

D6.1. BUSINESS ACTORS IDENTIFICATION



***REstoration of WETlands to minimise emissions and maximise carbon uptake –
a strategy for long term climate mitigation***

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As outlined in Task 6.1, the REWET project seeks to identify and acknowledge the institutions responsible for the maintenance, management, and financial support of wetland regions, with the goal of promoting the long-term success of environmentally friendly initiatives. These entities, which include a variety of parties, organisations, associations, and even companies and local businesses, are known as "economic actors." Their involvement is critical to the conservation and maintenance of these natural environments and, whether directly or indirectly, they have an impact on the successful sustainable management of wetlands across Europe and, specifically, at REWET's seven OLs locations.

This report identifies the important economic actors at each REWET OL using an approach that includes desk research, continuing conversation with Open-Labs coordinators, stakeholder analysis, and mapping. A diagram outlining their relationships to the key problems that nature restoration efforts face at these sites has been created. Furthermore, this updated edition includes a comprehensive list of parties involved in financing, scale-up, and managing restoration activities at the EU, UK, and global levels.

This version of the deliverable was updated to include the EU revision received in Sep 2024, expanding the list of stakeholders and their interrelation for the OL sites².



1. INTRODUCTION

Wetland ecosystems provide valuable ecosystem services, including flood mitigation, water purification, biodiversity support, and carbon sequestration, which collectively benefit communities and economies. However, restoring and maintaining these ecosystems require coordinated efforts that involve both public and private stakeholders. Identifying and engaging economic actors—such as businesses, government agencies, and community organisations—who benefit from or can support wetland ecosystem services, is crucial to establishing sustainable restoration practices and securing long-term financial and management support ¹.

Regarding financial viability to undertake restoration actions, it can result in its enhancement through Ecosystem Services valuation. It can significantly increase the economic returns by promoting ecosystem services like carbon sequestration and flood protection, which have quantifiable value in global and local markets. Studies indicate that these services are often underappreciated or undervalued unless economic stakeholders recognise their direct and indirect benefits. Canning *et al.* ² highlight the potential of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes and suggest that structures like common asset trusts could attract investments and bundle payments to provide long-term financial backing for restoration efforts.

From a management and implementation points of view, and having socioeconomic impacts in consideration, an active stakeholder support and participation with varied perspectives —such as landowners, agricultural businesses, and local governments—creates more inclusive management and mitigates conflict and risks. A study on Belarusian wetland projects ³ where multilevel stakeholder support scheme was applied, enabled diverse groups to contribute to restoration planning and implementation, despite some governance challenges that were faced.

Successfully engaging local or nearby stakeholders to wetlands in restoration programs, particularly those involving agriculture, recreation, and tourism, is critical since these actors typically have a direct interest in the health of these nature sites. These ecosystems support a wide range of economic interests; therefore, their well-being has a direct impact on other sectors. In this sense, many research lines in this ground have pointed out to the multiple benefits that incentives (financial or other types) and subsidies pose as booster of farmers' engagement tools for wetland restoration ⁴. As counterpart, some studies have proven that these financial incentives and subsidies are not as effective as it may seem when deeply analysed, due to bureaucratic hurdles to access those incentives ⁵, and also their potential to diminish intrinsic conservation motivation. This could lead stakeholders to depend on continuous funding, as seen in regions where financial dependency discouraged voluntary participation once incentives stopped ⁶.

As part of WP6, the identification of stakeholders should not be only centred around local stakeholders (farmers, villagers and local governments) impacted by restoration actions; we are also putting some efforts on specifically analysing those actors that may play an important role in making restoration of ecosystems a financially sustainable endeavour. Over the recent years, nature conservation projects worldwide have successfully implemented the so-called “blended finance” approaches for funding these initiatives (i.e. the UK Peatland Code via the voluntary carbon market ⁷, the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) in Southern Africa via specific financial de-risking mechanisms ⁸, the Commonland's Sustainable Finance initiative in Spain ⁹). Therefore, a comprehensive stakeholder mapping that extends beyond the local context is essential

to capturing the full spectrum of interests and dynamics that can impact the success of nature restoration.

1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENT AND PURSUE

In this document, we present the updated version of Deliverable 6.1, which has been amended in response to feedback and comments provided by Alberto Zocchi, the Officer overseeing the REWET project. The revisions include a comprehensive description of the methodologies employed to fulfil the objectives of this task. Additionally, the document has been enhanced by expanding the list of stakeholders identified in the scope of the project.

1.2 WPS AND TASKS RELATED WITH THE DELIVERABLE

This deliverable refers to **Task 6.1 – Business actors identification and engagement consultation** – included in WP6: Replication and business models. This task serves as initial point for the realisation of the following **Task 6.2: REWET business models**, and also as source of information for the interviews to be conducted under **Deliverable 6.2 - Interview reports of wetland economic actors per Open Lab** by BAX.



2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology followed for the completion of this task is based on a combination of a standard stakeholder identification, analysis and mapping methodology ¹⁰. It is composed by 3 main steps:

Step 1: Stakeholders identification

To complete this step, we conducted desk research to gather and indicate insights gained from an extensive analysis of both public and private digital platforms, scholarly research, and numerous other information sources, and the continuous feedback provided by OL coordinators and other experts within the REWET project influence from the OL coordinators, based on their hands-on experience and familiarity with the OLs locations. Not only those stakeholders with positive interest were gathered, but also those who even had an historic negative impact in the REWET OLs and now are also responsible to amend their effect by promoting sustainable plans.

Over the course of the project and tasks related with WP6, we have also considered that extending the scope of vision far from the REWET OLs would also benefit the positive outcome of this WP. Now that Blended Finance approaches are being applied and implemented to finance wetlands restoration projects, it is also significant to identify and make visible other relevant players around the world that have successfully contributed to nature restoration.

Step 2: Stakeholder Analysis

Following the identification of stakeholders, a comprehensive analysis was undertaken to gain an understanding of each stakeholder's specific interests, the potential impacts of their actions on a wetland restoration project, and the nature of their influence. This in-depth examination was conducted through a methodical review of diverse information sources, including both primary and secondary data, detailed in the reference section.

This process enabled us to uncover the motivations and expectations of stakeholders, assess the potential risks and benefits they bring to the restoration efforts, and identify the leverage they may possess to facilitate or hinder project progress. The next tasks of engagement of this WP, including the revised version of the interviews to be conducted, can be informed by the results of this analysis.

Step 3: Stakeholder Mapping

Building upon the first two steps, we developed a Stakeholder-Issues Interrelation diagram to elucidate the connections between stakeholders' interests and the potential themes that affect all parties involved. These issues relate to the core topics of the any wetland restoration project, such as environmental impact, economic benefits, regulatory compliance, community engagement and ecosystem services.

Each stakeholder was then plotted within the diagram based on their relationship to these central issues. The goal was to highlight areas of common interest and potential conflict, thereby fostering a more holistic understanding of the interplay between stakeholder interests. The resulting diagram could serve as a tool for recognising areas where collaborative efforts could be most effectively concentrated and where stakeholder engagement would be critical for the success of the restoration project.



3. IDENTIFICATION AND MAPPING OF STAKEHOLDERS AND ECONOMIC ACTORS

As introduced, the revised version of this deliverable 6.1 was completed after organising all the information gathered from rounds of consultations with the OL coordinators, conducting a thorough desk research approach of academic contributions and other relevant websites of interest for the nature restoration topic, and applying a generic methodology for stakeholder identification, as suggested by the Review Officer following the first REWET Reporting Period.

Next sections try to summarise the information collected specifically for each of the REWET OLs, having in consideration the experience and insights from the OLs coordinators, the local and community aspect of each OL and the main ecosystem services that each of the OLs offer. The list of stakeholders is summarised in a table format at the end of each OL section, briefly describing each group, association or organisation and detailing the type of entity it is. Additionally, a stakeholder analysis is applied having in consideration different main aspects or topics we considered are of relevance at each OL site when determining the grade of relationship between these stakeholders. This analysis is accompanied by an interrelation diagram to graphically support it.

We also list in this section a few economic actors that have play a role in nature restoration project in recent years, but not necessarily associated with the locality of REWET OLs or even the countries where these OLs are based.

3.1 Specific Open Lab cases

3.1.1. OPEN LAB #1: WEERRIBBEN WIEDEN NATIONAL PARK

3.1.1.1. *Identified economic stakeholders*

OL #1 is located at the Weerribben-Wieden National Park in the Overijssel region (Netherlands). As part of the Natura 2000 area, it covers more than 10,000 hectares and is the largest fen peatland in north-western Europe.

The initial stakeholders identified for OL#1 were:

- **Natuurmonumenten** (Society for the Preservation of Nature in the Netherlands): focuses on ecological restoration and carbon sequestration benefits. Among the many projects this organisation has promoted, one that should be highlighted is the recent renaturation of the Marker Wadden archipelago, one of the largest freshwater lakes in western Europe. This by constructing islands, marshes and mud flats from the sediments that have accumulated in the lake in recent decades. These 'Marker Wadden' will form a unique ecosystem that will boost biodiversity in the Netherlands. This project, aimed at enhancing biodiversity, has been notably funded by the Dutch National Postcode Lottery, Natuurmonumenten, and government ministries and provinces, demonstrating collaborative financing for nature conservation.
- **The Province of Overijssel**: it is the regional authority which has actively supported sustainable agricultural practices and ecological restoration projects aimed at balancing economic and environmental goals. Some studies show that



the region has promoted voluntary measures to improve groundwater quality, enabling farmers to adopt eco-friendly practices without incurring economic losses, and enhancing both environmental resilience and farm profitability ¹¹. Moreover, Overijssel leads circular economy initiatives in construction and local governance, focusing on stimulating sustainable practices and addressing barriers to circularity. This fosters economic innovation and aligns with broader nature and biodiversity restoration objectives ¹².

- **Waterschap Drents Overijsselse Delta:** it is a local water management board focusing on ecological water management and floodplain restoration, contributing to biodiversity and flood safety. This water authority collaborates on projects like controlled flooding to restore natural flood dynamics in the delta areas, promoting long-term ecological and landscape stability. A major initiative, the “Dijken en Natuur” (Dikes and Nature) project, focuses on reinforcing dikes while incorporating natural elements such as riparian vegetation and forests, reducing both flood risk and project costs by using nature-based solutions. This initiative highlights WDODelta’s commitment to sustainable flood protection and biodiversity by balancing structural safety with ecological benefits. The project operates within the High Water Protection Programme and brings together experts, conservation groups, and local authorities to create climate-adaptive infrastructure with minimal environmental impact ¹³.

From here on, some additional stakeholders have been identified after considering other relevant economic sectors. For example:

- **LTO Nederland:** this farmers and agriculture representative body participates in biodiversity and nature restoration efforts within the agricultural sector, balancing conservation goals with farmers’ economic needs. As part of the Delta Plan for Biodiversity Recovery, LTO Nederland collaborates with conservation organisations, public authorities, and private sectors to promote sustainable farming practices that support biodiversity. The organisation advocates for incentive structures, like subsidies and reduced interest rates, to make sustainable practices financially viable for farmers. Furthermore, LTO Nederland is a partner in the COMBINED project, a six-year research initiative aimed at enhancing biodiversity and climate resilience in Dutch landscapes by integrating ecological and agricultural management. This project involves collaboration with universities, conservation groups, and municipalities to find practical solutions that promote biodiversity while sustaining agricultural productivity ¹⁴.
- **VITENS:** As the largest water utility in the Netherlands, Vitens integrates nature conservation with water supply through projects aimed at sustainable water management and biodiversity restoration. One of their flagship initiatives, the “Eternal Source” or Panorama Waterland, promotes a multifunctional approach where water abstraction, nature development, and sustainable agriculture coexist. This concept incorporates wetlands and water basins that restore natural ecosystems and improve groundwater levels ¹⁵. Vitens has also established a “living lab” to pilot and demonstrate water treatment technologies and sustainable infrastructure, creating a blueprint for resilient water systems that prioritise both biodiversity and water quality ¹⁶.
- **DUNEA:** although not strictly present in the Weerribben Wieden National Park, it is one of the major water providers in the Netherlands, with an active profile in restoring dry dune ecosystems, which play a critical role in both biodiversity



conservation and water quality. Their projects focus on mitigating nitrogen pollution and rehabilitating sensitive dune habitats affected by human impact and nitrogen deposition. Dunea collaborates with other Dutch water companies and conservation groups to restore these ecosystems, ensuring sustainable groundwater extraction that supports a range of native flora and fauna. Such initiatives are critical as they maintain essential habitat quality while securing safe drinking water sources for local communities¹⁷. Moreover, has successfully implemented a revenue model that directly supports ecosystem management by charging an additional 4 cents on top of their standard rate of €1.09 per cubic meter of water supplied. This results in an annual collection of €5.50 per customer, which is specifically allocated to the management of dune areas, which proves their capacity and willingness in coming up with innovative ideas to finance restoration projects.

In the previous version of this deliverable was also mentioned that *various businesses that are related to recreation in the national park, such as hotels, shops, and boat rentals, are also included as economic stakeholders*. It is important to also consider this group of organisations which attract visitors, support local conservation efforts and sustainable tourism, and create economic incentives that align with preserving the park's unique wetland ecosystems. As examples of this cluster, some medium-size and local businesses identified within the OL#1 are:

- **VDB Holiday**
- **Restaurant 't Binnenhof.**
- **Weerribben Lodge**
- **'t Zwaantje Botenverhuur Rondvaart bedrijf**

Finally, the cultural aspect associated with the nature of the National Park is an item that promotes and attracts visitors to the site. Examples of cultural initiatives in the vicinity of the OL#1 are represented by **Kröller-Müller Museum** at the De Hoge Veluwe National Park.

The coordination of stakeholders' interests is covered by **The Foundation National Park Weerribben-Wieden**. They also provide a platform for communication and engagement among stakeholders.

Table 1. Summary of identified economic stakeholders for the OL#1 – Netherlands region.

Organisation	Type	Sector	Description
Natuurmonumenten	Public	Conservation	Dutch organisation devoted to protection and management of nature reserves in the Netherlands.
Province of Overijssel	Public	Government/Policy	Regional authority with legislative and environmental policy responsibilities in the field of nature restoration.

Drents Overijsselse Delta	Public	Water Utility	Public water authority responsible for water management, safety, and nature restoration in the region.
LTO Nederland	Public	Agriculture	Represents farmers and agricultural interests around the wetland.
Vitens	Private	Water Utility	The largest public water supply company in the Netherlands, drawing from various sources, including wetlands, with a vested interest in the sustainability and restoration of natural water systems.
Dunea	Private	Water Utility	Another Dutch water supply company engaged water management in coastal dune areas and wetlands.
VDB Holiday	Private	Recreation/Tourism	A tourism and recreational corporation operating within Dutch natural landscapes, with a stake in maintaining and restoring these areas to attract visitors.
Restaurant 't Binnenhof	Private	Recreation/Tourism	A local culinary business nestled in nature and dependable on the healthy state of the Weerribben Wieden National Park to enhance guest experiences.
Weerribben Lodge	Private	Recreation/Tourism	Multiple local accommodation providers for tourists that visit the National Park.
't Zwaantje Botenverhuur Rondvaart bedrijf	Private	Recreation/Tourism	A recreational provider that rents boats for the National Park sightseeing and also offering restauration services.
Kröller-Müller Museum	Public	Cultural/Tourism	A museum with an impressive collection of Van Gogh paintings, modern art, and a vast sculpture garden amidst the natural Hoge Veluwe Park.

3.1.1.2. Application of the stakeholder-issue interrelation mapping

For OL#1 - Weerribben Wieden National Park, we have identified three main issues or topics that could be the core for the stakeholder-issue interrelationship analysis of interest within task 6.1 of REWET:

1. **Ecological Preservation vs. Economic Development:** it illustrates the tension between conservation efforts led by organisations like Natuurmonumenten and the economic activities that may affect wetland health, such as those from the agriculture and tourism sectors. The diagram below (figure 1) show the relation between stakeholders, such as the Province of Overijssel and the local water management board (Waterschap Drents Overijsselse Delta), that should mediate these interests through legislation and water management, respectively.
2. **Water Management and Quality:** This issue deals with the responsibilities and impacts of water utility companies (DUNEA and VITENS) and the local water management board in maintaining water quality and supply, which is essential for all stakeholders. Further analysis should explore how these activities intersect with the needs of the agricultural sector (represented here by LTO Nederland) and the natural water demands of the wetland.
3. **Sustainable Tourism and Community Engagement:** This issue focuses on the balance between promoting tourism, which benefits local enterprises like restaurants (restaurant 't Binnenhof) or accommodation places (Weerribben Lodges), and preserving the ecological integrity of the wetlands, which is the core of the attraction. The dichotomy is based upon attracting visitors, maintaining the quality of natural experiences, and ensuring that tourism does not negatively impact the environment.

OL#1 - Weerribben Wieden National Park

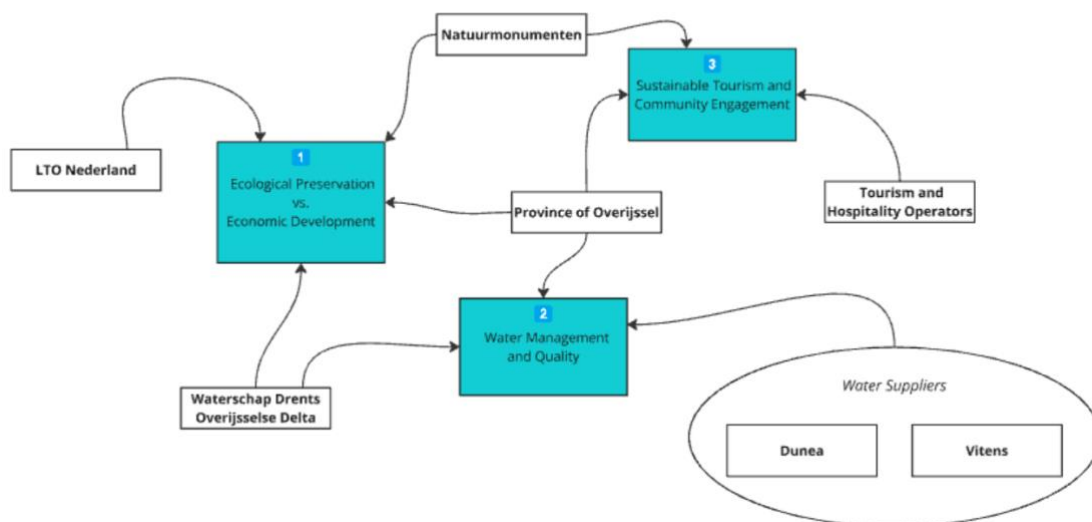


Figure 1. Stakeholder-Issue Diagram of the economic stakeholders identified for OL#1 – Netherlands. (Stakeholder: white box; Issue: Blue box)

3.1.2. OPEN LAB #2: MORAVA RIVER

3.1.2.1. Identified economic stakeholders

Open Lab #2 is located at Morava River in Austria. The initial stakeholders identified for OL#2 were:

- **Viadonau:** this Austrian waterway management company is a significant player in the Morava River restoration efforts. It leads projects such as reconnecting floodplain habitats, restoring river islands, and revitalising 8 km of river branches. Their work also includes combating invasive species and enhancing ecological connectivity to support biodiversity. These measures, part of the LIFE+ project, aim to improve the river's ecological status while maintaining flood protection and waterway functions ¹⁸.
- **WWF Austria:** as a conservation-focused stakeholder, WWF manages the Marchauen Nature Reserve near Marchegg, Austria. This organisation implements innovative projects like the reintroduction of Konik horses to support natural grassland management and habitat creation for endangered species. The reserve also features floodplain forests and measures to enhance water quality and habitat diversity, contributing to the ecological restoration of the Morava floodplain ¹⁹.

Some additional stakeholders have been included in this revised version of the deliverable after considering other relevant economic sectors. For example:

- **Nationalpark Donau-Auen GmbH:** manages the Austrian side of the Morava River floodplains, focusing on conservation and ecological restoration of the Danube-Morava wetland system. Over the last decades, the organisation has been involved in reconnecting floodplains to the river, enhancing hydrological dynamics and biodiversity. This effort supports numerous endangered species and underscores the importance of preserving intact ecosystems. The park's work is also critical in integrating ecological education and tourism as part of its conservation goals ²⁰.
- **Bundesministerium für Landwirtschaft, Regionen und Tourismus:** promotes sustainable land-use practices in the Morava region by balancing agriculture with conservation. This ministry also supports initiatives that enhance habitat connectivity and reduce agricultural runoff into the river system, aligning with broader European water and biodiversity policies ²¹.
- **Österreichischer Fischereiverband:** represents local fishing communities with a vested interest in maintaining healthy aquatic ecosystems. This association advocates for sustainable fisheries management practices and habitat restoration, supporting fish populations while preserving water quality and wetland biodiversity ²².
- **Niederösterreichischer Landesfischereiverband:** this organisation is a critical stakeholder in conservation and restoration projects within the Danube basin, with a strong focus on promoting sustainable fisheries and ecological balance in aquatic ecosystems. It has played a significant role in the LIFE+ Traisen project, which revitalised the heavily regulated Traisen River by creating new meanders, floodplain zones, and fish migration corridors. This initiative restored dynamic river habitats, enhancing biodiversity and benefiting 30 native fish species, including those protected under the EU Habitats Directive. The association works alongside other partners to ensure the ecological and hydrological success of these restoration measures, which also support local fisheries and communities ²³.
- **VERBUND AG:** Austria's largest hydropower company, VERBUND integrates renewable energy production with environmental stewardship. Along the Morava River, VERBUND has supported initiatives to minimise hydropower's ecological



footprint, including efforts to manage water levels and restore side-arm channels, improving aquatic habitats. Their work is featured in databases like eConservation initiative, promoted by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) ²⁴, and is recognised for its significant contributions to water management conservation projects ²⁵.

- **Wachau Nibelungengau-Kremstal Tourismus GmbH:** focuses on promoting eco-tourism in the Morava region, emphasising sustainable tourism practices. Their projects include guided river excursions that educate visitors about the ecological and cultural significance of the floodplain, helping to balance tourism development with conservation goals.

Table 2. Summary of identified economic stakeholders for the OL#2 – Austria region.

Organisation	Type	Sector	Description
Viadonau	Public	Waterway management, Conservation	Oversees waterway infrastructure and ecology, focusing on Danube navigation, flood protection, and habitat conservation for sustainable river management.
WWF Austria	Private	Environmental conservation	Engages in environmental advocacy, habitat protection, and sustainable resource use, leading initiatives for climate, forests, water, and wildlife preservation.
Nationalpark Donau-Auen GmbH	Public	Conservation, Recreation	Manages Austrian Morava floodplains, reconnecting wetlands to rivers for biodiversity, conservation, and ecological education while promoting sustainable tourism.
Bundesministerium für Landwirtschaft, Regionen und Tourismus	Public	Policy, Agriculture	Supports sustainable land-use practices, habitat connectivity, and reduction of agricultural runoff, balancing conservation with regional agricultural and water policies.
Österreichischer Fischereiverband	Private	Fisheries	Advocates for sustainable fisheries and aquatic habitat restoration to preserve biodiversity, water quality, and fishing livelihoods in Austrian river systems.

Niederösterreichischer Landesfischereiverband	Private	Water Utility	Another Dutch water supply company engaged water management in coastal dune areas and wetlands.
VERBUND AG	Private	Energy, Water Management	Integrates hydropower production with conservation, minimising ecological impacts through water management and restoration of Morava River side arms and habitats.
Wachau Nibelungengau-Kremstal Tourismus GmbH	Private	Recreation/Tourism	Promotes sustainable eco-tourism through river excursions and floodplain education, balancing tourism development with conservation in the Morava region.

3.1.2.2. Application of the stakeholder-issue interrelation mapping

The following three main issues have been identified for OL#2 – Morava River to be applied in its stakeholders mapping:

- 1. Ecological Conservation and Restoration:** the preservation of the Morava River ecosystem is a critical issue, with stakeholders such as Viadonau and WWF Austria being central to the restoration efforts. Viadonau's role in habitat reconnection and invasive species management directly impacts the river's ecological status. Similarly, WWF Austria's conservation initiatives within the Marchauen Nature Reserve, including species reintroduction and habitat creation, are essential for the ecological restoration of the Morava floodplain. Nationalpark Donau-Auen GmbH's management of the floodplains ties in with the work of both Viadonau and WWF Austria, focusing on ecological restoration and species conservation. Their efforts are complemented by the Bundesministerium für Landwirtschaft, Regionen und Tourismus, which promotes sustainable land-use practices that align with conservation objectives.
- 2. Sustainable Economic Activities:** balancing economic development with ecological integrity is a second key issue. The Bundesministerium für Landwirtschaft, Regionen und Tourismus and VERBUND AG exemplify this balance, with the first supporting sustainable agriculture and the second integrating renewable energy production with environmental stewardship. Both stakeholders should demonstrate how economic activities can be conducted while respecting and enhancing ecological values. The Österreichischer Fischereiverband and Niederösterreichischer Landesfischereiverband represent the interests of local fishing communities, advocating for sustainable fisheries and habitat restoration to support both biodiversity and economic vitality.
- 3. Community Engagement and Education:** this issue summarise the need of involving local communities and fostering awareness through educational initiatives. Nationalpark Donau-Auen GmbH plays a pivotal role in ecological education, integrating it with tourism and conservation goals. This can be

replicated by Wachau Nibelungengau-Kremstal Tourismus GmbH, which promotes eco-tourism and educates visitors on the region's ecological and cultural importance, ensuring tourism development supports conservation objectives.

In the case of both fishing associations, engaging local communities could be their main task related to this issue. This is crucial in creating a shared sense of responsibility and pertaining sense over the river's natural resources.

OL#2 – Morava River

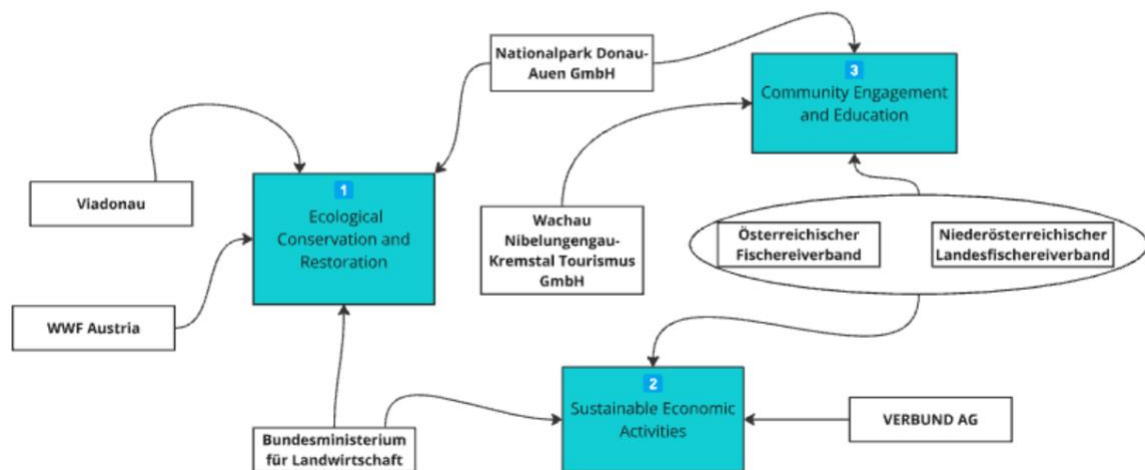


Figure 2. Stakeholder-Issue Diagram of the economic stakeholders identified for OL#2 – Austria.
(Stakeholder: white box; Issue: Blue box)

3.1.3. OPEN LAB #3: YLPÄSSUO

3.1.3.1. Identified economic stakeholders

Open Lab #3 is situated at Ylpässuo, Kiuruvesi in Finland. Initially, **the Natural Heritage Foundation** of Finland was identified as the solely primary stakeholder due to its connection with the Open Lab through its goal of expanding protected natural areas in the country. Ylpässuo is one such protected area, which hosts research and university activities.

Additional stakeholders identified in this revised version of the document include:

- **Metsähallitus:** a state-owned enterprise responsible for managing Finland's national parks and protected areas, including wetlands. Metsähallitus focuses on habitat restoration, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable public access. The organisation has extensive experience in forest and mire restoration, dating back to the late 1980s. It implements large-scale projects like Hydrology LIFE, which has restored over 5,800 hectares of wetlands across Finland. Metsähallitus also conducts long-term monitoring to assess the effectiveness of restoration efforts on vegetation, hydrology, and wildlife ²⁶.
- **The Snowchange Cooperative:** an NGO dedicated to peatland restoration and community-based ecosystem services in Finland. Snowchange works closely



with indigenous and local communities to implement nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Their efforts focus on rewetting drained peatlands, which helps restore biodiversity, improve water quality, and enhance carbon sequestration ²⁷. It is notable their work with Rewilding Europe since 2019 using funds provided by Rewilding Europe Capital ²⁸.

- Finnish Association for Nature Conservation (Suomen luonnonsuojeluliitto):** Finland's largest environmental NGO, it works for the Baltic Sea, inland waters and small water bodies, in addition to implementing a programme to protect rapids. The Association's objective is to make Finnish mires into appreciated sources of recreation and natural products. The Association's actors survey mire sites and defend their natural values. The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation organises aquatic environment and traditional landscape rehabilitation projects. The Association participates in the drafting of river basin and marine resources management plans as well as the work of river basin groups. It also defends wetlands in land use planning and various projects. The Association promotes the expansion of marine national parks ²⁹.
- Sámi Council:** represents the interests of the Indigenous Sámi people in sustainable land use, particularly concerning peatland and wetland resources. The council works to ensure that traditional ecological knowledge is integrated into conservation and restoration efforts. They advocate for the protection of Sámi cultural landscapes, which often include important wetland areas in northern Finland. They are also proactive in building up projects related to battle against climate change and protect local communities ^{30,31}.
- Visit Finland:** promotes eco-tourism and nature-based activities in Finnish wetland sites, including the Ylipäässuo region. Visit Finland collaborates with local communities and conservation organisations to develop sustainable tourism practices that support wetland preservation. Their efforts help raise awareness about the ecological importance of wetlands while contributing to local economies through responsible tourism ³². They run a program which certifies businesses that meet their criteria for sustainable operations, making them part of an association of ecotourism and hospitality businesses.

The protected status of OL#3 is posing a barrier in identifying local economic stakeholders based on any sector of significance as the rest of the OLs. The major interest of this OL lies in its use for scientific investigation and its importance as a carbon-sequestering wetland, thereby elevating the climate-related ecosystem service as the most prominent feature of this location.

Table 3. Summary of identified economic stakeholders for the OL#3 – Finland region.

Organisation	Type	Sector	Description
Metsähallitus	Public	Conservation	Manages Finnish national parks and wetlands, restoring habitats and biodiversity through nature restoration projects.
The Snowchange Cooperative	Private	NGO/Climate Action	Implements community-based peatland restoration and climate solutions,

			rewetting peatlands for biodiversity, water quality, and carbon storage, partnering with Rewilding Europe.
Finnish Association for Nature Conservation	Private	NGO/Environmental Advocacy	Advocates for wetland and water body conservation, organises restoration projects, and influences land-use and river basin planning to protect aquatic and mire ecosystems.
Sámi Council	Private	Indigenous Advocacy	Advocates for Sámi interests in sustainable peatland and wetland use, integrating traditional knowledge into conservation and climate change mitigation.
Visit Finland	Public	Tourism/Recreation	Promotes eco-tourism in wetland sites, collaborating with communities and conservationists to combine wetland preservation with sustainable tourism development.

3.1.3.2. Application of the stakeholder-issue interrelation mapping

Here is presented the three main issues and their interrelationships that we have identified for OL#3 stakeholders:

1. **Biodiversity Conservation and Habitat Restoration:** the preservation and restoration of Ylpässuo's biodiversity are of significance importance. In that sense, Metsähallitus plays a significant role in managing Finland's protected areas. Together with The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, they form a tandem of stakeholders in preserving and promoting nature restoration of Finnish wetlands.
2. **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation:** the issue of climate change is a central concern for wetland conservation, with peatlands being significant carbon sinks. The Snowchange Cooperative is a key stakeholder, working with indigenous and local communities to re-wet drained peatlands, thereby restoring their ability to sequester carbon and support climate change mitigation. We have related the Sámi Council to this issue as their involvement ensures that traditional ecological knowledge is incorporated into conservation strategies, providing a cultural dimension to climate change adaptation and the protection of wetland resources.
3. **Sustainable Tourism and Community Development:** Metsähallitus not only oversees habitat restoration and biodiversity conservation but also implements sustainable public access policies, connecting with the sustainable tourism aspect.

OL#3 - Ylpässuo

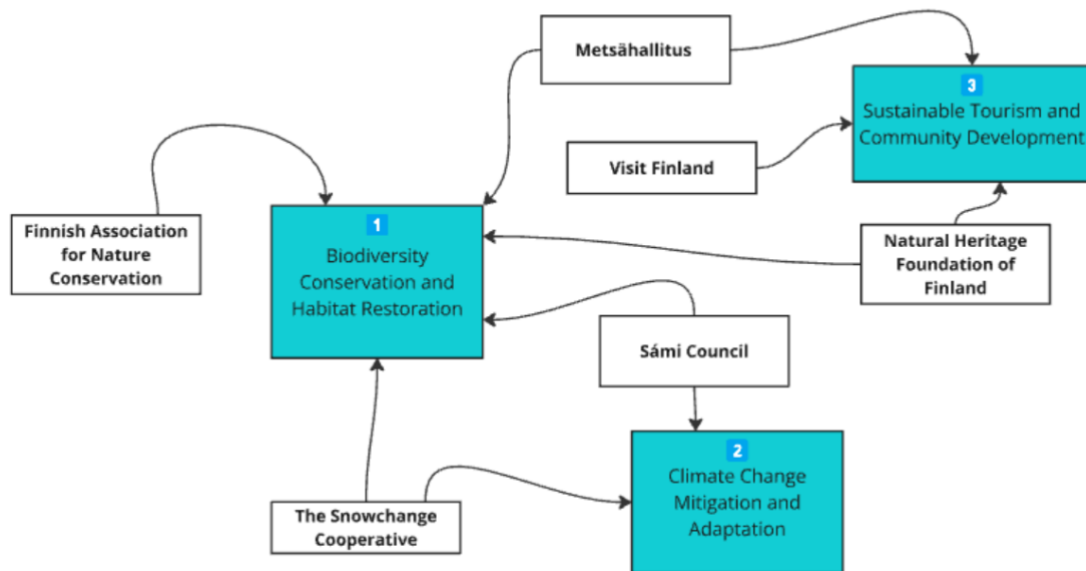


Figure 3. Stakeholder-Issue Diagram of the economic stakeholders identified for OL#3 – Finland. (Stakeholder: white box; Issue: Blue box)

3.1.4. OPEN LAB #4: ESS-SOO

3.1.4.1. Identified economic stakeholders

Open Lab #4 is located at Ess-soo, Estonia. The primary business stakeholder for this Open Lab is the **State Forest Management Center (RMK)**, a public body that manages state-owned forests and natural sites, playing a critical role in forest and peatland conservation by promoting the restoration of previously drained and mined peatlands.

Additional stakeholders identified for OL#4 are:

- **Estonian Fund for Nature (Eestimaa Looduse Fond):** this NGO focuses on conserving Estonia's natural habitats, including wetlands and peatlands, through restoration initiatives and public engagement. Their projects emphasise biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation³³.
- **Soomaa.com:** eco-tourism operator specialising in nature-based activities such as bog-walking and canoeing in the Soomaa and surrounding areas. Their tours promote sustainable tourism and raise awareness of Estonia's wetland ecosystems.
- **Eesti Maaturism:** a prominent player in Estonia's eco-tourism sector, this organisation promotes sustainable tourism in rural and wetland areas. They have been integral in the development of cultural heritage and nature tourism projects, such as showcasing the value of Estonian wetlands as destinations for eco-conscious visitors. Eesti Maaturism collaborates with local businesses and conservation groups to highlight the connection between tourism, wetland health, and cultural preservation. Their involvement in projects like NatureBizz emphasises creating sustainable economic opportunities through responsible tourism³⁴.

- **Estonian Ministry of the Environment (Keskkonnaministeerium):** the primary government body overseeing Estonia’s environmental policies, including peatland and wetland conservation. It has facilitated extensive restoration work under EU-funded projects such as LIFE Mire Estonia ³³ and WaterLANDS ³⁵, targeting degraded peatlands for ecological recovery. The ministry plays a key role in aligning national restoration efforts with EU climate and biodiversity goals, ensuring sustainable land-use practices and reducing carbon emissions through effective wetland management.

Some other sectors related to the historic use of peatlands in Estonia are those related to peat extraction. This activity is the opposite of what peatland restoration actions are focused to achieve if uncontrolled or not measures are taken to limit any freedom-to-operate to these companies. However, the sustainable use of peatlands promoted by the Estonian government and its environmental agency opens the window to force these corporations to retrieve peatlands to their natural state. This makes them a potential economic actor in peatland restoration and conservation. Examples of this type of associations are:

- **AS Tootsi Turvas:** a major player in Estonia's peat extraction industry, operating under the ownership of the Neova Group. This company specialises in producing horticultural and energy peat and has been active since the early 20th century. It operates in several areas, including Lavassaare, one of its largest peat production zones. They actively participate in restoration projects (also WaterLANDS ³⁵ in this case). For instance, in Lavassaare, the company is working to restore biodiversity and create habitats for wildlife on former peat extraction lands, transitioning them into functional ecosystems by 2027. It is also committed to sustainability, adhering to rigorous environmental standards and supporting carbon neutrality through responsible production practices.
- **Estonian peat association (Eesti Turbaliit):** an NGO that serves as a coalition of companies involved in peat production, processing, and marketing. It plays a significant role in promoting sustainable peatland management by representing the interests of the industry and ensuring compliance with Estonia’s strict environmental regulations. The association facilitates dialogue between stakeholders, including policymakers, industry actors, and environmental organisations ³⁶.

Table 4. Summary of identified economic stakeholders for the OL#4 – Estonia region.

Organisation	Type	Sector	Description
State Forest Management Center (RMK)	Public	Conservation	Estonia's government agency responsible for managing state-owned forests and wilderness areas sustainably for conservation, recreation, and timber production.
Estonian Fund for Nature	Public	Environmental Conservation	NGO dedicated to preserving Estonia's natural habitats and biodiversity through conservation efforts and public awareness campaigns.

Soomaa.com	Private	Tourism	A tour operator that specialises in eco-tourism and nature experiences in the Soomaa National Park, offering guided tours, canoeing, and wildlife watching.
Eesti Maaturism	Private	Rural Tourism	An association that promotes rural tourism in Estonia by supporting local businesses and offering authentic countryside travel experiences to visitors.
Estonian Ministry of the Environment	Public	Government	A governmental body responsible for developing national environmental policy, regulation, and oversight to ensure sustainable development and environmental protection.
AS Tootsi Turvas	Private	Peat Extraction	A company engaged in the extraction and processing of peat, which is used as a fuel and horticultural substrate, with operations focused on sustainable practices.
Estonian peat association	Private	Peat Industry Advocacy	An organisation representing the interests of Estonian peat producers, promoting the responsible development and use of peat resources.

3.1.4.2. Application of the stakeholder-issue interrelation mapping

For the OL#4, the following analysis for the interrelation mapping is described:

1. **Peatland Conservation and Habitat Restoration:** The State Forest Management Center (RMK) is pivotal in the conservation and restoration of peatlands, promoting the return of degraded peatlands to their natural state. Their work directly aligns with the objectives of the Estonian Fund for Nature, which focuses on restoring natural habitats and emphasises biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation.

AS Tootsi Turvas, while historically part of the peat extraction industry, is also contributing to the restoration of peatlands, demonstrating that industry stakeholders can have roles in both economic activities and conservation efforts. Their involvement in projects like WaterLANDS reflects a commitment to sustainable practices and the restoration of functional ecosystems.



- Economic Development and Sustainable Tourism:** Soomaa.com and Eesti Maaturism are central to promoting sustainable tourism in Estonia's wetlands. By offering nature-based activities and highlighting the cultural heritage of these areas, they support economic development while also raising awareness about the importance of wetland ecosystems. Their efforts and interests are narrowly linked with the successfulness of RMK and the Estonian Fund for Nature, as the health of the wetlands directly impacts the quality of the tourism experience and the longevity of their business models.
- Policy and Regulation on Environmental Management:** the Estonian Ministry of the Environment oversees environmental policies, including those affecting peatland and wetland conservation. Their role in facilitating restoration work and aligning national efforts with broader EU goals is crucial for maintaining sustainable land-use practices.

The Estonian peat association, representing the peat industry, is engaged in dialogue with policymakers and conservation groups, advocating for sustainable peatland management and regulatory compliance. Their cooperation with environmental bodies like the RMK and the Estonian Fund for Nature helps to balance economic interests with environmental stewardship.

OL#4 – Ess-soo bog

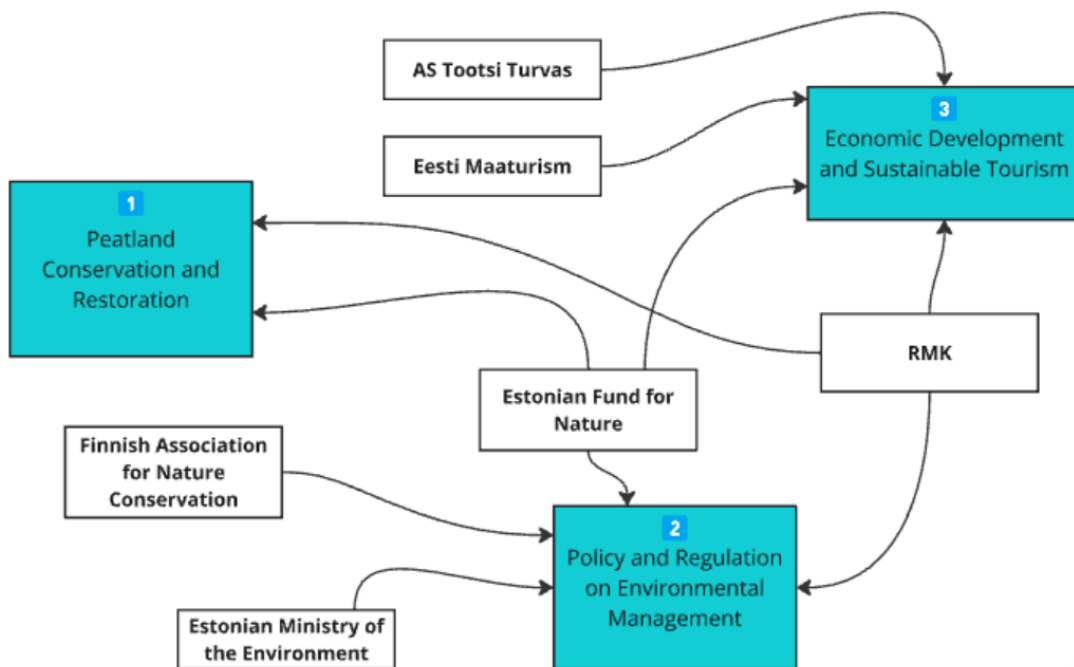


Figure 4. Stakeholder-Issue Diagram of the economic stakeholders identified for OL#4 – Estonia.
(Stakeholder: white box; Issue: Blue box)

3.1.5. OPEN LAB #5: RIVER BÊCHE

3.1.5.1. Identified economic stakeholders

The Open Lab #5 at River Bêche, Belgium is primarily connected with **Natagora**, an NGO that owns the land and has a keen interest in its restoration. The secondary stakeholder related to the OL is the **Wallonia local government**, which owns some parts of the land and supports its restoration. The key interests, needs, and concerns of these stakeholders include conservation, budget allocation, and the potential impact of restoration on neighboring lands.

This revised version extended the number of stakeholders by adding the following new potential economic actors in the restoration of OL#5:

- **Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos (ANB):** in English, it is the Flemish Agency for Nature and Forests, tasked with managing conservation areas along the River Bêche. ANB oversees wetland and forest restoration projects to promote biodiversity and improve hydrological dynamics. Their work aligns with EU policies like the Natura 2000 framework, integrating ecological restoration with sustainable public access to natural areas ³⁷.
- **Natuurpunt:** a prominent Belgian NGO dedicated to conserving natural landscapes and biodiversity. Natuurpunt manages extensive reserves near the River Bêche and leads community-based projects to restore riverine habitats. Their efforts include reforestation, invasive species management, and the rehabilitation of aquatic ecosystems. They also conduct merchandising and commercial campaigns for people to subscribe and fund their activities ³⁸.
- **Visit Wallonia (Wallonie Belgique Tourisme):** the regional tourism board promotes ecotourism and sustainable travel experiences in Wallonia, including areas around the River Bêche. Their initiatives support local economies by showcasing the ecological and cultural significance of wetlands through guided tours, educational activities, and conservation-themed tourism ³⁹.
- **Société Royale Forestière de Belgique:** a leading forestry association advocating for sustainable forest and land management. The organisation works on enhancing forest health and integrating ecological values into land-use planning, benefiting wetland ecosystems linked to the River Bêche. Their sustainable forestry practices align with biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration goals ⁴⁰. It is notable to mention a couple of Interreg-funded projects in which the SRFB participates: W.A.V.E, whose main objective is to promote a high-performance local wood industry by relocating the value chain and encouraging the use of wood, an environmentally-friendly material with high carbon storage potential ⁴¹; and MigForest, which aims to deploy assisted migration of tree species at the scale of the North-Western Europe territory, for a better anticipation of climate change and an improved resilience of the forest ecosystem in a cross-border approach ⁴².
- **Aquafin NV:** an economic actor potentially interested in applying nature-based solutions to the natural treatment of waste water via the wetland restoration. Aquafin is the Belgium's premier wastewater treatment company known to support ecosystem health and to align with broader conservation goals by mitigating the impacts of urban wastewater on wetlands ⁴³.



Current interactions between stakeholders include cooperation between Natagora and the Walloon region, but conflict exists with other landowners.

Table 5. Summary of identified economic stakeholders for the OL#5 – Belgium region

Organisation	Type	Sector	Description
Natagora	Private NGO	Conservation, Environmental Advocacy, Biodiversity Research	Belgian NGO focused on biodiversity protection, nature reserve management, and environmental education in Wallonia and Brussels.
Wallonia Government	Public	Conservation, Policy Making, Sustainable Development	Oversees Wallonia's environmental policy, land use, and nature restoration aligned with EU Natura 2000 directives.
Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos (ANB)	Public	Conservation, Forestry	Flemish Agency managing conservation areas along the River Bêche, promoting biodiversity and hydrological restoration, aligned with EU Natura 2000 frameworks.
Natuurpunt	Private NGO	Conservation, Environmental Advocacy	NGO conserving natural landscapes and biodiversity through reserves, community-led habitat restoration, and commercial campaigns for funding and engagement.
Visit Wallonia (Wallonie Belgique Tourisme)	Public	Tourism	Regional tourism board promoting sustainable tourism in Wallonia, highlighting the ecological and cultural significance of wetlands like the River Bêche.
Société Royale Forestière de Belgique (SRFB)	Private	Forestry	Forestry association supporting sustainable practices, enhancing forest health, and aligning with biodiversity and carbon goals via Interreg-funded projects like W.A.V.E and MigForest.
Aquafin NV	Private	Water Management	Belgium's leading wastewater treatment company, exploring nature-based solutions to mitigate

			urban wastewater impacts on wetlands and ecosystem health.
Natagora	Private NGO	Conservation, Environmental Advocacy	NGO focusing on biodiversity conservation in Wallonia through habitat restoration, wetland management, and awareness programs, particularly within Natura 2000 sites.
Wallonia Local Government	Public	Policy, Environmental Management	Oversees regional environmental policies and supports wetland restoration projects in Wallonia, aligning with EU conservation frameworks and local development initiatives.

3.1.5.2. Application of the stakeholder-issue interrelation mapping

- 1. Conservation and Biodiversity Enhancement:** Natagora and Natuurpunt can be positioned at the forefront of the River Bêche restoration project. Natagora, owning the land and advocating for its restoration, is intrinsic to the planning and implementation of biodiversity enhancement strategies. Natuurpunt's community-based projects, including reforestation and invasive species management, complement Natagora's initiatives, furthering the ecological restoration goals. ANB aligns with these conservation efforts through its management of wetland and forest restoration projects designed to promote biodiversity along the River Bêche. Additionally, the SRFB contributes to conservation through sustainable forestry practices, which are compatible with biodiversity conservation and enhancement, as demonstrated in the projects they have been involved: W.A.V.E and MigForest.
- 2. Economic Development and Sustainable Tourism:** Visit Wallonia is central to this effort, as they work to promote ecotourism and sustainable travel experiences that can economically benefit local communities while exhibiting the ecological and cultural significance of the wetlands. Here, the SRFB also plays a role in this issue by promoting the local wood industry in a sustainable manner. Finally, The Wallonia local government's interest in supporting restoration initiatives intersects with their broader economic development goals, including the promotion of sustainable land use and job creation through increased tourism.
- 3. Water Management and Nature-based Solutions:** this final issue centers around effective water management and the implementation of nature-based solutions as part of the restoration process. Aquafin NV's potential interest in applying natural water treatment methods makes them a key stakeholder in exploring nature-based solutions to enhance the wetland's ability to treat wastewater, thus supporting ecosystem health. Again, the ANB can be linked



here as it shares a stake in water with a focus on improving hydrological dynamics as part of their conservation work.

The Wallonia local government could likely be concerned with the restoration's impact on water management, such as flood control and maintaining water quality for surrounding communities. Their role will involve balancing the need for effective water management with ecological and economic interests.

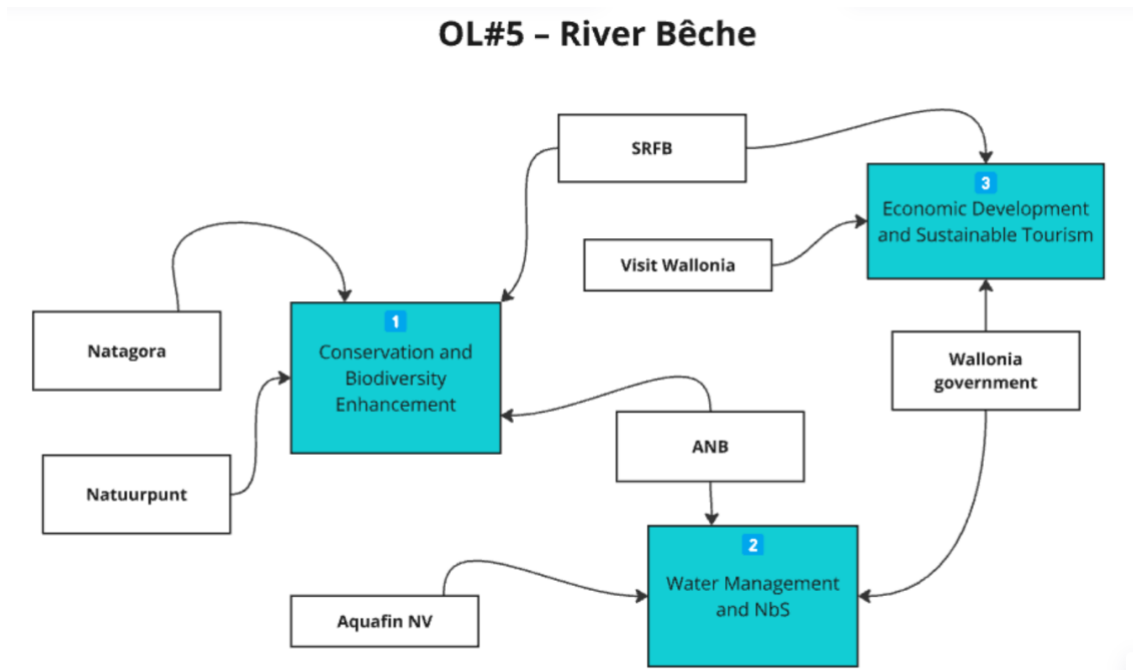


Figure 5. Stakeholder-Issue Diagram of the economic stakeholders identified for OL#5 – Belgium. (Stakeholder: white box; Issue: Blue box)

3.1.6. OPEN LAB #6: GUSSOLA OXBOW LAKE, PO RIVER

3.1.6.1. Identified economic stakeholders

Open Lab #6 is located in the River Po basin, Italy. It has a strong relation between farming companies and agricultural (mostly, poplar cultivation) organisations that provide food and material services to the community that inhabits the vicinity of Cremona, Lombardy. Previously identified economic stakeholders were:

- **Interregional Agency for the Po River:** a governmental organisation responsible for managing the Po River's water resources and ensuring the sustainable development of the river basin. As a stakeholder, the agency would be involved in coordinating restoration efforts, ensuring that they align with regional water management plans, and possibly providing funding or policy support for the project.
- **Inerti Sacca:** it is a significant stakeholder in the restoration and sustainable management of the Po River basin, operating in the aggregates industry. As part of collaborative efforts with the Po River Basin Authority and environmental organisations, the company contributes to initiatives such as the renaturation of the river. These include restoring natural watercourse processes, creating wetlands, and managing sediment sustainably to reduce ecological impacts. By



focusing on the ecological rehabilitation of degraded riverbank areas and promoting biodiversity, Inerti Sacca exemplifies industry engagement in environmental restoration projects aligned with broader goals of the Po basin recovery plan.

- **Padano Forestry Consortium:** the Padano Forestry Consortium plays a pivotal role in ecological restoration through its expertise in afforestation and biodiversity conservation. Within the broader Po River renaturalisation projects, the consortium is involved in reforestation activities to restore riparian zones and increase habitat connectivity. Specific measures include planting native trees, combating invasive plant species, and enhancing soil and water retention capacities. These efforts are critical to improving flood resilience and restoring ecological balance in one of Italy's most critical agricultural and industrial areas. A branch of the main organisation is site-based at the vicinity of OL6 in Gussola^{44,45}.
- **Municipalities of Gussola and Martignana di Po:** local municipalities have a direct interest in the restoration of the Po River as it can enhance the quality of life for their residents, promote tourism, and protect against flooding. Amongst their contributions to nature restoration projects are local funding, land use planning, and engaging the community in restoration activities.
- **Province of Cremona:** as a regional government, they can play a role in integrating the project into regional development plans, coordinating with other municipalities and stakeholders, and providing regulatory oversight.
- **Italian Center for River Redevelopment (CIRF):** non-profit organisation dedicated to the protection and restoration of Italian rivers and their ecosystems. Main tasks in this type of project are offering technical expertise, advocating for best practices in river management, and helping raise awareness. Additionally, they could contribute economically by securing funding and fostering partnerships between public and private entities.

The key interests and needs of these stakeholders vary from potential damage to cultivation due to flooding, impact on public image based on intervention outcomes and access to the area during floods.

Additional stakeholders identified in this revised version are:

- **Fondazione Cariplo:** a philanthropic organisation supporting environmental sustainability, and funding projects aimed at restoring biodiversity and promoting sustainable land use in Lombardy. Its involvement facilitates innovative approaches to wetland conservation⁴⁶.
- **ANEPLA (Italian Aggregates Association):** this private sector organisation focuses on sustainable aggregate extraction and collaborates with environmental groups to rehabilitate degraded riverine areas. Recently, it has partnered with WWF to support the Po River basin authority in designing a €357 million restoration project⁴⁷.
- **Cantine Riunite & CIV:** One of Italy's largest wine cooperatives, based in Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna along the Po River basin, Cantine Riunite & CIV is deeply committed to sustainability. The cooperative incorporates environmental restoration practices into its operations, including the use of green energy and organic agricultural methods. Approximately 18.44% of its production sites are dedicated to green spaces, and they have implemented innovative



systems to recycle byproducts, such as turning pomace into biogas. Their initiatives to manage water resources efficiently and reduce the carbon footprint of wine production align closely with the goals of ecological restoration projects⁴⁸.

We would like to highlight the relevance of cultural stakeholders, such as scientists, teachers, and students as potential influencers of people's choices and political decisions, promoting a sustainable and knowledge-based approach.

Table 6. Summary of identified economic stakeholders for the OL#6 – Italy region.

Organisation	Type	Sector	Description
Interregional Agency for the Po River (AIPO)	Public	Water Management	Governmental organisation managing the Po River's water resources, coordinating sustainable development and restoration efforts, including integrating hydraulic and ecological projects.
Inerti Sacca	Private	Aggregates	Specialises in sustainable aggregate extraction and rehabilitation of degraded areas. Potential partner for sediment management and restoration of Po River wetlands.
Padano Forestry Consortium	Private	Forestry	Focuses on sustainable forest management, reforestation, and ecological services along the Po River, contributing to biodiversity and climate resilience.
Municipalities of Gussola and Martignana di Po	Public	Local Governance	Local governments supporting restoration through funding, land-use planning, and community engagement to enhance residents' quality of life and promote sustainable tourism.
Province of Cremona	Public	Regional Governance	Regional authority with a role in integrating wetland restoration into development plans, coordinating among municipalities, and providing regulatory oversight.
Italian Center for River Redevelopment (CIRF)	Non-Profit	Conservation	Provides technical expertise, advocates for sustainable river management practices, and

			fosters partnerships to secure funding for restoration projects.
Fondazione Cariplo	Non-Profit	Philanthropy	Funds environmental projects focusing on biodiversity restoration and sustainable land use, promoting innovative conservation methods in Lombardy.
ANEPLA (Italian Aggregates Association)	Private	Aggregates, advocacy	Supports sustainable extraction practices and river restoration. Previously partnered with WWF and AIPO for the River Po basin restoration projects.
Cantine Riunite & CIV	Private	Agriculture (Wine)	One of Italy's largest wine cooperatives, interested in wetland restoration for maintaining water quality and sustainable agricultural practices in the Po River basin.

3.1.6.2. Application of the stakeholder-issue interrelation mapping

1. **Biodiversity Restoration and Habitat Connectivity:** this first issue can involve stakeholders such as the Padano Forestry Consortium, which leads efforts in habitat restoration through initiatives like native tree planting and invasive species control. This enhances biodiversity connectivity, which is critical for the health of wetlands. The CIRF provides technical expertise needed to design interventions that are friendly to biodiversity and supports ongoing habitat monitoring. ANEPLA plays a role in the sustainable rehabilitation of areas affected by aggregate extraction, furthering the goal of habitat restoration. Fondazione Cariplo again emerges as a key player, funding projects that use innovative techniques to restore biodiversity. Finally, Cantine Riunite & CIV indirectly contributes to this issue by conserving green spaces and adopting sustainable land practices, thus reducing their ecological footprint on sensitive areas.
2. **Flood Risk Mitigation:** a critical issue where the Interregional Agency for the Po River plays a leading role in coordinating flood risk reduction efforts while ensuring that water management infrastructure is compatible with ecological restoration strategies. The Municipalities of Gussola and Martignana di Po are active advocates for improved flood defenses to protect their local communities and promote resident engagement in restoration efforts. The Padano Forestry Consortium's contribution is significant in terms of increasing riparian vegetation, which enhances soil retention and reduces runoff, mitigating flood risks. The Province of Cremona's role involves integrating flood management into regional planning, thereby coordinating efforts across various municipalities. Fondazione

Cariplo supports these objectives by funding innovative flood mitigation approaches that also offer biodiversity benefits.

3. **Sustainable Economic Development:** encompasses the need to align ecological restoration with the agricultural, industrial, and community requirements. Cantine Riunite & CIV demonstrates how the agricultural sector can contribute to sustainability by recycling byproducts and minimising carbon emissions, which in turn supports the local economy. Inerti Sacca ensures that the practices of aggregate extraction are sustainable, aligning with both economic and ecological restoration goals. The Municipalities of Gussola and Martignana di Po seek to derive economic benefits from restoration-driven tourism and increased agricultural productivity. The Province of Cremona operates as a regulatory body to ensure that restoration efforts are aligned with regional economic strategies and also contribute to job creation. Additionally, ANEPLA supports industry practices that are eco-friendly and that integrate well within the local and national economic frameworks.

OL#6 – Gussola Oxbow Lake

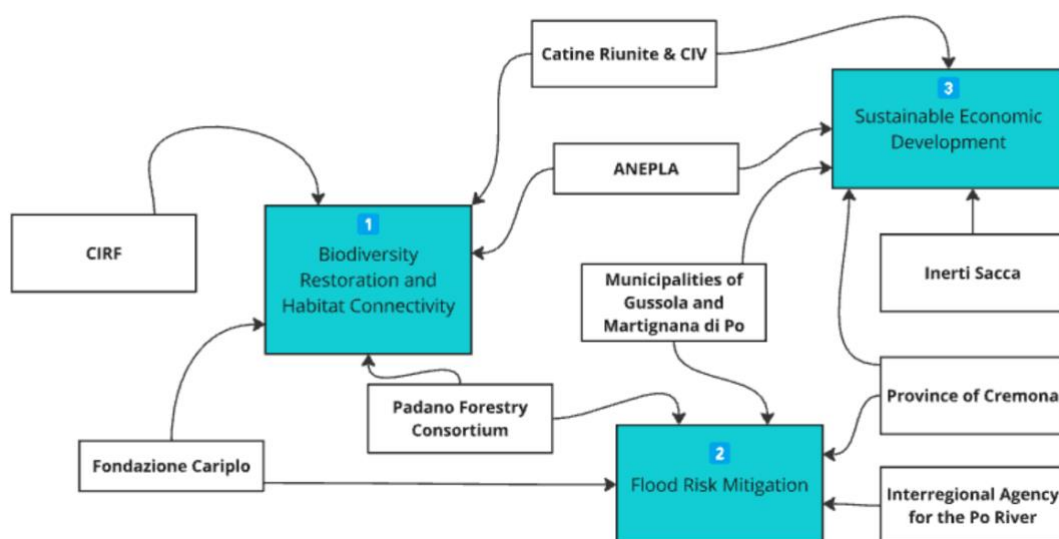


Figure 6. Stakeholder-Issue Diagram of the economic stakeholders identified for OL#6 – Italy.
(Stakeholder: white box; Issue: Blue box)

3.1.7. OPEN LAB #7: ALPIARÇA

3.1.7.1. Identified economic stakeholders

Open Lab #7 is in Alpiarça, Portugal, within the National Reserve Paul da Gouxa. In the last version of this deliverable, the primary stakeholder identified was:

- **Quinta da Atela**, an industrial farm that produces wine and breeds cattle. They are closely connected with the OL as they have signed a protocol with Alpiarça Municipality to jointly manage the nature reserve ⁴⁹. They have a long story of commitment with the site and has benefited directly from the positive effects and ecosystem services the wetland area provides, as they offer enotourism (tourism associated to wine), accommodation and dedicated places within the facilities to hold events. Moreover, the Quinta seeks to balance cattle breeding with the management of the nature reserve and is also interested in the carbon market to

sell credits from the nature reserve. They are in strict contact with the REWET project and the hosted the consortium in a visit during the first consortium meeting of the project.

- **Alpiarça Municipality:** the local government of the village where the nature reserve is located. This entity is the second landowner of the nature reserve and holds key responsibilities for tourism and nature reserve management. Their main economic prospect with the reserve is to sustainably promote ecotourism in the area, for example, by creating walking trails and leisure spaces, which enhance the region's attractiveness for visitors while preserving biodiversity.
- **Associação dos Amigos da Natureza de Alpiarça (AANA):** this recently founded non-profit local organisation plays an important role in promoting nature interpretation, educational activities and enhancing the tourist offerings of the area. Examples of these activities include offering guided tours, birdwatching sessions, and awareness campaigns⁵⁰. These efforts not only attract tourists but also foster local engagement in conservation efforts, contributing to the site's ecological and economic sustainability.

Additional economic actors identified and described in this revised document for OL#7 are:

- **EntreMargens:** an association of tourism agencies in the vicinity of Alpiarça, Santárem. Their common objective is to also promote tourism in the region; hence they are impacted by the conservation status of their surrounding nature.
- **Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas (ICNF):** the national conservation body responsible for managing protected areas, including Alpiarça's wetland areas.
- **Turismo de Portugal:** the national tourism board promotes the Paul da Gouxa Nature Reserve as an eco-tourism destination, highlighting its importance for birdwatching, educational tours, and cultural heritage. These initiatives enhance local economic development while supporting conservation efforts.
- **Quercus – Associação Nacional de Conservação da Natureza:** a non-profit organisation that works to protect and restore natural habitats, including wetlands, in Portugal. one of Portugal's leading environmental NGOs, focusing on nature conservation, restoration, and sustainability. It owns over 600 hectares of land near the Tagus River, which are managed for conservation, ecotourism, and educational activities. Quercus actively participates in wetland and riparian habitat restoration, emphasising water management, biodiversity protection, and public engagement. Its projects often include partnerships with national and EU bodies to promote ecological preservation and climate resilience in areas like Paul da Gouxa, like the LIFE Adapt project⁵¹.
- **Associação Portuguesa de Parques e Reservas Naturais (APPn):** it works to conserve Portugal's natural reserves and parks, promoting the ecological restoration of habitats like wetlands. This association supports capacity-building initiatives, engages in regional environmental planning, and fosters partnerships between public and private stakeholders.
- **Associação Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (APEA):** plays a vital role in protecting bird habitats within wetlands and riparian ecosystems. It conducts bird monitoring programs and habitat restoration projects, including creating biodiversity corridors in areas like Paul da Gouxa. By collaborating with local

communities and international initiatives, APEA integrates conservation practices with educational outreach and eco-tourism opportunities.

- **Instituto de Investigação das Pescas e do Mar (IPIMAR):** focuses on sustainable fisheries and aquatic ecosystem management. Their research includes studying the interactions between wetland health and fish populations, making them critical stakeholders in projects like the Paul da Gouxa restoration. IPIMAR contributes to scientific assessments that support policies integrating fisheries with wetland biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- **Fidelidade:** a leading insurance company in Portugal, recognised for integrating sustainability into its business model. Through its "Nature Positive Plan", Fidelidade emphasises biodiversity preservation, eco-efficiency, and carbon neutrality across its operations. Specific initiatives include supporting nature-based solutions to mitigate climate risks and promoting insurance products that protect natural assets while incentivising sustainable land use. They have also issued green bonds to finance sustainability-related projects ⁵².

The **University of Évora** is a specific entity that represents and coordinates the interests of stakeholders in this location. Friends of Nature of Alpiarça provide a formal communication channel and platform for stakeholders to engage, share information and participate in decisions related to the location.

Table 7. Summary of identified economic stakeholders for the OL#7 – Portugal region.

Organisation	Type	Sector	Description
Quinta da Atela	Private	Agriculture (wine)	Co-owner of Paul da Gouxa Nature Reserve, integrates sustainable farming with biodiversity restoration, eco-tourism, and habitat management efforts.
Alpiarça Municipality	Public	Local Government	Co-owner of Paul da Gouxa Nature Reserve, managing tourism and conservation efforts to promote sustainable ecotourism and enhance biodiversity.
Associação dos Amigos da Natureza de Alpiarça (AANA)	Non-profit	Conservation, Tourism	Promotes nature interpretation, guided tours, and educational campaigns, fostering conservation and enhancing eco-tourism offerings in Alpiarça.
EntreMargens	Private	Tourism	Association of tourism agencies in Santarém, promoting regional tourism impacted by the conservation of surrounding natural areas.
Instituto da Conservação da	Public	Conservation	Manages Portugal's protected areas, including

Natureza e das Florestas (ICNF)			Alpiarça's wetlands, ensuring ecological integrity and compliance with national conservation policies.
Turismo de Portugal	Public	Tourism	Promotes Paul da Gouxa Nature Reserve as an eco-tourism hub, supporting birdwatching, cultural heritage, and local economic development.
Quercus – Associação Nacional de Conservação da Natureza	Non-Profit	Conservation	Focuses on wetland and habitat restoration, engaging in water management and biodiversity projects like LIFE Adapt in Paul da Gouxa.
Associação Portuguesa de Parques e Reservas Naturais (APPn)	Non-Profit	Conservation	Works to conserve natural parks and reserves, promoting wetland restoration and fostering collaborations for ecological sustainability.
Associação Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (APEA)	Non-Profit	Conservation	Protects bird habitats in wetlands through monitoring, restoration, and eco-tourism, fostering conservation through community and international efforts.
Instituto de Investigação das Pescas e do Mar (IPIMAR)	Public	Research, Fisheries	Conducts research on fisheries and wetland ecosystems, supporting policies integrating sustainable fishing with biodiversity and ecosystem health.
Fidelidade	Private	Insurance	Integrates sustainability into its operations, supporting biodiversity restoration and financing eco-projects through its "Nature Positive Plan" and green bonds.

3.1.7.2. Application of the stakeholder-issue interrelation mapping

1. **Biodiversity Conservation and Habitat Management:** regarding this main issue, ICNF is tasked with overseeing protected areas, including Alpiarça's wetlands, ensuring their conservation. Quercus actively participates in wetland

and riparian habitat restoration, focusing on biodiversity protection. APPn supports ecological restoration efforts across Portugal's natural reserves and parks. APEA contributes to this topic by protecting bird habitats and engages in restoration projects that foster biodiversity, such as creating biodiversity corridors, and IPIMAR researches the sustainable management of fisheries and aquatic ecosystems, with a particular interest in the interplay between wetland health and fish populations. Quinta da Atela, although not a main expert or apparently not a primary stakeholder in this issue, it is a co-manager of the Paul da Gouxa reserve and, therefore, co-responsible for addressing this issue.

2. **Carbon Market Engagement and Climate Adaptation:** here Quinta da Atela is also mapped as showing ambitions in explore the possibility of trade with potential certified carbon credits issued to the nature reserve. ICNF might be involved in regulating carbon market activities within their managed areas. Quercus, already active in ecological projects, could leverage carbon market mechanisms for funding climate resilience projects like LIFE Adapt. APPn could play a part in environmental planning that includes strategies for carbon sequestration and climate adaptation.
3. **Ecotourism and Economic Development:** here Quinta da Atela could be a deeply engaged stakeholder in this issue as well as an ecotourism and accommodation services provider, looking into further integrate their business with the management of the nature reserve. Also, Alpiarça Municipality could be involved in this matter having in consideration its goal to sustainably develop ecotourism by creating trails and leisure spaces to attract visitors while preserving the natural environment. In that sense, AANA promotes nature interpretation and educational tourism activities, fostering local involvement in conservation and enhancing the area's tourist appeal. EntreMargens, a collective of tourism agencies, is invested in the promotion of regional tourism and benefits from a well-maintained nature reserve. Turismo de Portugal positions the nature reserve as an attractive ecotourism destination, emphasizing its birdwatching, educational, and cultural heritage potential. Quercus engages in nature



conservation and ecotourism initiatives, often partnering with national and EU bodies on projects like LIFE Adapt that support these goals.

OL#7 – Paul da Gouxa

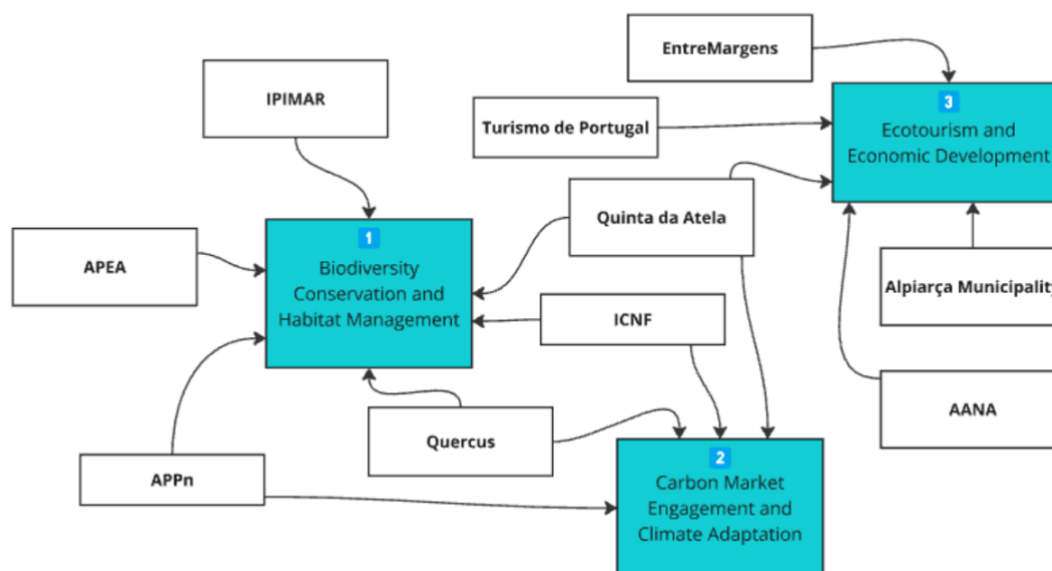


Figure 7. Stakeholder-Issue Diagram of the economic stakeholders identified for OL#7 – Portugal. (Stakeholder: white box; Issue: Blue box)

3.2 General Economic Actors of Relevance for REWET

While the identification of economic stakeholders for our seven Open Labs in the REWET project provides a crucial foundation, it is essential to consider broader economic and business actors operating at national, European, and even global scales. These entities contribute significantly to financing, managing, and implementing large-scale restoration and conservation projects. Their expertise, resources, and innovative frameworks often transcend regional boundaries, allowing for the scaling of effective restoration strategies. Recognising their contributions will strengthen partnerships, diversify funding sources, and promote sustainable management of restoration initiatives.

Below is an extended list of potential economic and business actors along with descriptions of their relevant academic or applied contributions to restoration and conservation projects:

- **Ramsar Convention Partners:** several European organisations collaborate under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. These include public and private entities engaged in the conservation and wise use of wetland ecosystems. Ramsar facilitates funding and technical support for projects like the restoration of Mediterranean wetlands⁵³.
- **European Investment Bank (EIB):** the EIB is a major financier of environmental projects in Europe. It has funded nature restoration efforts such as the Moldova Forest Development Programme Project, which aims to enhance Moldova's forest sector governance and regulatory framework, as well as its institutional and technical capacities, to ensure a clear vision to further develop the forest sector and alignment with the international best practices in sustainable forest

management (SFM) ⁵⁴. It should be also highlighted the recent signed MoU between EIB and WWF, teaming up for the mobilisation of early-stage funding for Nature-based Solutions that will help to buffer societies and economies against the worsening impacts of the climate and biodiversity crises ⁵⁵.

- **Peatland Code (UK):** it is a certification standard in the UK that enables private investment in peatland restoration by generating carbon credits. Projects under this code focus on restoring degraded peatlands to sequester carbon, reduce water pollution, and enhance biodiversity. The CANAPE project is working towards designing a vision for the future of the Store Vildmose (Jutland, Denmark) area, a large raised bog, largely drained for agriculture. In doing so, they are building up some paludiculture farms pilots in the site ⁵⁶.
- **Global Peatland Initiative (GPI):** this global coalition includes European members such as Germany and the UK, focusing on protecting and restoring peatlands to combat climate change. It integrates private sector partners with academic institutions for effective project delivery.
- **Green Climate Fund (GCF):** though global, the GCF supports European wetland restoration through climate adaptation projects. It collaborates with financial institutions and governments to fund resilient wetland ecosystems ⁵⁷.
- **Landlife (Netherlands):** Landlife specialises in nature-based solutions for land restoration, including wetlands. It partners with municipalities, NGOs, and private companies to create sustainable landscapes, combining restoration with biodiversity offsets and carbon credits ⁵⁸.
- **Ducks Unlimited Europe:** this branch of the global conservation organisation focuses on conserving waterfowl habitats in wetlands across Europe. It engages in habitat restoration projects supported by corporate partnerships and international funding ⁵⁹.
- **Mirova (France):** it is an investment management company specialising in sustainable finance. It has developed the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund in collaboration with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), financing projects to restore degraded land worldwide. Examples include wetland and agroforestry projects in Africa and Latin America, which integrate academic studies on carbon sequestration and biodiversity enhancement ⁶⁰.
- **Bondalti (Portugal):** a chemical company which actively integrates environmental sustainability into its operations. It has partnered with Portuguese universities to study and implement salt marsh restoration projects, contributing to carbon sequestration and habitat conservation. These projects often serve as case studies for academic research on industrial contributions to ecosystem restoration ⁶¹.
- **Regreener (Netherlands) – already interviewed by BAX within REWET project:** it is a platform that allows individuals and businesses to invest in reforestation and wetland restoration projects globally ^{62–64}. Collaborating with research institutions, it focuses on measuring the impacts of its projects on carbon offsetting and biodiversity, such as in European reforestation efforts supported by academic soil monitoring studies.



- **InvestNL (Netherlands)** – *already interviewed by BAX within REWET project*: InvestNL supports Dutch businesses and projects contributing to sustainability, carbon-neutral economy, AgriFood, etc, as impact investors. It funds projects aligned with making the Netherlands to achieve climate goals, to be more sustainable and to provide innovation ⁶⁵.
- **Wetlands and Wildfowl Trust (WWT, UK)**: it is a conservation organisation managing wetland reserves across the UK. It collaborates with universities on research projects examining wetland ecosystem functions, such as carbon cycling and bird migration patterns. Its efforts have been pivotal in demonstrating the ecological and economic value of wetland restoration, not only at UK ^{66,67} level, but also worldwide ⁶⁸.
- **Aqua Segura (Argentina)**: a non-profit organisation focused on providing innovative solutions to ensure access to safe water and sustainable sanitation in Argentina. It specialises in developing decentralised, efficient water management technologies tailored to local communities, particularly in vulnerable regions. The organisation integrates education, technology, and community engagement to address water quality issues and promote ecosystem health. Their holistic approach often involves partnerships with local authorities and academic institutions to ensure scalable and impactful solutions ⁶⁹.



4. CONCLUSIONS

The present document focused on identifying economic stakeholders who can assist to wetland restoration projects in roles such as management, advising, and financing for sustainable wetland practices. The major goal has been to identify, examine, and map these stakeholders in order to better understand the benefits that come with their participation in wetland conservation activities.

The participation of the OL coordinators has been crucial in identifying organisations that are integral to the REWET OLs' environment, establishing them as key players in conservation and restoration initiatives. Their findings were supported with comprehensive desk research and the development of interrelation maps for each Open Lab, which illustrated the network of identified actors.

Furthermore, we considered that limiting the scope of this assignment to only the OLs might undermine the overall picture of the actual range of economic actors involved in wetlands conservation and restoration initiatives. As a result, we included a section detailing and mapping more general participants at the EU and global levels, in order to encourage the future roadmap of any wetland restoration project that would incorporate these actors.

Additionally, we wanted to note that some of the managed sites do not possess any relevant or significant local economic actors due to their remote and protected status, or even due to their current low level of restoration. For example, OL#3 (Finland) is a minerotrophic mire categorised as protected area in 2020 which was previously exploited by peat extractors. There is no local communities or commercial activities around the 11-ha area and it is being studied to obtain further knowledge in its effect in carbon sequestration and biodiversity enhancement. Moreover, the OL#5 in Belgium is currently undergoing renovation and restoration efforts, with a primary focus on implementing NbS to slow water discharge in upstream regions of the river Bêche and river Emmels. With this, we just want to highlight the difference in importance between OLs when trying to weight the level of involvement of potential economic stakeholders within the REWET scope. Also, each OL should be treated as the different ecosystems they are which it does have an impact in the successful implementation and realisation of this task.

Finally, the "Financing restoration projects and attracting the private sector" stream is increasingly focussing on building Blended Finance schemes and environments that attract the private sector by lowering the ROI risk level. It is almost inconceivable to believe that a large-scale restoration project could be funded with only one or a few business players donating their resources to cover the entire cost of the venture. Larger consortiums of organisations with the tools and capabilities to make that finance a reality are more feasible, and that is what this document aims to achieve by mapping some of the medium-to-large organisations with the ability or power to do so in each considered country.



5. NEXT STEPS

Following the comprehensive identification and mapping of key economic actors in wetland restoration projects, our next steps are twofold:

- The first is to refine and extend Deliverable 6.2, 'Interview reports of wetland economic actors per Open Lab,' to encompass a broader and more diverse array of actors. This will not only increase the scope of our engagement but will also provide a richer, more detailed landscape of stakeholders to be considered. We plan to deepen the context in which these stakeholders operate and identify those whose interests align closely with nature restoration objectives.
- The second step involves leveraging the outcomes from these interviews to begin formulating business models that are related to the conservation goals of wetlands. These models will seek to balance economic viability with ecological sustainability, ensuring that they can support long-term restoration initiatives. We will explore innovative funding mechanisms, partnership structures, and revenue-generating activities that can finance ongoing conservation efforts while creating value for the economic actors involved.

The insights gained from these processes will result in a strong set of plans for Work Package 6, defining sustainable business models that can be developed and replicated in a variety of wetland settings. This will pave the way for the long-term viability and scalability of wetland restoration operations, which aligns with the REWET project's aim of promoting green growth and biodiversity preservation.



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