 research proposals under Horizon 2020. We are also exploring using structural funds such as the EMFF to implement restoration activities.
3. Corporate/private sector funds. Corporate engagement can provide good opportunities for collaboration but can entail a need for investment in relationship management and can bring higher reputational risk. The members of Wetlands International – European Association agreed to evaluate opportunities on a case-by-case basis. Wetlands International has adopted a corporate engagement policy and scorecard, an ethical policy and partnership policy which guide decision-making in this respect. Corporate prospects could include water, engineering and energy companies (legally obliged to mitigate impacts), breweries (as concerned water users), and other socially and environmentally responsible corporates (CSR schemes or in joint collaborations, for example public-private partnerships). This category can also include cooperation with private sector partners targeting institutional funds, such as the Natural Capital Financing Facility.

Annexes

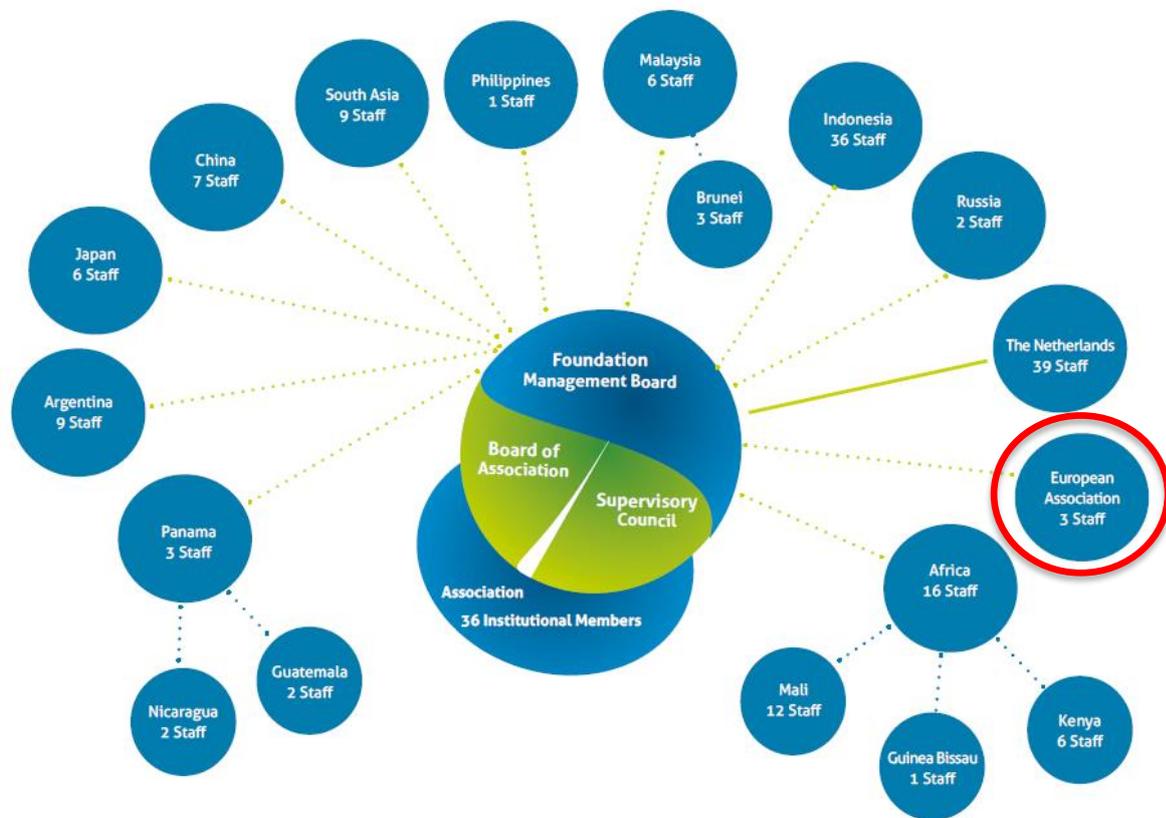


Figure A: Wetlands International global network structure