ProCleanLakes

D.3.1. Market analysis including database of business-related stakeholders

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1. Introduction

The study focused on market analysis consists of three main components: two quantitative analyses and an in-depth interview. The first quantitative survey explores the perceptions of aspiring entrepreneurs in Norway, Romania, and Greece regarding starting businesses in lake protection and restoration. It examines motivations, entrepreneurial needs (e.g., funding, training), and constraints such as regulatory barriers. Data was collected online using a questionnaire targeting 150 participants (50 per country), focusing on business and sustainability-oriented students and professionals.

The second quantitative analysis investigates active entrepreneurs' interests and needs in developing business models related to lake sustainability. Conducted in the same three countries where the demo sites are located, it surveyed 45 entrepreneurs from industries such as renewable energy, tourism, and water management. The study focused on challenges like funding access, technology adoption, and market barriers, while assessing motivations for integrating sustainable practices into business strategies.

Finally, the qualitative analysis compares insights from three interviews with business owners from Norway, Romania, and Greece, interested in developing solutions for lakes protection and restoration. Each participant provided unique perspectives based on their cultural and professional contexts, focusing on themes like the importance of lake protection, technological innovations, governance, and future visions. Methodologically, these interviews were semi-structured, allowing detailed exploration of personal and professional insights on lake restoration.

2. Quantitative survey focused on aspiring entrepreneurs' perceptions related to their interest for a business in lake protection and restoration

1. Introduction

This study focuses on aspiring entrepreneurs across Norway, Romania, and Greece, the three countries where the ProCleanLakes project's demo sites are located. This survey investigates individuals' motivations, needs, and challenges related to starting businesses in the field of lake protection and restoration. The research is framed within the context of promoting sustainability and supporting entrepreneurship as a driver for environmental and economic development.

The main objectives of this study are:

- to explore the motivations driving aspiring entrepreneurs to consider starting businesses related to lake protection and restoration.
- to identify their needs and perceived requirements for successfully initiating such businesses, including funding, market insights, and training.
- to understand the constraints and challenges faced by these individuals in pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities in this field.

- to assess their interest in innovative business models and sustainability-oriented approaches, particularly within the context of protecting natural lakes.

Data was collected as an on-line survey using the Prolific platform (https://www.prolific.com/) to ensure a diverse and representative sample of 150 aspiring entrepreneurs from Norway, Romania, and Greece (50 from each country). Participants were carefully selected based on their expressed interest in pursuing an entrepreneurial career in the future. Additionally, the online questionnaire was distributed to students from these countries enrolled in programs on business administration and environmental studies. This approach ensured that the study captured the perspectives of individuals with genuine aspirations to develop businesses in sustainability-focused sectors, specifically in lake protection and restoration. The sample reflects cross-country differences and provides insights into how local contexts shape entrepreneurial interest and readiness.

2. Analysis of responses provided by aspiring entrepreneurs

The first section of the survey, entitled **Motives for starting a business connected to restored lakes** explores participants' motivations through four key items. These include: the interest to start a business to protect natural lakes and promote sustainability; the influence of environmental concerns about lake degradation on entrepreneurial interest; the anticipation of growing demand for businesses focusing on lake protection and restoration; the alignment of lake protection projects with personal values and long-term professional goals.

The *first item* under consideration, namely the motivation to start a business to protect natural lakes and promote sustainability, reflects alignment with sustainability-driven entrepreneurial motivations across respondents from the three demo sites located in Norway, Romania, and Greece (Figure 1).

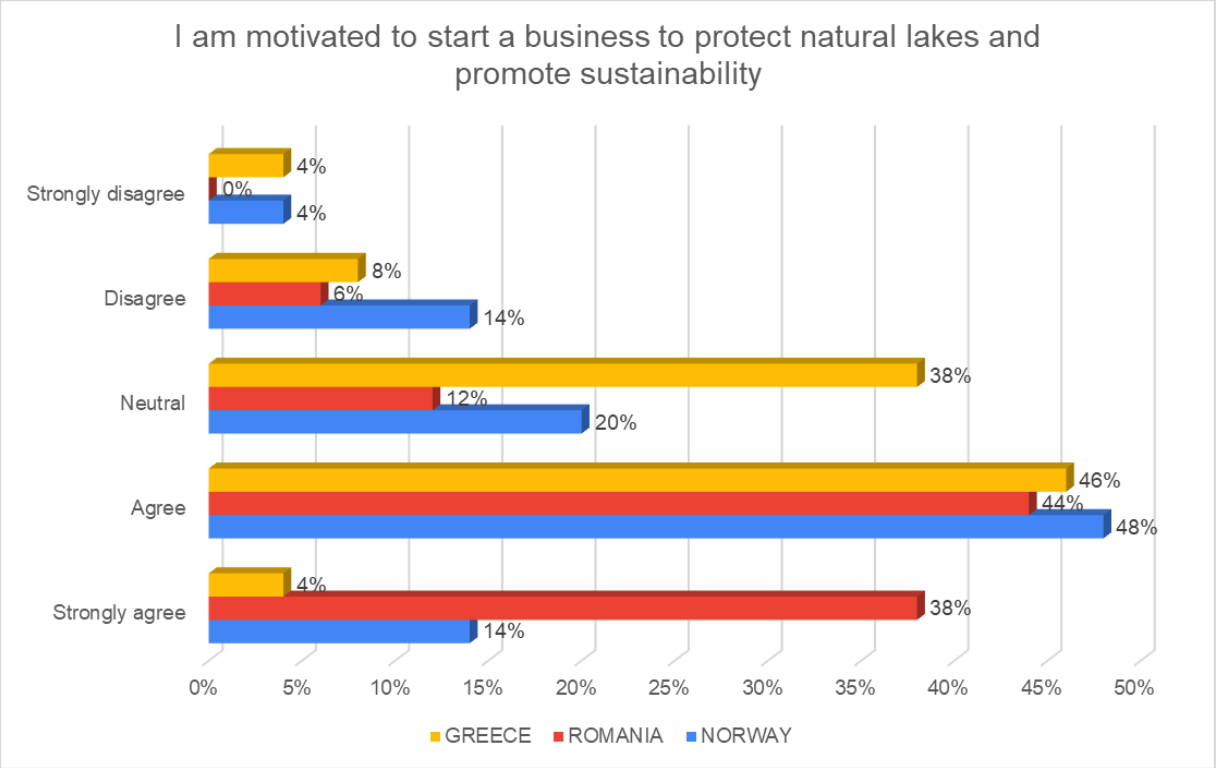

Figure 1 – The motivation of respondents to start a business to protect natural lakes and promote sustainability
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

In the Romanian sample, respondents outlined the highest level of strong agreement (38%) and the least overall disagreement level (0% strongly disagree, 6% disagree), indicating a strong motivation to start businesses focused on sustainability.

In Norway, a significant proportion of respondents agreed (48%), but fewer strongly agreed (14%) compared to Romania. There is a notable neutral stance (20%) and a moderate level of disagreement.

In Greece, respondents were less polarized, with the highest neutrality (38%) and relatively low strong agreement (4%). However, nearly half (46%) still agreed, suggesting a moderate level of motivation overall.

The *second item* of this section examines the varying levels of entrepreneurial motivation inspired by environmental concerns about lake degradation across Romania, Greece, and Norway, highlighting key differences in response patterns, cultural contexts, and socioeconomic factors shaping these perspectives (Figure 2).

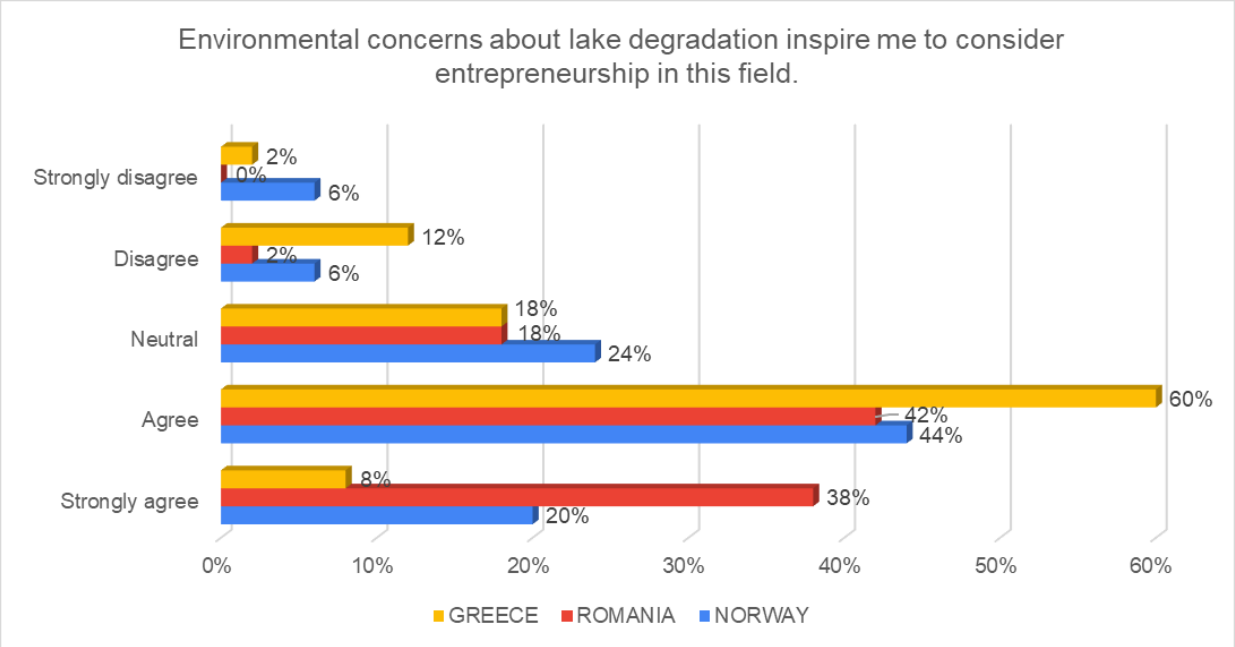

Figure 2 – Environmental concerns about lake degradation inspire me to consider entrepreneurship in this field
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania demonstrates the strongest overall positive response, with 80% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing, and minimal opposition (2% disagree), highlighting a strong correlation between lake degradation concerns and entrepreneurial interest.

Greece leads in general agreement (60%) but shows the highest levels of disagreement (14% combined), indicating polarized views that may be interpreted through economic challenges affecting entrepreneurial motivations.

Norway presents balanced responses, with moderate agreement (44%) and the highest neutrality (24%), suggesting a significant level of uncertainty, potentially due to the country's environmental protections that inhibit entrepreneurship initiatives in this field.

The responses to the *third item* "We expect a growing demand for businesses that focus on lakes' protection and restoration services" reveal interesting cross-country trends (Figure 3).

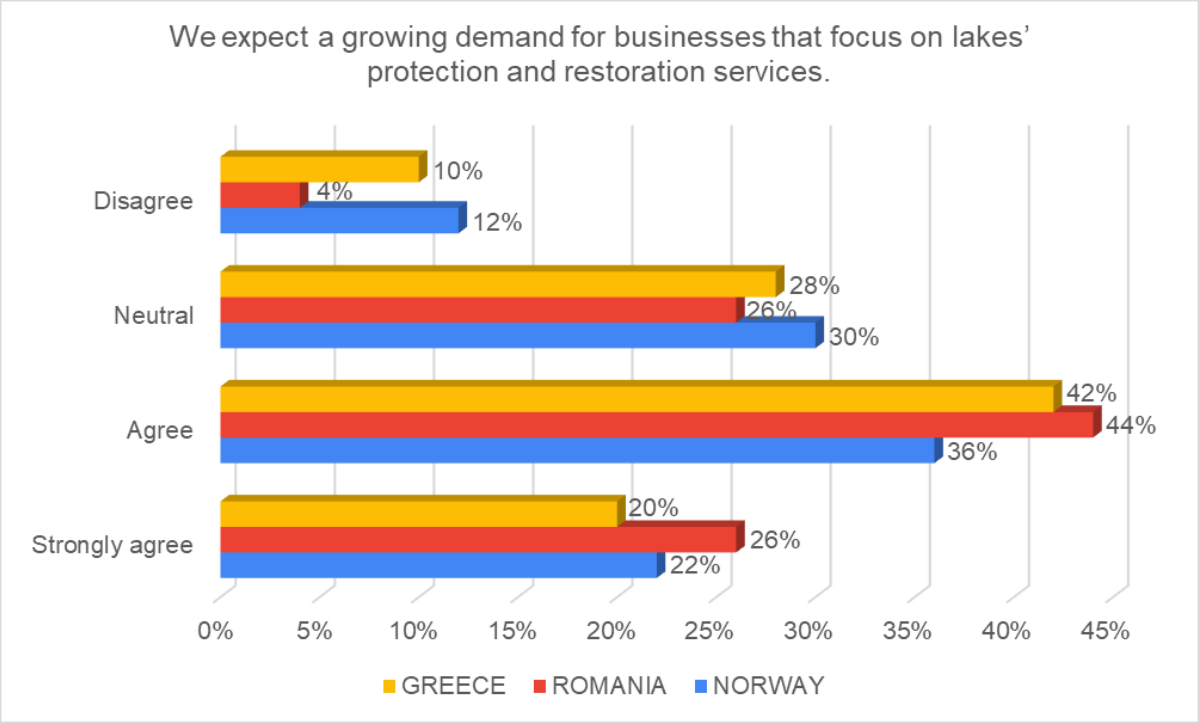

Figure 3 – Cross-country expectations on the demand for businesses that focus on lakes' protection and restoration services
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian sample leads with the highest positive responses, as 26% of participants strongly agree and 44% agree, indicating a strong belief in the market potential for such businesses. Greek sample follows closely, with 20% strongly agreeing and 42% agreeing, showing significant optimism but slightly less enthusiasm than Romania. Norway shows moderate support, with 22% strongly agreeing and 36% agreeing, alongside the highest proportion of neutrality (30%) and disagreement (12%), suggesting a more cautious outlook on this matter. None of the countries registered strong disagreement, underscoring a general consensus on the potential growth of this market, even if levels of confidence vary.

The *fourth item* assigned to this dimension explores the extent to which individuals from Norway, Romania, and Greece feel that lake protection projects align with their personal values and long-term professional goals (Figure 4).

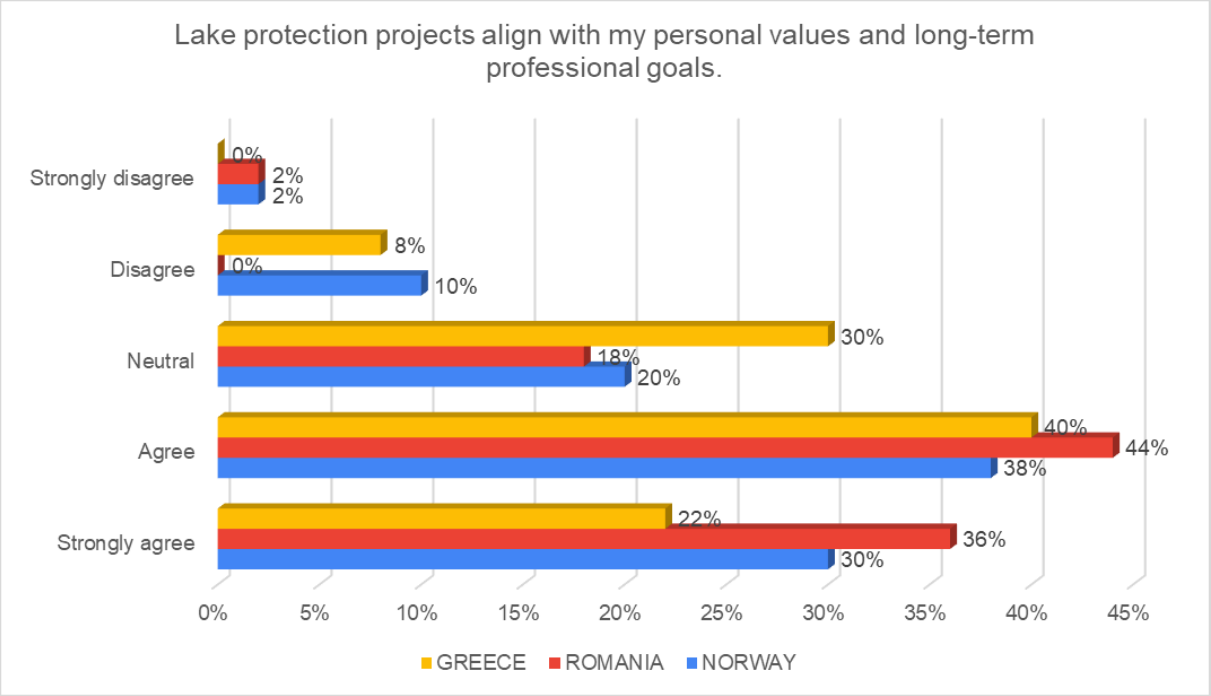

Figure 4 – Respondents' perceptions regarding the alignment between lake protection projects with their personal values and long-term professional goals
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents outline the strongest positive alignment, with 36% strongly agreeing and 44% agreeing, suggesting that a significant majority see these projects as deeply resonating with their values and professional aspirations. 22% of Greek respondents strongly agree, while 40% agree, indicating substantial alignment but with a higher neutral distance (30%), reflecting some hesitation. Respondents from Norway are characterised by a notable weight of positive responses (30% strongly agree, 38% agree) but also the highest disagreement levels, with 10% disagreeing and 2% strongly disagreeing, as well as a moderate neutrality rate (20%). These findings highlight Romania's clear enthusiasm, Greece's cautious optimism, and Norway's more balanced perception regarding lake protection aligning with personal and professional goals.

The second section of the survey, entitled: **Entrepreneurial Needs for Business Creation**, explores the requirements identified by individuals seeking to establish businesses focused on lakes' protection and restoration. This part of the survey evaluates participants' perceived needs across four key areas: funding opportunities, market analysis, training, and stakeholder networking.

The *first item* of this section examines the perceived need for funding opportunities to support businesses focused on lakes' protection and restoration across Norway, Romania, and Greece (Figure 5).

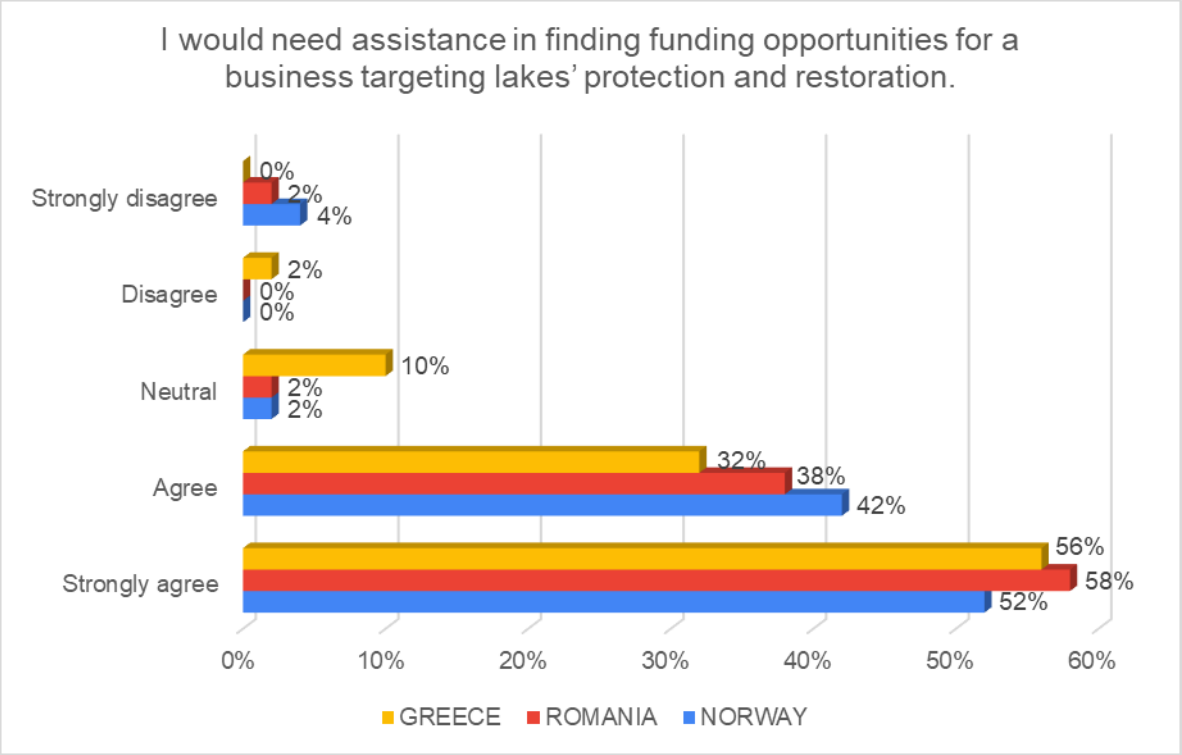

Figure 5 – Respondents' perceptions regarding the need for funding opportunities to support businesses focused on lakes' protection and restoration
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania leads with the highest proportion of strong agreement (58%), indicating significant demand for funding assistance, closely followed by Greece (56%) and Norway (52%), outlining widespread recognition of the importance of financial support in all three countries. Norway also has the highest level of agreement (42%), whereas Greece and Romania display slightly lower rates (32% and 38%, respectively). Neutral responses are minimal in Romania and Norway (2% each), while Greece has a higher neutral rate (10%), suggesting uncertainty. Disagreement is almost missing, with minor opposition in Norway (4% strongly disagree), Romania (2% strongly disagree) and Greece (2% disagree).

The *second item* examines the perceived importance of market analysis and competitive insights in developing businesses focused on lakes' protection and restoration. Responses highlight a strong consensus across Norway, Romania, and Greece on the value of data-driven decision-making for entrepreneurial success (Figure 6).

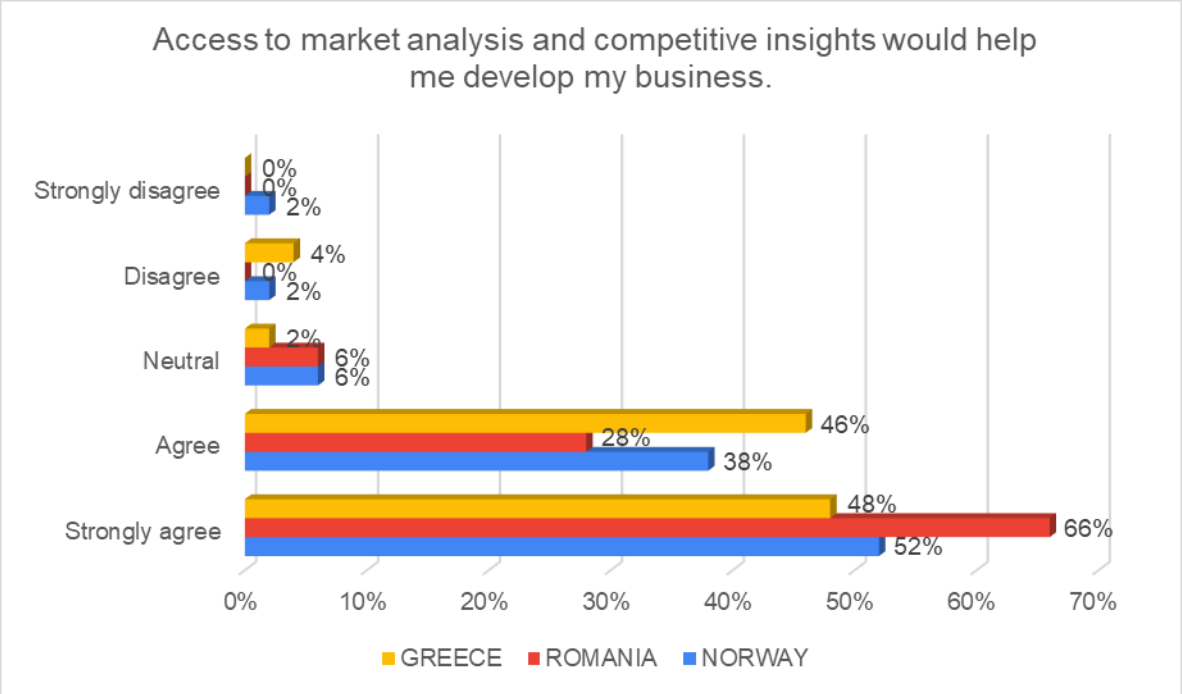

Figure 6 – Respondents' perceptions related to the importance of market analysis and competitive insights in developing businesses focused on lakes' protection and restoration
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

The responses reveal strong agreement across all three countries, with Romania leading at 66%, followed by Norway at 52%, and Greece at 48%. Agreement responses (strongly agree and agree combined) highlight significant demand for market intelligence, with Romania reaching 94%, Norway 90%, and Greece 94%, indicating universal acknowledgment of its importance. Neutral responses are minimal across all countries, at 6% for Romania and Norway, and only 2% in Greece, suggesting clear opinions on the necessity of market insights. Disagreement levels are negligible, with Norway and Greece outlining slight opposition (4% combined), while Romanian sample reports no disagreement.

The *third item* included in this section underscores the need for training in innovative technologies and best practices for lake restoration across Norway, Romania, and Greece. The findings highlight strong support in all three countries, reinforcing the role of knowledge and skill development in fostering effective environmental entrepreneurship (Figure 7).

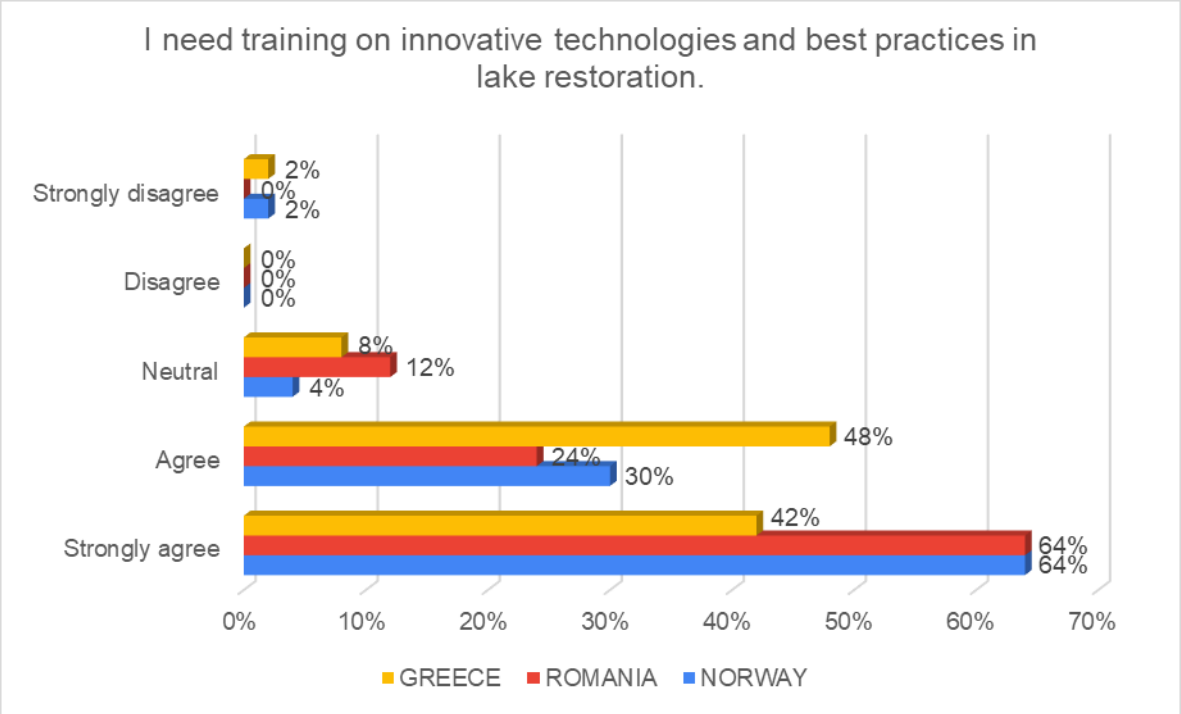

Figure 7 – Respondents' perceptions related to the need for training in innovative technologies and best practices for lake restoration
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

The responses to the question reveal strong support across all three countries, with Norway and Romania providing identical levels of strong agreement at 64%, while Greece trails at 42%. When combining agreement levels (strongly agree and agree), Norway and Romania maintain the highest percentages (94% and 88%, respectively), while Greece follows at 90%, reflecting broad recognition of the importance of training. Neutral responses are slightly higher in Romania (12%) compared to Greece (8%) and Norway (4%), indicating minor uncertainty in some participants. Disagreement is negligible, with only Norway and Greece showing minimal opposition at 2% strongly disagree.

The *fourth item* examines the importance of building networks with stakeholders in lake restoration for business success across Norway, Romania, and Greece (Figure 8).

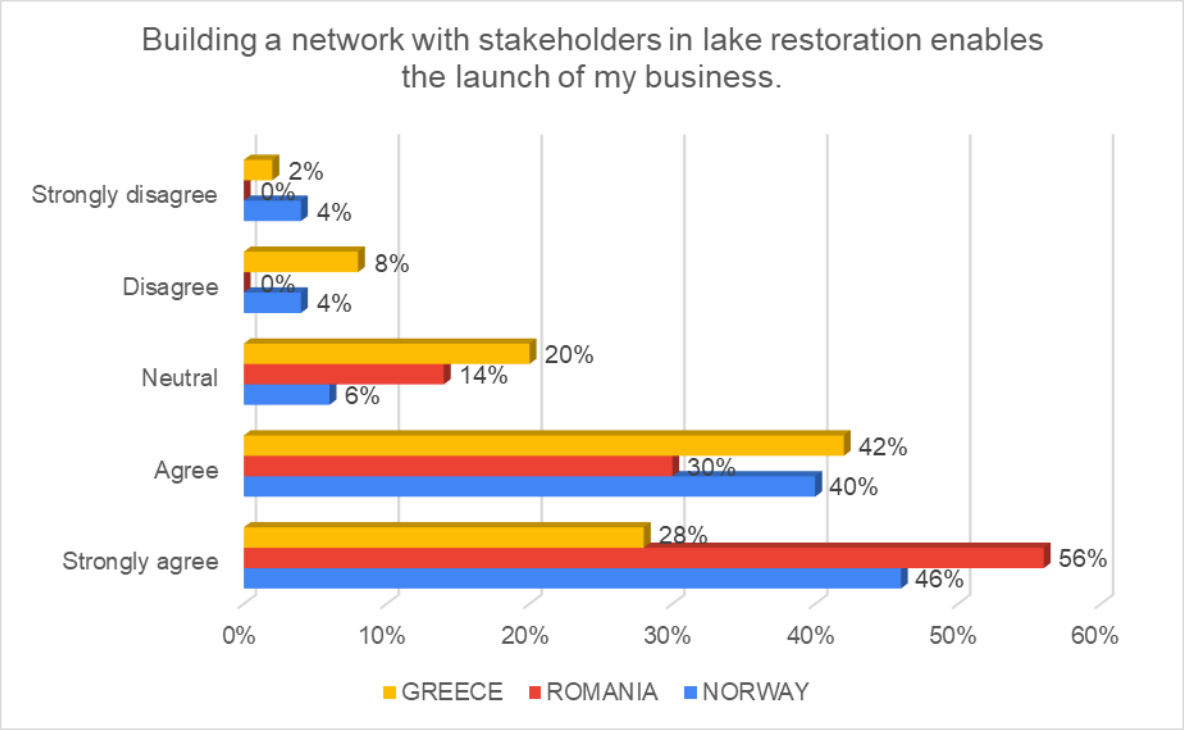

Figure 8 – Respondents' perceptions related to the importance of building networks with stakeholders in lake restoration for business success
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

The responses describe different levels of agreement across Norway, Romania, and Greece. Romania leads with the highest percentage of strong agreement (56%), indicating strong recognition of the importance of stakeholder collaboration. Norway follows with 46% strongly agreeing and an additional 40% agreeing, highlighting broad support for networking. Greece shows a lower percentage of strong agreement (28%) but compensates with 42% agreeing, indicating substantial but less intense recognition of this need. Neutral responses are notably higher in Greece (20%) and Romania (14%) compared to Norway (6%), reflecting a lack of clarity on the topic. Disagreement levels are minimal, with Norway and Greece showing slight opposition (8% and 10% combined, respectively), while Romania reports no disagreement.

The third section of the survey, entitled **Constraints and Challenges in Lake Protection Entrepreneurship**, delves into the perceived constraints and challenges faced by entrepreneurs aiming to start businesses focused on lakes' protection and restoration. The four analyzed items address barriers such as financial limitations, information gaps, regulatory obstacles, and competition. Participants were asked to evaluate these challenges, providing insights into the key factors hindering entrepreneurial activity in this domain.

The *first item* regarding the importance of securing financial resources for a business focused on lakes' protection and restoration addresses the perceived difficulty of obtaining the necessary funding or other financial support to launch and sustain a business in this environmentally focused sector (Figure 9).

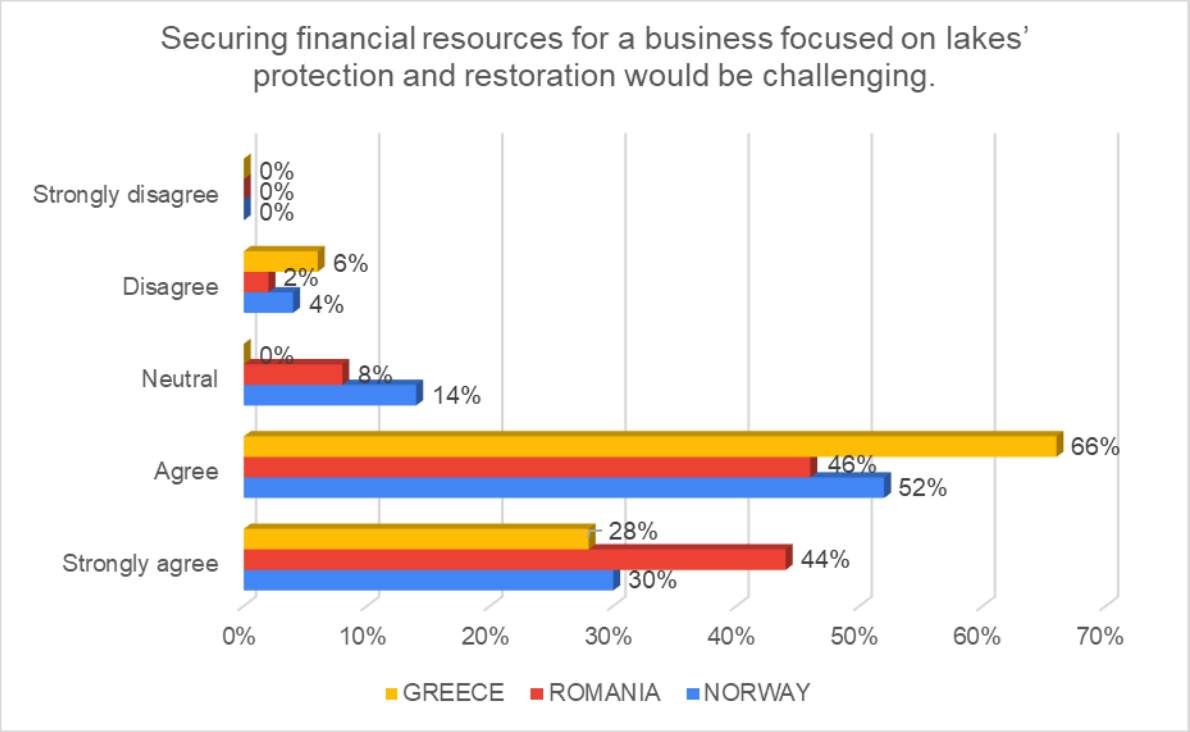

Figure 9 – Respondents' perceptions related to the importance of securing financial resources for a business focused on lakes' protection and restoration
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Greece leads with the highest combined agreement (94%, including 66% agree and 28% strongly agree), indicating widespread recognition of financial challenges. Romania follows closely, with 90% combined agreement, of which 44% strongly agree, highlighting significant concern as well. The sample from Norway outlines slightly lower agreement levels (82%), with 52% agreeing and 30% strongly agreeing, alongside the highest neutral responses (14%), reflecting a slightly more balanced view. Disagreement is minimal across all countries, with Norway (4%) and Greece (6%) reporting minor opposition, while Romania records the lowest disagreement (2%).

The responses to the *second item* focused on the availability of information about market readiness for lakes protection and restoration services reveal significant differences across Norway, Romania, and Greece (Figure 10).

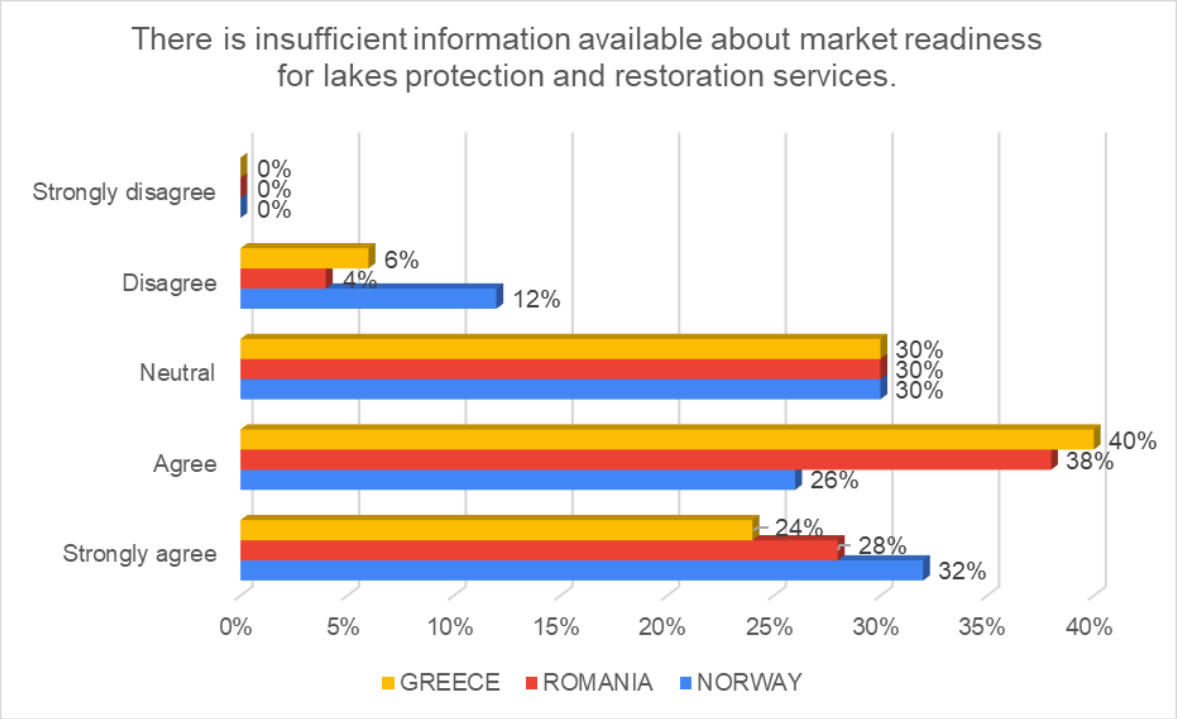

Figure 10 – Respondents' perceptions related to the importance of securing financial resources for a start-up focused on lakes' protection and restoration
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Greece has the highest combined agreement (64%), with 24% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing, indicating a strong perception of information scarcity. Romania follows with 66% combined agreement, including 28% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing, reflecting similar concerns. Norway, on the other hand, has a lower combined agreement at 58%, with 32% strongly agreeing and 26% agreeing, alongside the highest neutral responses (30%), suggesting a more mixed or uncertain perspective. Disagreement is low, with 12% in Norway and 6% in Greece, while Romania reports the lowest disagreement at 4%.

The responses to the *third item* from this section, addressing the impact of fast-changing environmental regulations as a barrier to starting businesses in lakes protection and restoration, reveal differing opinions across Norway, Romania, and Greece (Figure 11).

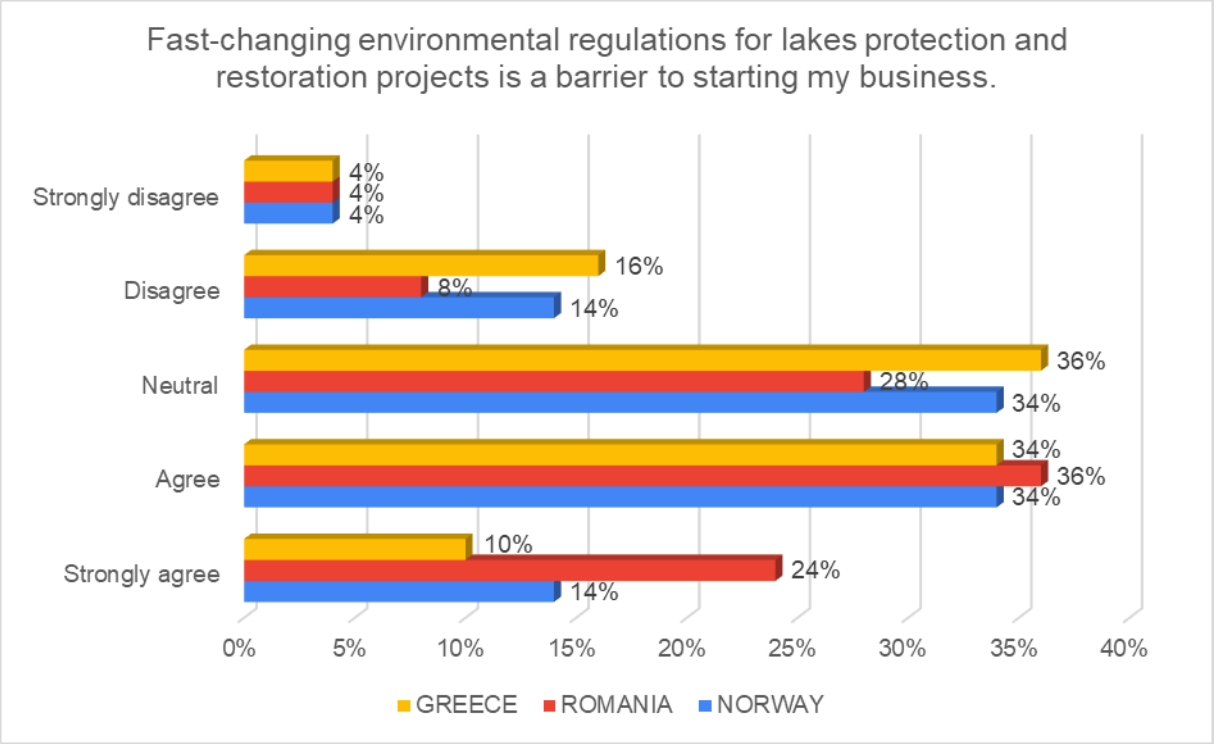

Figure 11 – Respondents' perceptions related to the impact of fast-changing environmental regulations as a barrier to starting businesses in lakes protection and restoration
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania exhibits the highest level of agreement, with 24% strongly agreeing and 36% agreeing, indicating a strong perception of regulatory challenges. Norway and Greece show similar agreement levels, with 14% and 10% strongly agreeing, and 34% agreeing in both countries, reflecting moderate concern. Neutral responses are substantial across all three countries, with Greece at 36%, Norway at 34%, and Romania at 28%, suggesting significant uncertainty about the impact of regulatory changes. Disagreement levels are more pronounced in Norway (18% combined) and Greece (20% combined), while Romania has the lowest disagreement (12%). We remark the shared perception of regulatory challenges, with Romania identifying it as a more prominent issue, while Norway and Greece show more varied opinions.

The responses to the *fourth item* regarding competition as a challenge for new entrepreneurs in the lakes protection and restoration field reveal significant differences across these three countries where the demo sites are located (Figure 12).

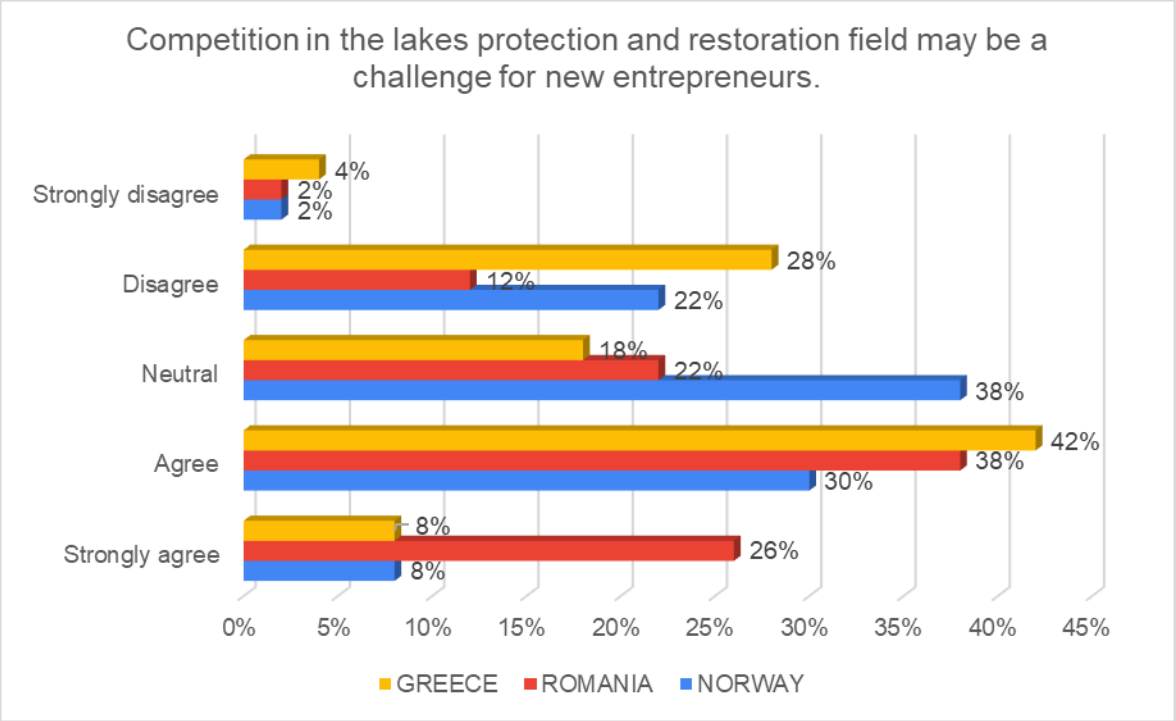

Figure 12 – Respondents' perceptions related to the perceptions on competition as a challenge in the lake's protection and restoration
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania has the highest level of strong agreement (26%) and agreement (38%), indicating a stronger perception of competition as a challenge compared to the other countries. Greece follows with 8% strongly agreeing and 42% agreeing, reflecting broad acknowledgment of the issue, albeit with a lower level of strong agreement. In contrast, Norway shows lower levels of strong agreement (8%) and agreement (30%), along with the highest neutral responses (38%), suggesting greater uncertainty or mixed perceptions. Disagreement is most pronounced in Greece (28%) and Norway (22%), while Romania has the lowest levels of disagreement (12%). While competition is seen as a challenge across all three countries, Romania perceives it as a more pressing issue, whereas Norway shows a more divided perspective.

Another section of the survey, entitled **Interest in Innovation and Business Models**, explores participants' openness to innovative approaches and entrepreneurial opportunities within the context of lakes' protection and restoration. The four items assess specific areas of interest: sustainable aquaculture business models that align with environmental protection goals; the potential of algae-based circular economy projects as promising ventures; the integration of renewable energy solutions, such as floating solar farms, into business models, and the development of sustainable tourism services that actively contribute to lake restoration.

The *first item* from this section seeking to explore the interest in exploring sustainable aquaculture business models related to lakes protection and restoration reveal distinct variations across the three target countries (Figure 13).

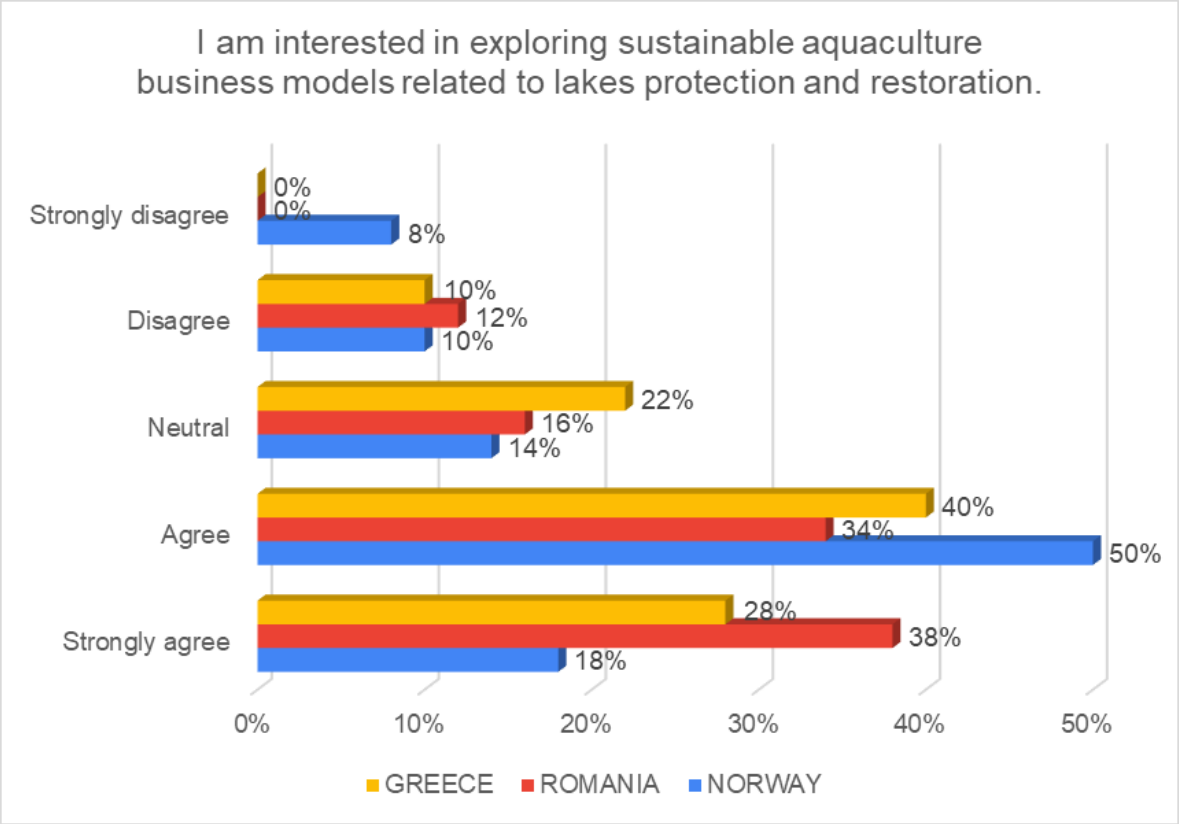

Figure 13 – Respondents' perceptions related to the interest in exploring sustainable aquaculture business models related to lakes protection and restoration
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania shows the highest level of strong agreement (38%), indicating a significant enthusiasm for sustainable aquaculture opportunities, followed by Greece at 28%, and Norway at 18%. Agreement is most pronounced in Norway, with 50% agreeing, compared to Greece (40%) and Romania (34%). Neutral responses are relatively consistent but slightly higher in Greece (22%) compared to Romania (16%) and Norway (14%), suggesting moderate uncertainty in some participants. Disagreement levels are relatively low, with Norway and Greece both at 10%, while Romania reports a slightly higher rate of 12%. Strong disagreement is negligible in Greece (0%) and Romania (0%) but slightly higher in Norway (8%).

The responses to the *second item* regarding the use of algae in circular economy projects as a promising business opportunity reveal interesting insights (Figure 14).

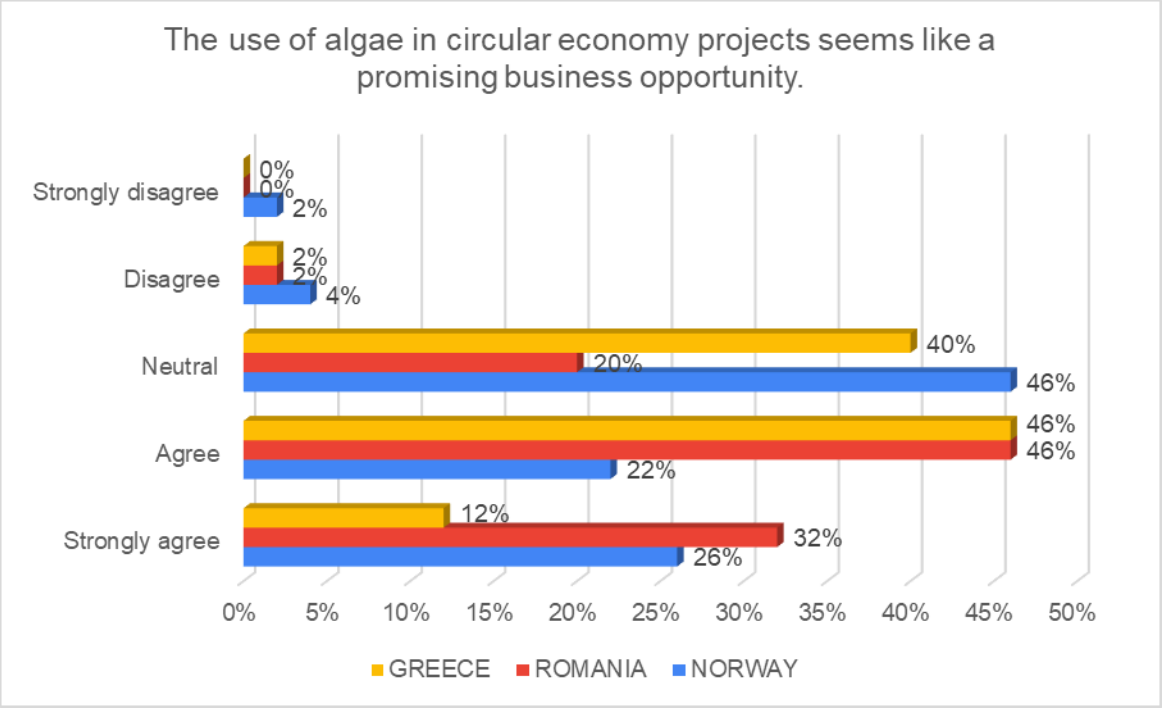

Figure 14 – Respondents' perceptions related to the use of algae in circular economy projects as a promising business opportunity
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania leads with the highest level of agreement, with 32% strongly agreeing and 46% agreeing, reflecting strong enthusiasm for this innovative approach. Greece exhibits similar agreement levels (46% agree) but has a lower proportion of strong agreement (12%), indicating moderate interest. Norway shows the highest level of neutrality at 46%, suggesting uncertainty or less awareness of algae-based opportunities, while its agreement levels are lower (26% strongly agree, 22% agree). Disagreement is minimal across all three countries, with Norway showing the highest combined disagreement at 6%, compared to Greece and Romania, both at 2%. These findings highlight Romania's strong support for algae-based business models, Greece's moderate optimism, and Norway's relatively cautious stance due to climate conditions, marked by higher neutrality and lower agreement.

The responses to the *third item* about integrating renewable energy projects, such as floating solar farms, into potential businesses highlight varied levels of interest in the three samples (Figure 15).

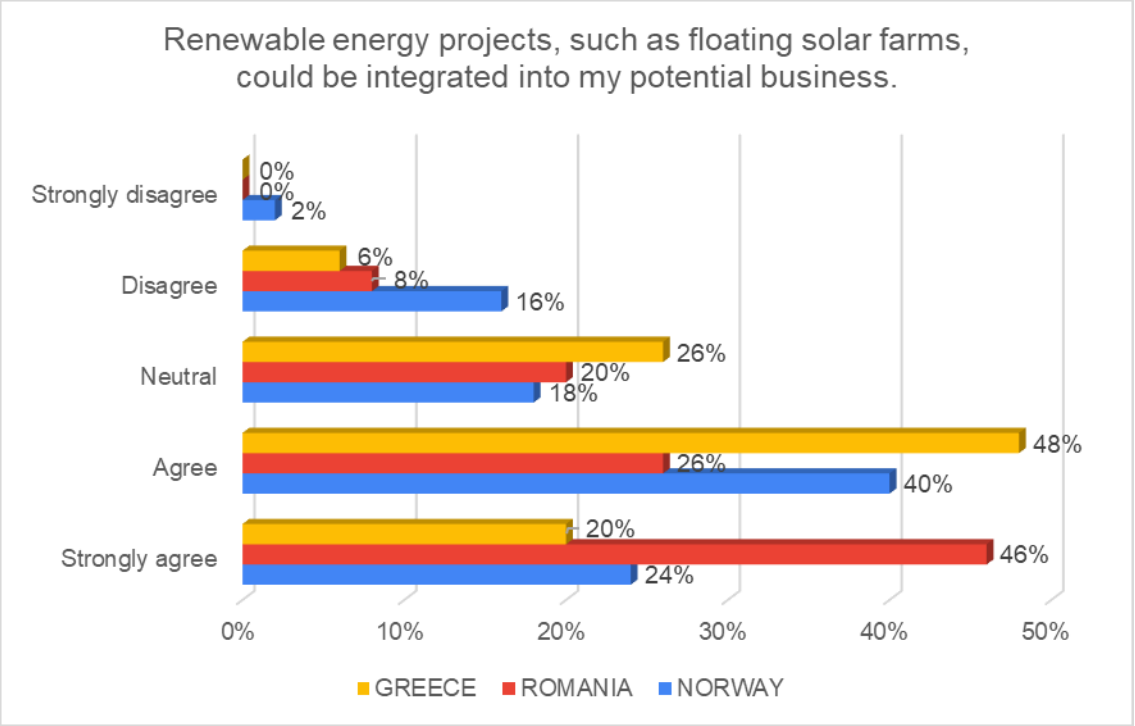

Figure 15 – Respondents' perceptions related to renewable energy project as a promising business opportunity in this field
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania leads with the highest strong agreement (46%), indicating significant enthusiasm for incorporating renewable energy into business models, followed by Norway (24%) and Greece (20%). Greece shows the highest overall agreement when combining strong agreement and agreement (68%), reflecting broad support for the idea, while Norway and Romania are close behind at 64% and 72%, respectively. Neutral responses are relatively higher in Greece (26%) and Romania (20%) compared to Norway (18%), suggesting some uncertainty. Disagreement is more pronounced in Norway, with 16% disagreeing and 2% strongly disagreeing, while Greece and Romania have lower disagreement rates (6% and 8%, respectively). These findings demonstrate Romania's strong enthusiasm, Greece's broad but slightly cautious support, and Norway's mixed but generally favourable perspective on renewable energy integration into business models.

The responses to the *fourth item* regarding interest in providing sustainable tourism services that contribute to lake restoration efforts show significant differences across Norway, Romania, and Greece (Figure 16).

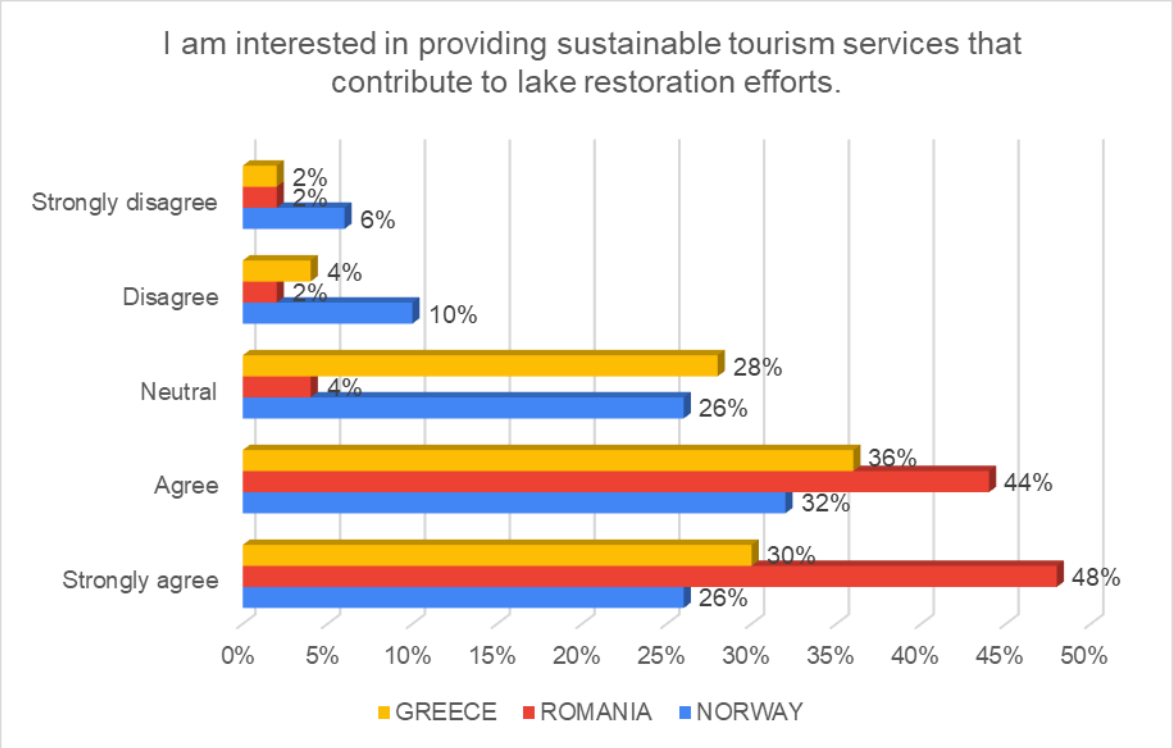

Figure 16 – Respondents' perceptions related to sustainable tourism services as a promising business opportunity in this field
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania demonstrates the strongest enthusiasm, with 48% strongly agreeing and 44% agreeing, resulting in a combined agreement of 92%, reflecting widespread support for sustainable tourism initiatives. Greece follows with 30% strongly agreeing and 36% agreeing, revealing 66% agreement, indicating moderate but notable interest, though it also has a relatively high neutrality rate (28%). Norway shows a more divided perspective, with 26% strongly agreeing and 32% agreeing (58% combined), alongside a high neutral response rate (26%) and the highest levels of disagreement (10% disagree, 6% strongly disagree).

The last section embedded in this survey, entitled **Funding Opportunities and Revenue Streams** aims at exploring participants' awareness and perceptions of financial support and income generation possibilities in the context of lakes' protection and restoration businesses. It examines familiarity with funding sources such as grants and crowdfunding, the potential for revenue generation through partnerships with local governments or private entities, and the viability of nature-based solutions as stable and scalable revenue streams. Additionally, it evaluates the perceived effectiveness of public-private partnerships as a funding option.

The *first item* integrated in this section, reflecting the awareness about various funding sources, such as grants or crowdfunding, for starting a business targeting lakes' protection and restoration, show diverse levels across Norway, Romania, and Greece (Figure 17).

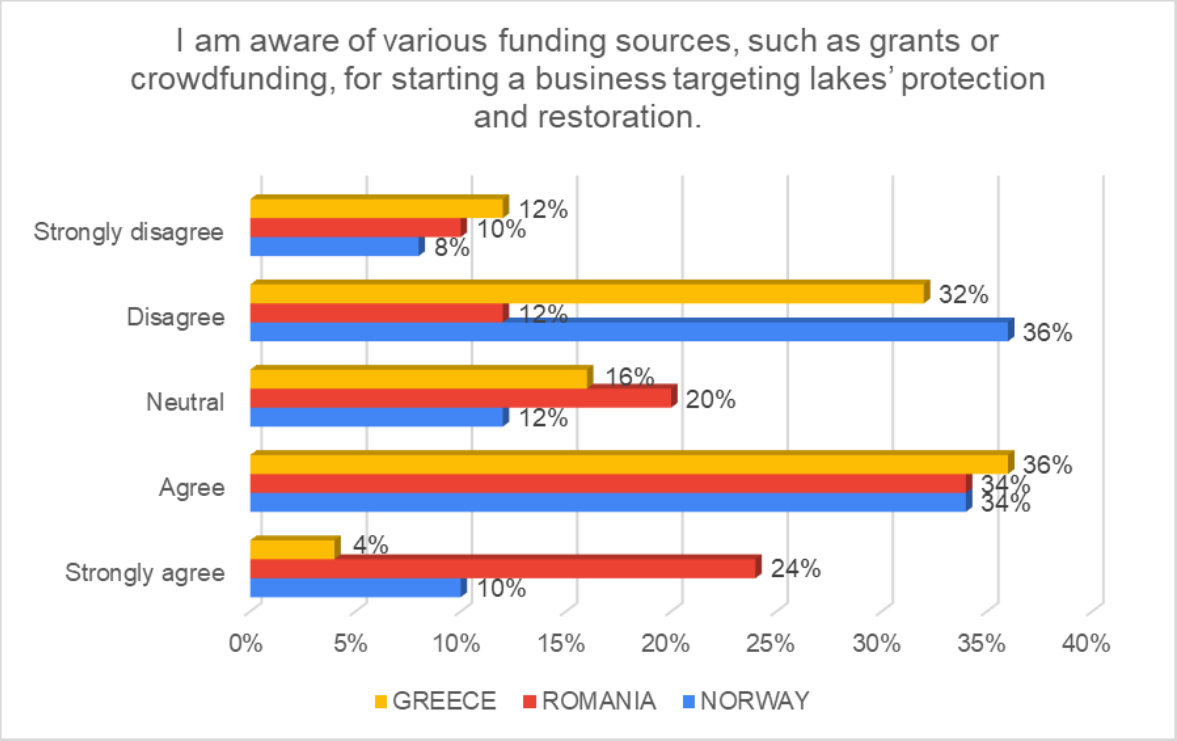

Figure 17 – Respondents' awareness about various funding sources for starting a business targeting lakes' protection and restoration
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania demonstrates the highest level of strong agreement (24%), indicating greater confidence in funding awareness, with an additional 34% agreeing. Greece shows moderate agreement (36%) but has the lowest level of strong agreement (4%), suggesting limited awareness. Norway reflects a mixed perspective, with 10% strongly agreeing and 34% agreeing, but also the highest levels of disagreement (36% disagree and 8% strongly disagree), signalling significant gaps in funding knowledge. Neutral responses are highest in Romania (20%) compared to Greece (16%) and Norway (12%), reflecting varying degrees of uncertainty.

The *second item* seeks the potential for revenue generation through partnerships with local governments or private entities in lakes' protection and restoration (Figure 18).

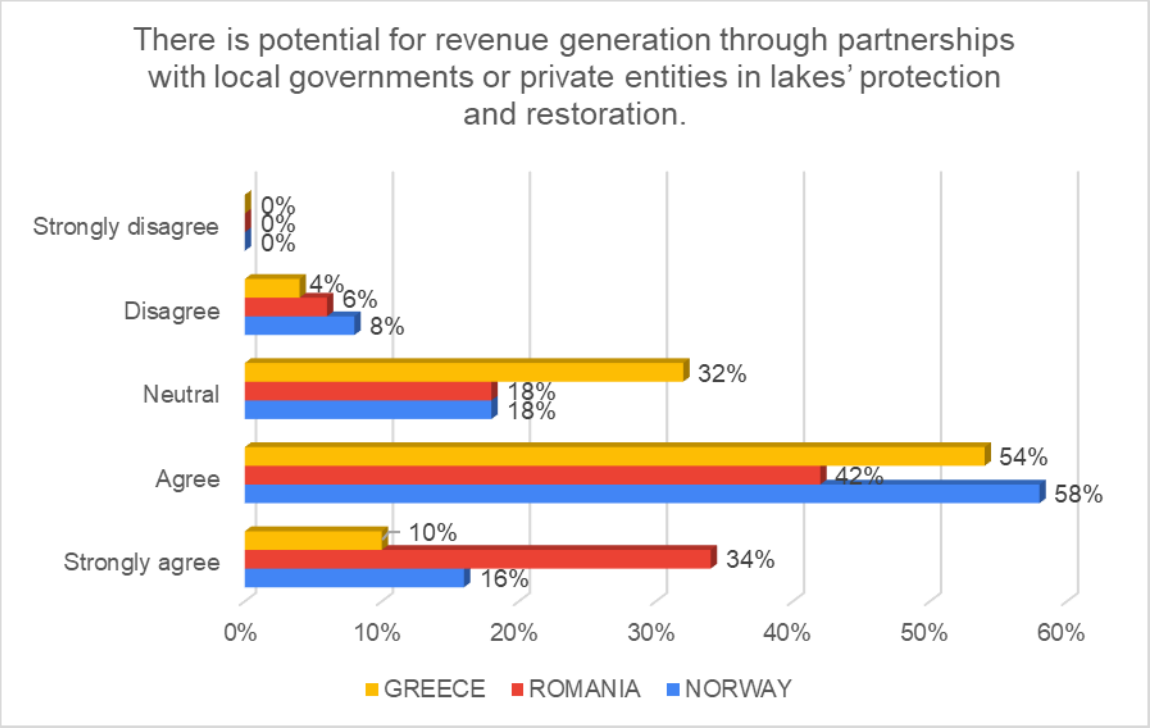

Figure 18 – Respondents' perceptions on the potential for revenue generation through partnerships with local governments or private entities
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania demonstrates the highest level of strong agreement (34%) and a combined agreement of 76%, indicating strong optimism about revenue opportunities through partnerships. Norway follows with a higher overall agreement (74%), driven by 58% agreeing and 16% strongly agreeing, reflecting a positive but slightly less enthusiastic outlook. Greece shows moderate support, with 54% agreeing but only 10% strongly agreeing, alongside the highest neutral responses (32%), suggesting more caution or uncertainty. Disagreement levels are minimal across all countries, with Greece (4%), Romania (6%), and Norway (8%) reporting only slight resistance.

The *third item* illustrates responses to the perceptions that nature-based solutions are able to indirectly generate stable and scalable revenue streams, showcasing varying levels of agreement across the three demo sites (Figure 19).

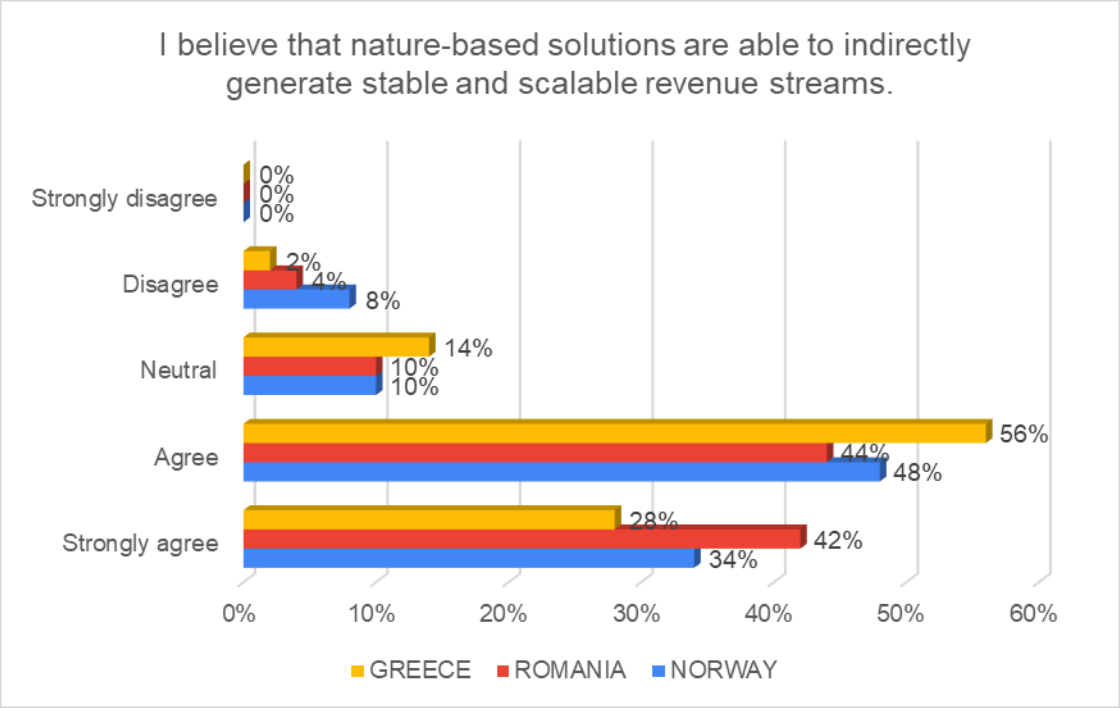

Figure 19 – Respondents' perceptions that nature-based solutions are able to indirectly generate stable and scalable revenue streams
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania leads with the highest level of strong agreement (42%) and a combined agreement of 86%, reflecting strong confidence in the indirect revenue potential of nature-based solutions. Norway closely follows, with 34% strongly agreeing and 48% agreeing, totalling 82% agreement, indicating significant optimism. Greece exhibits similar support, with a combined agreement of 84%, though with a higher share of agreement (56%) and lower strong agreement (28%), suggesting moderate confidence. Neutral responses are minimal and consistent across Norway and Romania (10%) but slightly higher in Greece (14%). Disagreement levels are low, with Greece (2%), Romania (4%), and Norway (8%) showing only slight resistance. These findings highlight a shared belief in the scalability of nature-based solutions, with Romania showing the most robust enthusiasm and Greece expressing cautious optimism.

The responses to the *fourth item* focused on public-private partnerships as a viable option for funding a business in lakes protection and restoration reveal varying levels of agreement across Norway, Romania, and Greece (Figure 20).

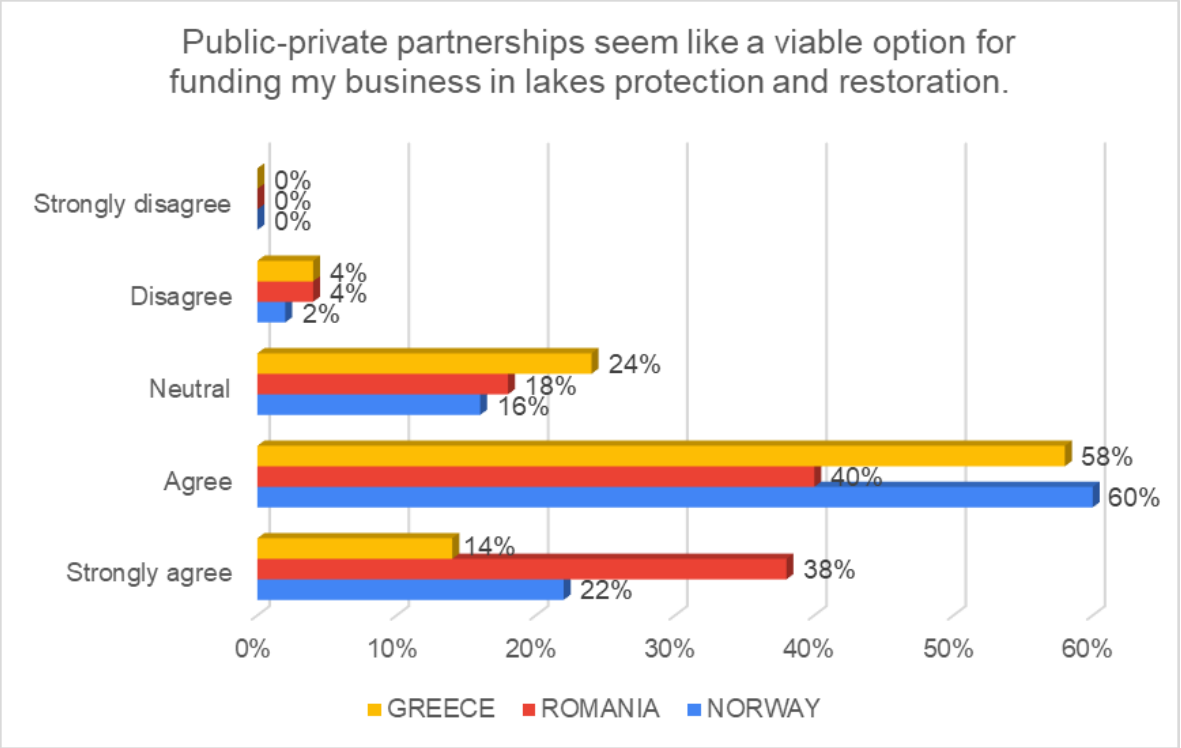

Figure 20 – Respondents' perceptions on public-private partnerships as a viable option for funding a business in lakes protection and restoration
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania outlines the highest level of strong agreement (38%), reflecting strong confidence in the potential of such partnerships, followed by Norway (22%) and Greece (14%). When combining agreement levels, Norway leads with 82% (60% agree), closely followed by Greece at 72% (58% agree), while Romania has 78% (40% agree). Neutral responses are highest in Greece (24%), compared to Romania (18%) and Norway (16%), indicating some hesitation or uncertainty, particularly in Greece. Disagreement levels are minimal, with Greece and Romania both at 4% and Norway at just 2%.

Sample demographics

The age distribution of respondents across Norway, Romania, and Greece highlights distinct demographic patterns, reflecting varied engagement across different age groups, presented in Figure 21.

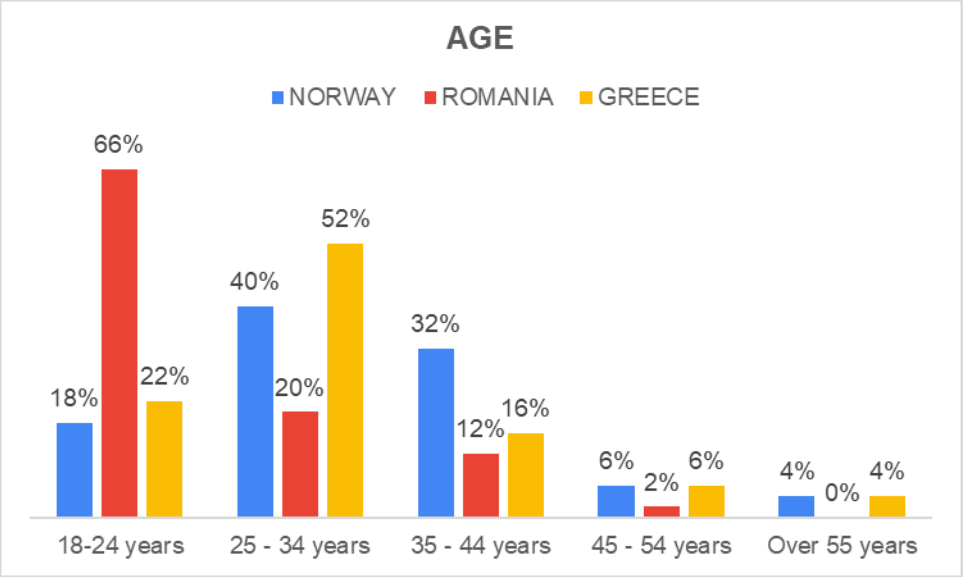

Figure 21 – Sample demographics- Age
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents skew significantly younger, with a dominant 18-24 years demographic. Norwegian respondents show a more even spread across 18-44 years, reflecting diverse career stages. Greek respondents emphasize the 25-34 years' group, suggesting strong involvement of young professionals.

The gender distribution of respondents across Norway, Romania, and Greece highlights notable differences in representation, Figure 22.

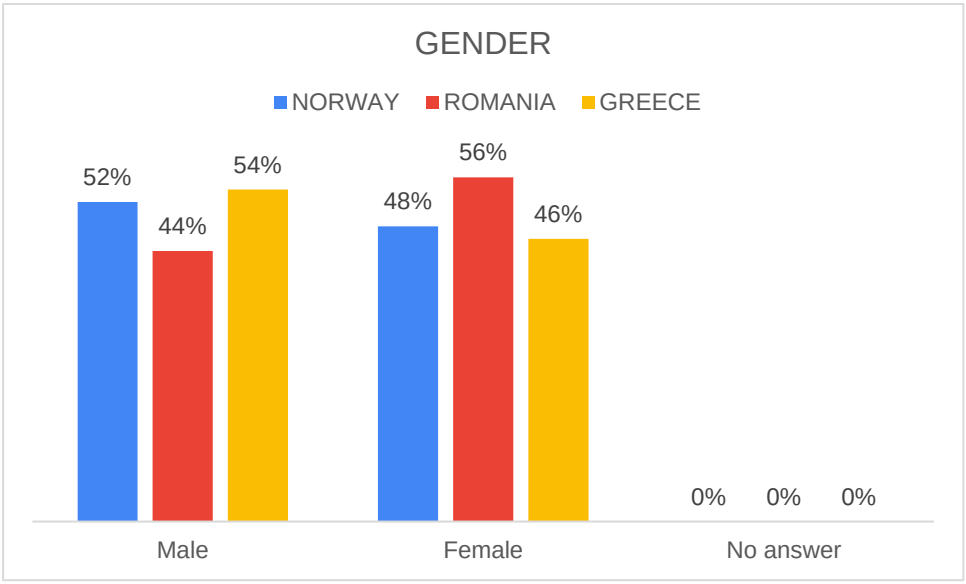

Figure 22 – Sample demographics- Gender
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania stands out with a higher female representation compared to Norway and Greece. Norway displays the most balanced gender distribution, while Greece shows a slight male predominance.

The education levels of respondents vary significantly across Norway, Romania, and Greece, reflecting diverse academic backgrounds as shown in Figure 23.

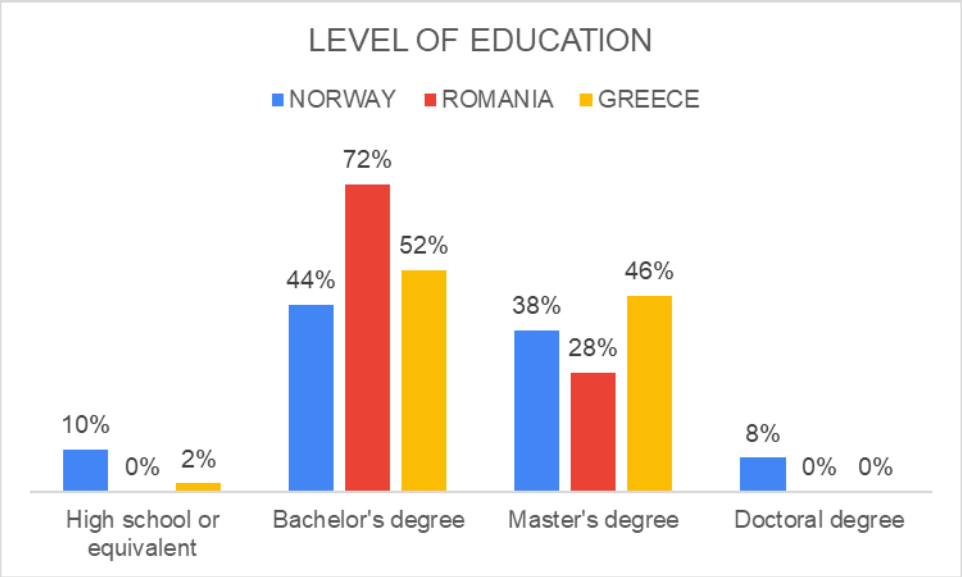

Figure 23 – Sample demographics- Level of education
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania leads in the proportion of respondents with Bachelor's degrees, suggesting a younger, less-experienced group in higher education. Norway has the highest representation of respondents with advanced degrees, including Master's and Doctoral levels. Greece shows a balanced distribution between Bachelor's and Master's degree holders, reflecting a diverse academic landscape.

These employment trends, Figure 24, provide context for understanding respondents' perspectives on business-related challenges and opportunities, influenced by their professional and academic statuses.

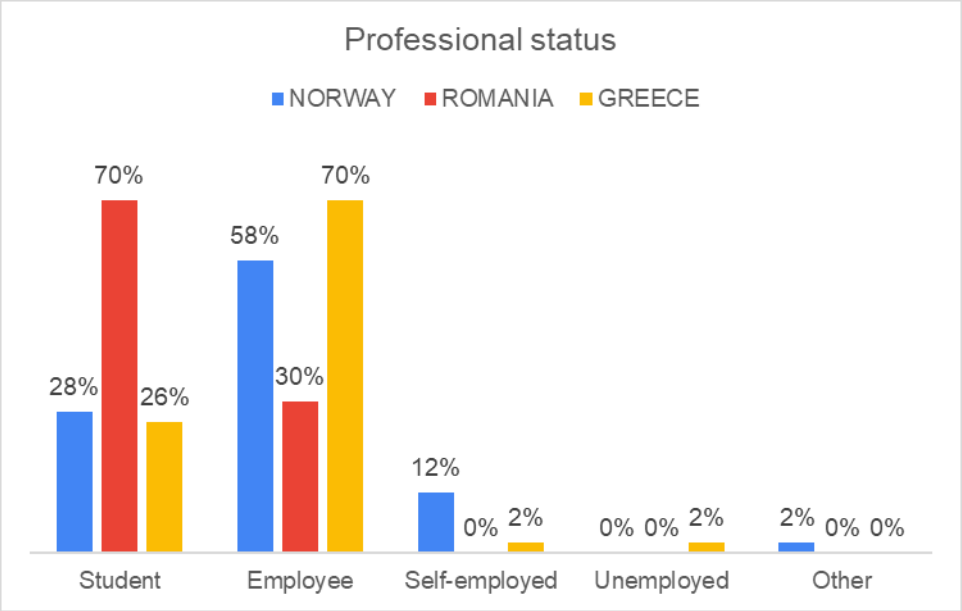

Figure 24 – Sample demographics- Professional status
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania's high student representation contrasts with the stronger workforce engagement seen in Norway and Greece. Greece and Norway share similar proportions of employees, reflecting established professional bases. Self-employment is minimal across all three countries, suggesting limited entrepreneurial activities among respondents.

This study highlights the diversity of perspectives and experiences among entrepreneurs and professionals from Norway, Romania, and Greece regarding lake protection and restoration. The analysis reveals distinct demographic and professional characteristics across these countries, reflecting varied levels of engagement, priorities, and challenges in adopting sustainable practices.

3. Quantitative survey focused on entrepreneurs' interests and needs to develop a business in lake protection and restoration

1. Introduction

This study shifts focus to active entrepreneurs across three European countries where the ProCleanLakes project's demo sites are located: Norway, Romania, and Greece. These entrepreneurs are highly relevant business stakeholders in implementing practical and scalable solutions for lake protection, leveraging their existing business expertise and resources.

The main objectives of this research are:

- To assess the interest of entrepreneurs in innovation and the development of new business models related to lake protection.
- To explore the motivations behind expanding their business portfolios to include environmentally sustainable practices.
- To identify the needs and resources required for successful business development in this domain.
- To evaluate the constraints and challenges that hinder entrepreneurial efforts in lake protection.
- To investigate the opportunities for funding and potential revenue streams that support these initiatives.

The study employs a survey-based approach, structured around five core sections: interest in innovation and new business models, motivations for business portfolio expansion, needs for business development, constraints and challenges, opportunities for funding and revenue streams. The questionnaire concludes with demographic questions to capture insights into the respondents' profiles, including their industry, level of education, and professional experience.

The survey was distributed to 45 active entrepreneurs from Norway, Romania, and Greece (15 from each demo site), ensuring a diverse representation across key industries. Respondents were selected based on their involvement in sectors with potential relevance to lake protection, including renewable energy, water treatment, and recreational activities. Demographic data such as age, gender, and years of experience in management further contextualize the findings, enabling a nuanced analysis of cross-country trends and individual motivations.

2. Analysis of responses provided by business owners

The first section of the survey, entitled **Interest in innovation and new business models** explores participants' interest through one key item. The responses to the question, as can be seen in Figure 25, reveal varying levels of interest among business owners in Norway, Romania, and Greece regarding the development of innovative business models for water ecosystem protection and restoration.

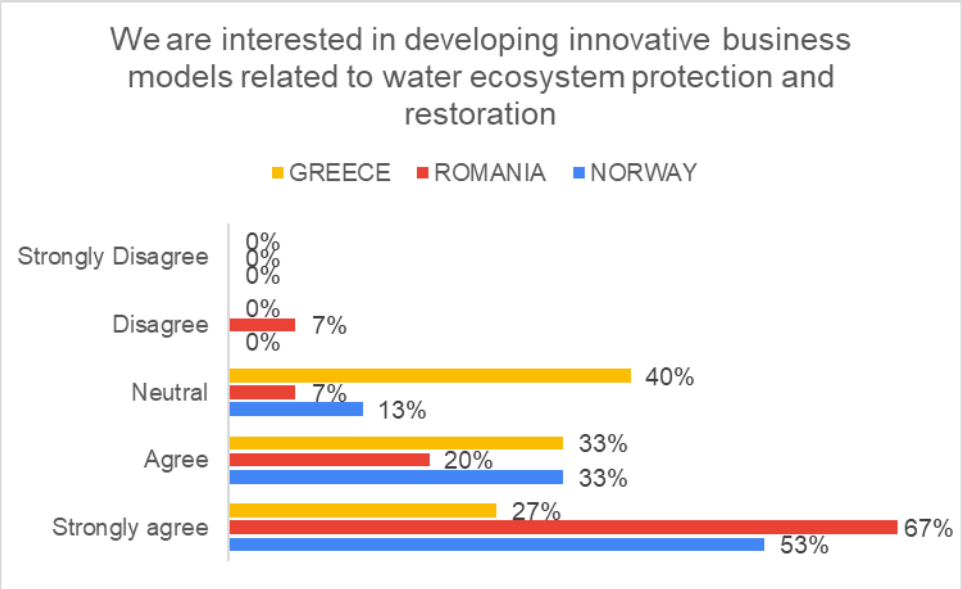

Figure 25– Interest in developing innovative business models related to water ecosystem protection and restoration. Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romania exhibits the strongest interest, with 67% of respondents indicating they "Strongly agree" with the statement. Only 7% of respondents chose "Neutral," and another 7% expressed disagreement, showing a clear alignment toward innovation and sustainability. This high level of commitment reflects strong motivations driven by the local context, including the country's increasing focus on sustainable development.

Norway follows with 53% of respondents strongly agreeing and another 33% agreeing. A small percentage (13%) remain neutral, while there is no disagreement. The responses indicate a broad positive attitude, influenced by Norway's advanced environmental policies and established green business practices.

In Greece, responses are more polarized: only 27% strongly agree, while another 33% agree. The highest proportion of neutrality (40%) suggests hesitation or uncertainty among Greek respondents, reflecting economic or structural challenges that limit immediate investment in innovative sustainability initiatives.

No strong disagreement was recorded, indicating that, while cautious, respondents still recognize the importance of water ecosystem protection. Romanian respondents demonstrate the highest enthusiasm and commitment, indicating a strong readiness to adopt innovative practices for lake sustainability. Norwegian

respondents also show significant interest but with a slightly higher neutral stance compared to Romania. Greek respondents show moderate agreement but a much higher level of neutrality, which highlight barriers to implementation rather than a lack of interest.

The second section of the survey, **Motivations for expanding business portfolios**, investigates the motivations driving entrepreneurs to expand their business portfolios to include sustainability-oriented initiatives, particularly those focused on lake protection and restoration. This section comprises four key questions: extending the business into nature-based solutions as part of long-term sustainability objectives, protecting natural lakes as a mission to bring a positive impact on the environment, developing new services for lake protection and restoration to improve business reputation, entering markets dedicated to lake protection and restoration as a significant opportunity for company growth.

The *first item* in this section evaluates the extent to which expanding into nature-based solutions aligns with the sustainability objectives of businesses across the three countries. The responses of business owners as can be seen in Figure 26.

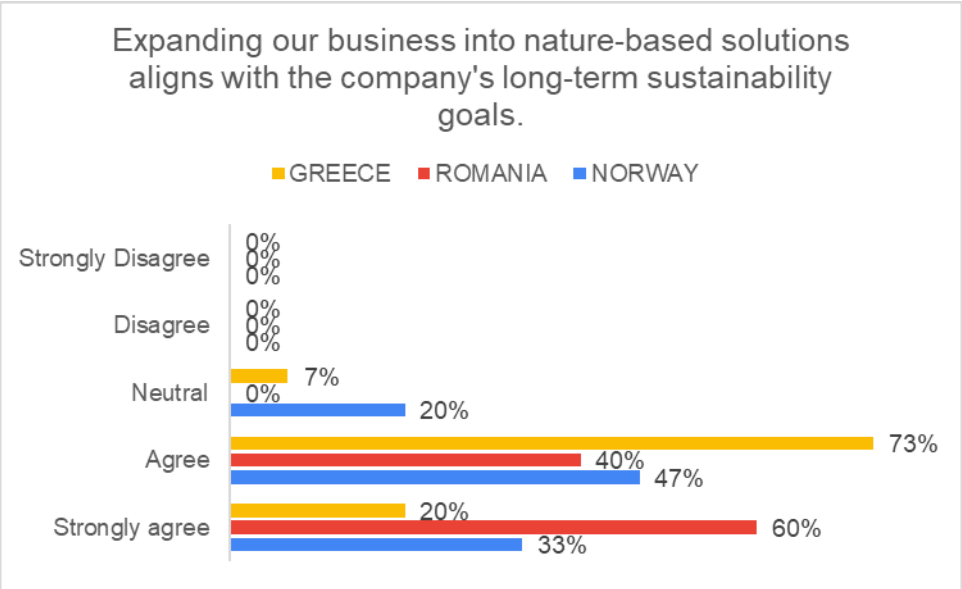

Figure 26 – Motivation for expanding business into nature-based solutions aligns with the company's long-term sustainability goals
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian entrepreneurs demonstrate a high level of alignment, with 60% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing that nature-based solutions align with their sustainability goals. There is no neutrality or disagreement, indicating strong cohesion among Romanian respondents regarding the importance of sustainability.

In Norway, 33% strongly agree and 47% agree with the statement, reflecting substantial interest but with 20% remaining neutral. The presence of neutral responses suggests that some entrepreneurs still evaluating the feasibility or relevance of such solutions to their businesses.

Greek respondents show the strongest overall agreement, with 73% agreeing, 20% strongly agreeing and 7% are neutral, showcasing a recognition of the value of sustainability goals in business expansion.

The *second item* in this section evaluates the degree to which businesses are motivated to protect natural lakes as part of their environmental mission (Figure 27).

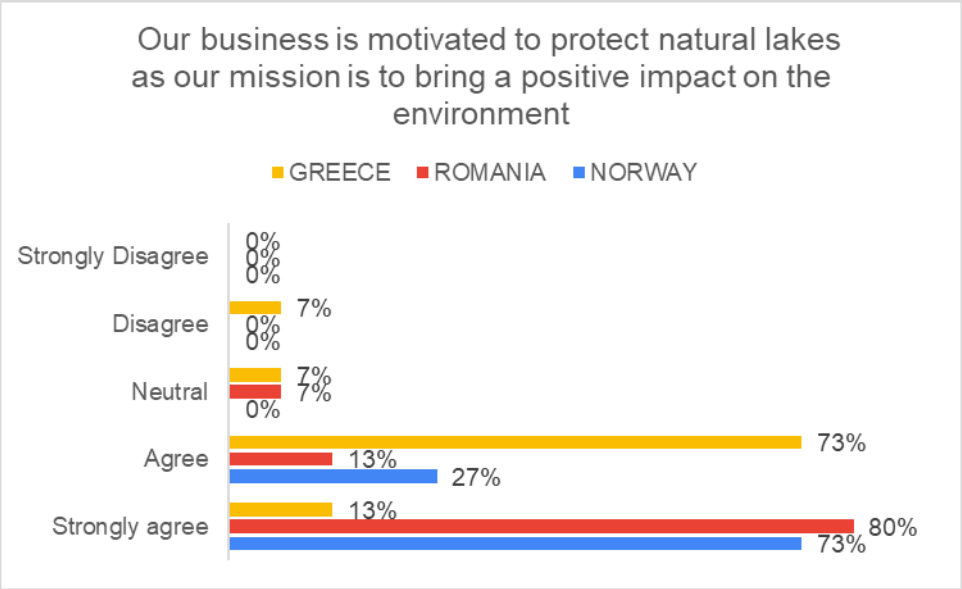

Figure 27 – Entrepreneurs' motivation to protect natural lakes as part of their environmental mission.
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents show the highest motivation, with 80% strongly agreeing that protecting lakes aligns with their mission to bring a positive environmental impact. A smaller proportion (13%) agree, while 7% remain neutral. The lack of disagreement highlights a strong consensus on the importance of environmental protection within the Romanian sample.

Norwegian entrepreneurs also show substantial motivation, with 73% strongly agreeing and 27% agreeing. No neutral or negative responses were recorded, reflecting a unified perspective on the importance of lake protection.

Greek respondents display a similar distribution, with 73% agreeing and 13% strongly agreeing. However, 7% of respondents disagree, indicating some reservations or differing priorities.

These findings emphasize the shared commitment across countries to protecting natural lakes, while also pointing to opportunities for targeted support to address specific concerns and barriers in each region.

The *third item* explores how developing new services for lake protection and restoration enhance business reputation. Figure 28 presents the responses of entrepreneurs from the 3 countries.

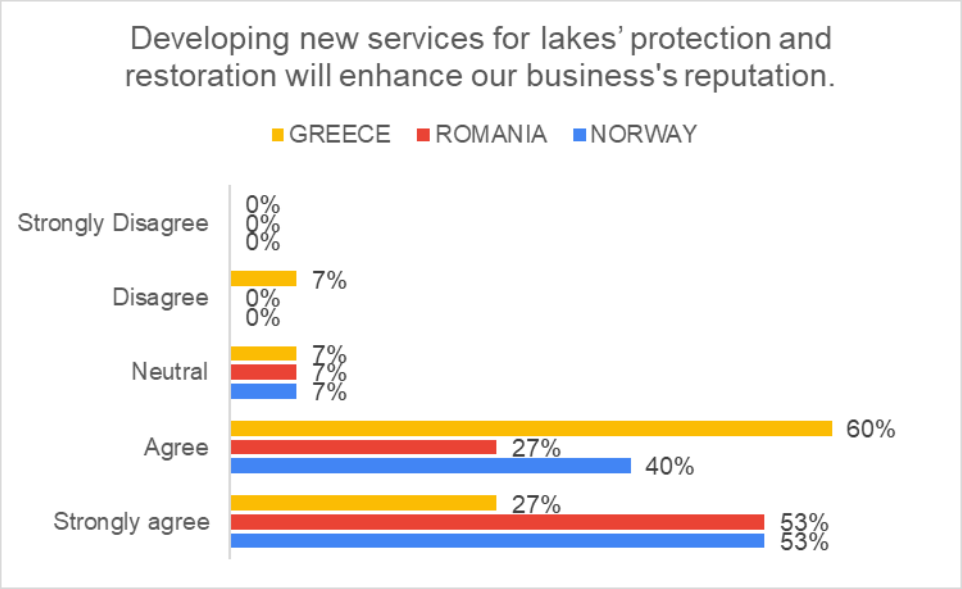

Figure 28 – Entrepreneurs' motivation to develop new services for lakes' protection and restoration.
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents strongly believe in the reputational benefits, with 53% strongly agreeing and 27% agreeing. Only 7% remain neutral, and no disagreement was recorded, emphasizing widespread alignment on this aspect.

Norwegian entrepreneurs display similar enthusiasm, with 53% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing. A small percentage (7%) remain neutral, reflecting minor hesitation or uncertainty.

Greek respondents exhibit slightly more varied responses, with 27% strongly agreeing, 60% agreeing, and 7% disagreeing. The disagreement suggests differences in perception or challenges specific to the Greek context.

Romania and Norway demonstrate comparable levels of strong agreement, suggesting shared recognition of reputational benefits. Greece, while showing substantial agreement overall, indicates some reservations.

The *fourth item* explores the extent to which entrepreneurs view entering markets for lake protection and restoration as offering significant growth opportunities. The responses are graphically represented in Figure 29.

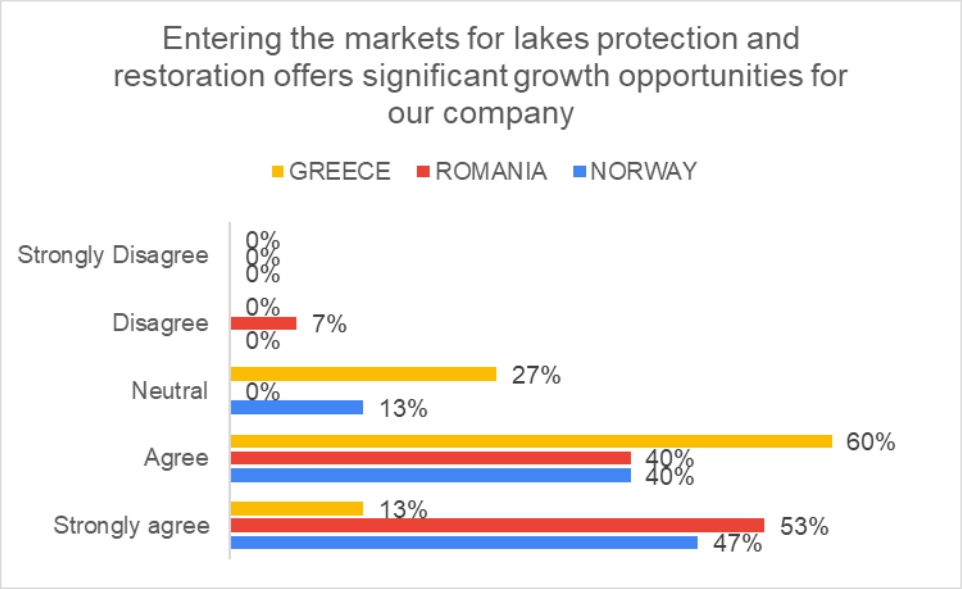

Figure 29 – Entrepreneurs' motivation to entering markets for lake protection and restoration
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents exhibit strong agreement, with 53% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing. Only 7% disagree, and no neutral responses was recorded, indicating a belief in growth opportunities in this sector.

Norwegian entrepreneurs also display high levels of agreement, with 47% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing. A notable 13% remain neutral, suggesting some uncertainty or lack of readiness to enter these markets.

Greek respondents show a slightly different pattern, with 13% strongly agreeing and 60% agreeing. However, 27% remain neutral, reflecting a significant level of hesitation.

Romanian and Norwegian entrepreneurs demonstrate the strongest levels of confidence in the growth potential of these markets, highlighting their readiness to capitalize on emerging opportunities. Greek respondents, while showing substantial agreement overall, exhibit a higher degree of neutrality, suggesting the need for targeted support to address existing barriers.

The third section of the survey, **needs for business development**, delves into the specific needs identified by entrepreneurs to ensure the successful development of their businesses in the context of lake protection and restoration. The section is structured around four key questions: evaluating the necessity for greater access to funding opportunities for projects related to lake protection and restoration, assessing the importance of developing new technologies to support lake protection and restoration efforts, exploring the potential benefits of forming partnerships with governmental agencies to advance these initiatives, understanding the role of additional training and coaching services in contributing to the success of businesses engaged in lake protection and restoration.

The responses to the *first item*, from Figure 30, highlight varying levels of agreement among entrepreneurs from the three countries regarding the necessity for increased funding opportunities.

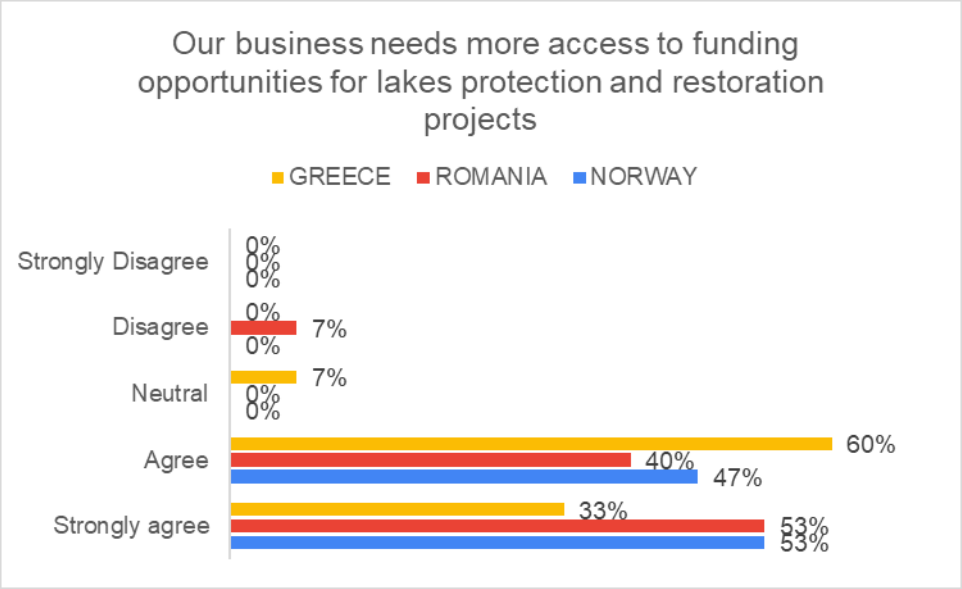

Figure 30 – Entrepreneurs' needs to increased funding opportunities Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian entrepreneurs exhibit a strong demand for funding opportunities, with 53% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing. Only 7% disagree, showcasing a consensus on the importance of financial access for this sector.

In Norway, 53% of respondents strongly agree and 47% agree with the need for funding access. No neutral or disagreeing responses were recorded, reflecting a unified stance on this issue.

Greek entrepreneurs show a slightly different pattern, with 60% agreeing and 33% strongly agreeing. However, 7% of respondents are neutral, indicating minor hesitation or differing priorities within this group. Greek respondents, while still highly supportive of the need for funding, display a slightly higher level of neutrality~~, suggesting barriers or uncertainties in their local context~~.

The *second item* in this section evaluates the perceived importance of developing new technologies to support lake protection and restoration efforts. Figure 31 presents the answers of entrepreneurs.

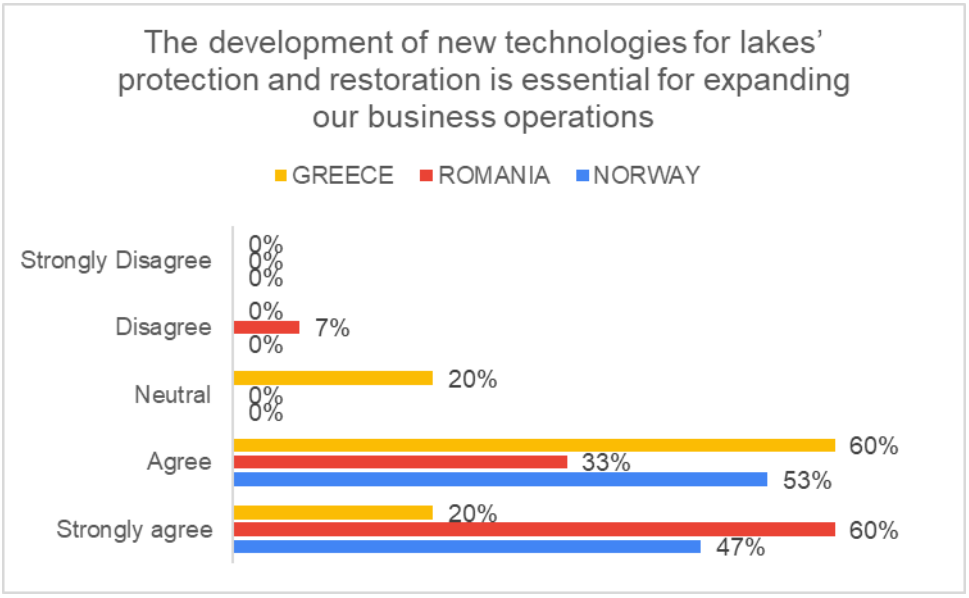

Figure 31 – Entrepreneurs' needs to develop new technologies for lake's protection and restoration
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents express strong agreement, with 60% strongly agreeing and 33% agreeing that technological advancements are important for expanding business operations in this area. Only 7% disagree, while no neutral responses were recorded, indicating a clear emphasis on the need for innovation.

Norwegian entrepreneurs also highly value technological development, with 47% strongly agreeing and 53% agreeing. No neutral or disagreeing responses were observed, showcasing unanimous support for this priority.

Greek respondents exhibit a similar trend, with 20% strongly agreeing and 60% agreeing. However, 20% remain neutral, reflecting a degree of hesitation or differing views within this group.

The *third item* in this section assesses the benefits of partnerships with government agencies in advancing lake protection and restoration efforts. The responses are graphically represented in Figure 32.

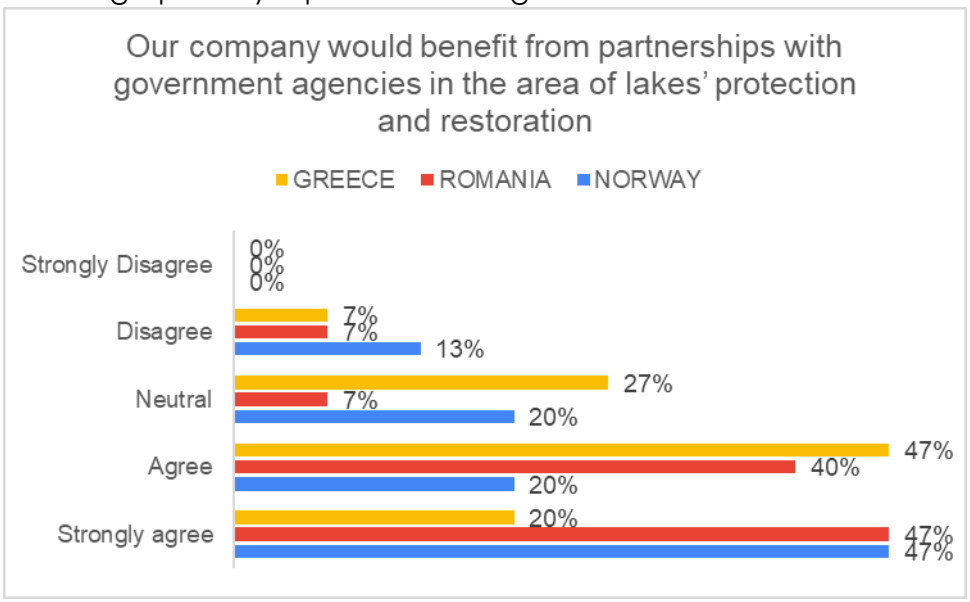

Figure 32 – Entrepreneurs' benefits of partnerships with government agencies in advancing lake protection and restoration efforts
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian entrepreneurs display strong agreement, with 47% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing that partnerships with government agencies would benefit their businesses. Only 7% disagree, while 7% remain neutral, indicating some variation in perspectives within this group.

Norwegian respondents show similar levels of agreement, with 47% strongly agreeing and 20% agreeing. However, a higher proportion (20%) remain neutral, and 13% disagree, reflecting a mix of enthusiasm and cautious optimism.

Greek respondents exhibit comparable levels of agreement, with 47% agreeing and 20% strongly agreeing. A notable 27% remain neutral, while 7% disagree, indicating diverse perspectives within this group.

Romanian entrepreneurs exhibit the strongest consensus on the value of government partnerships, with minimal disagreement. Norwegian and Greek respondents share similar patterns, with higher levels of neutrality and some disagreement, reflecting barriers or differing levels of confidence in government collaboration.

The *fourth item* in this section evaluates the extent to which additional training and coaching services could support business success in lake protection and restoration projects. The responses are graphically represented in Figure 33.

Figure 33 – Entrepreneurs' needs of additional training and coaching services that support business success in lake protection and restoration projects. Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents exhibit a strong preference for training and coaching services, with 67% strongly agreeing and 27% agreeing. Only 7% disagree.

Norwegian entrepreneurs show significant support as well, with 40% strongly agreeing and 53% agreeing. A small proportion (7%) remain neutral, while no disagreement was observed, showcasing a shared recognition of this priority.

Greek respondents display slightly more varied responses, with 13% strongly agreeing and 67% agreeing. However, 7% remain neutral, and 13% disagree, indicating mixed views within this group.

Romanian respondents show the highest level of strong agreement, emphasizing their readiness to embrace additional training opportunities. Norwegian respondents demonstrate broad agreement, albeit with slightly lower levels of strong agreement compared to Romania. Greek respondents, while supportive overall, show a wider distribution of responses, highlighting the need for tailored training programs to address their specific concerns and priorities.

The fourth section of the survey, **Constraints and challenges**, explores the constraints and challenges those entrepreneurs face in implementing lake protection and restoration projects. This section highlights the regulatory, financial, and operational barriers hindering progress. The section comprises four key questions:

assessing the difficulty of managing regulatory requirements for lake protection and restoration projects, understanding the impact of high implementation costs on business growth, evaluating the shortage of qualified personnel for nature-based solutions, identifying challenges in accessing markets for eco-friendly protection and restoration services.

For the *first item* of this section, responses reveal varying levels of difficulty in managing regulatory requirements across the three countries, as can be seen in Figure 34.

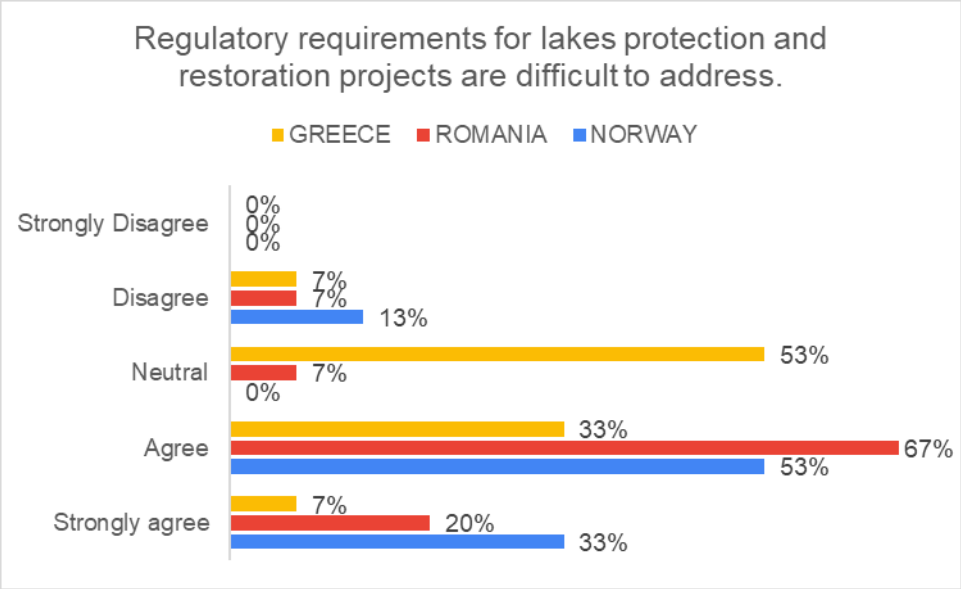

Figure 34– Entrepreneurs' regulatory requirements for lakes protection and restoration projects. Source: data retrieved from the online survey

In Romania, 67% of respondents agree and 20% strongly agree that regulatory requirements are difficult to address, 7% remain neutral, while another 7% disagree, reflecting a minority perspective that regulations are manageable.

53% of Norwegian respondents agree, and 33% strongly agree with the statement. 13% disagree, indicating some variation in experiences or perspectives regarding regulatory challenges.

Greek respondents show a mixed response, with 33% agreeing and 7% strongly agreeing. A significant 53% remain neutral, suggesting uncertainty or limited experience with these requirements.

The cost of implementing lakes' protection and restoration solutions poses a barrier to business growth, as reflected in the responses for the *second item* (Figure 35).

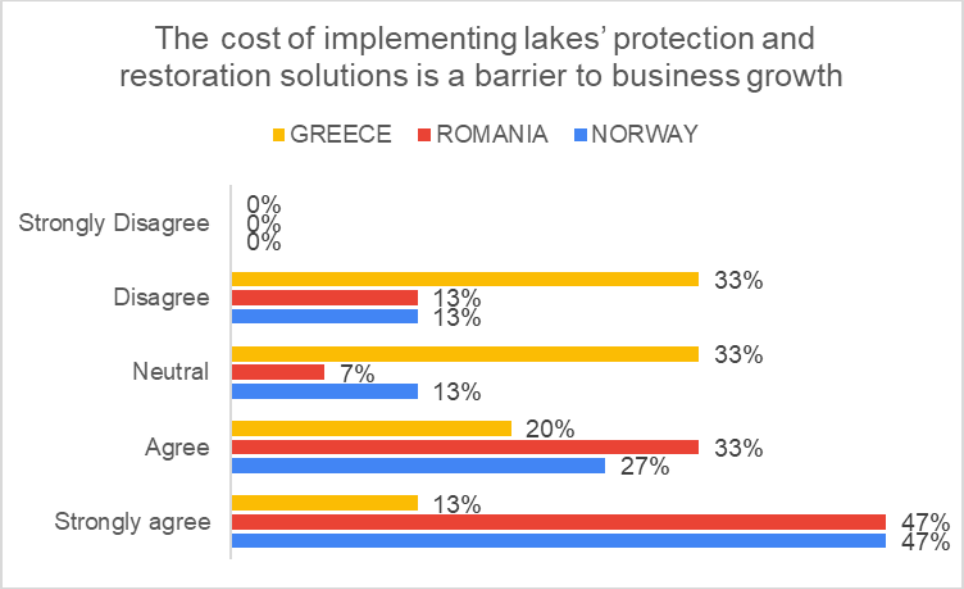

Figure 35 – Entrepreneurs' barriers regarding the cost of implementing lake's protection and restoration solutions. Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents report significant concern, with 47% strongly agreeing and 33% agreeing that costs are a major barrier. 7% remain neutral, while another 13% disagree, highlighting mixed experiences among respondents.

In Norway, 47% of respondents strongly agree, and 27% agree with the statement. 13% remain neutral, while 13% disagree, suggesting some entrepreneurs find the costs manageable.

Greek respondents show more variation, with 13% strongly agreeing and 20% agreeing. A substantial 33% remain neutral, while another 33% disagree, indicating a lack of consensus on the impact of costs.

Skilled labour, that refers to the third question, is a component in implementing nature-based solutions, yet its availability varies significantly across the three countries. The responses are graphically represented in Figure 36.

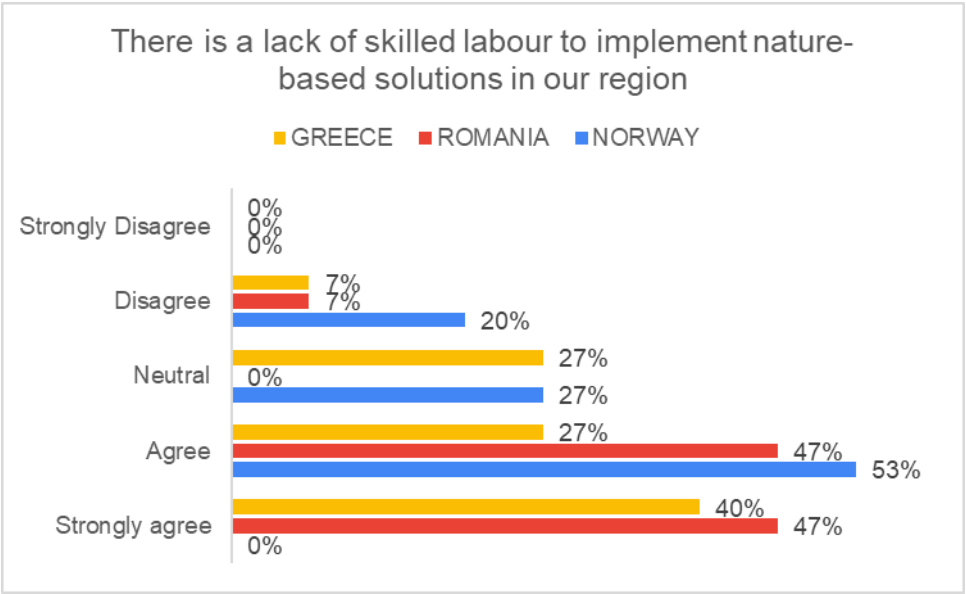

Figure 36 – Entrepreneurs' skills labour to implement nature-based solutions Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents highlight this as a significant issue, with 47% strongly agreeing and another 47% agreeing. 7% disagree, indicating some variability in experiences or perspectives on workforce availability.

In Norway, 53% of respondents agree, and 27% are neutral, that there is a lack of skilled labour. 20% disagree, suggesting that some Norwegian businesses do not face this challenge to the same extent.

Greek respondents show a broader range of opinions, with 40% strongly agreeing and 27% agreeing. 27% remain neutral, while 7% disagree, reflecting mixed perspectives on the availability of skilled labour.

The ability to access markets for eco-friendly protection and restoration services is perceived differently across the three countries, as can be seen in Figure 37.

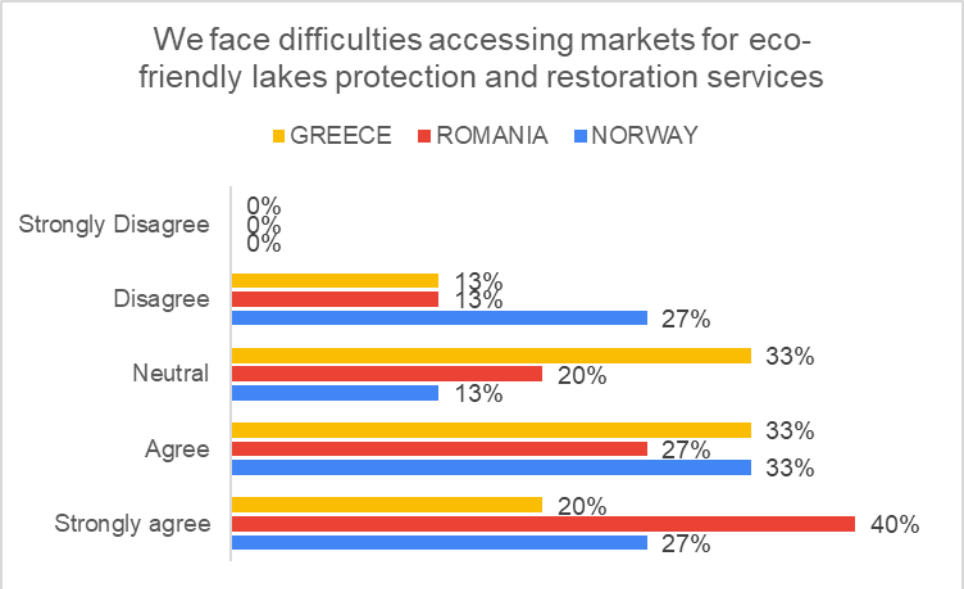

Figure 37 – Entrepreneurs' difficulties accessing markets for eco-friendly lakes protection and restoration services. Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents report moderate challenges, with 40% strongly agreeing and 27% agreeing that market accessibility is a barrier. 20% remain neutral, and 13% disagree.

In Norway, 27% strongly agree, and 33% agree that market accessibility is a challenge. 13% remain neutral, and 27% disagree.

Greek respondents show mixed perspectives, with 20% strongly agreeing and 33% agreeing. 33% remain neutral, and 13% disagree.

Romanian respondents exhibit the highest levels of strong agreement, emphasizing a clear challenge in accessing markets. Norwegian respondents display a balanced view, with a notable proportion disagreeing. Greek respondents show varied opinions, reflecting regional differences in market dynamics and barriers.

The fifth section of the survey explores the financial dimensions of engaging in lake protection and restoration initiatives. It focuses on identifying funding sources and evaluating the financial sustainability of such projects. This section comprises four key questions: assessing the extent to which entrepreneurs are familiar with available

funding options, including grants and private investments, evaluating the potential for services related to lake protection and restoration to serve as stable revenue streams, exploring the feasibility of crowdfunding and public-private partnerships as funding mechanisms, understanding expectations for long-term cost savings through the adoption of nature-based solutions.

The responses to the *first item* of this section (Figure 38) reveal varying levels of familiarity with funding opportunities across the three countries.

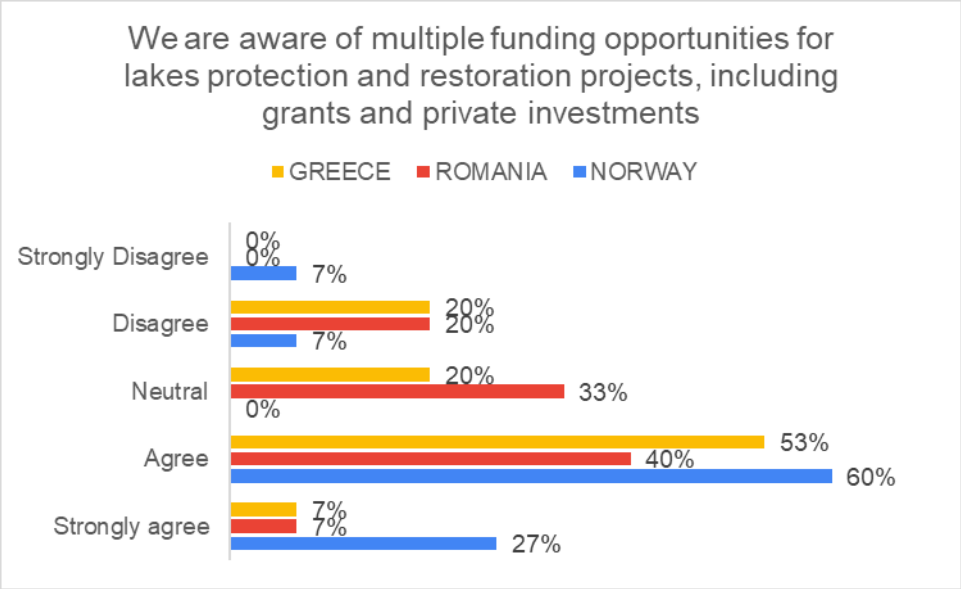

Figure 38 – Entrepreneurs' awareness of multiple funding opportunities for lakes protection and restoration projects. Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents show a balanced perspective, with 40% agreeing and 7% strongly agreeing that they are aware of funding opportunities. 33% remain neutral, and 20% disagree, highlighting a diverse range of awareness levels within the country.

In Norway, awareness is relatively high, with 60% agreeing and 27% strongly agreeing. 7% disagree, also 7% strongly disagree, and no respondents are neutral, indicating a strong overall familiarity with funding options.

Greek respondents demonstrate moderate awareness, with 53% agreeing and 7% strongly agreeing. 20% remain neutral, and 20% disagree, suggesting that more effort need to increase awareness in this region.

Stable revenue sources are a cornerstone of sustainable business growth, particularly in the context of lakes' protection and restoration. The *second item* investigates how entrepreneurs perceive the potential of such services to provide consistent income, offering insights into their financial expectations and strategic priorities across the three countries. The responses are graphically represented in Figure 39.

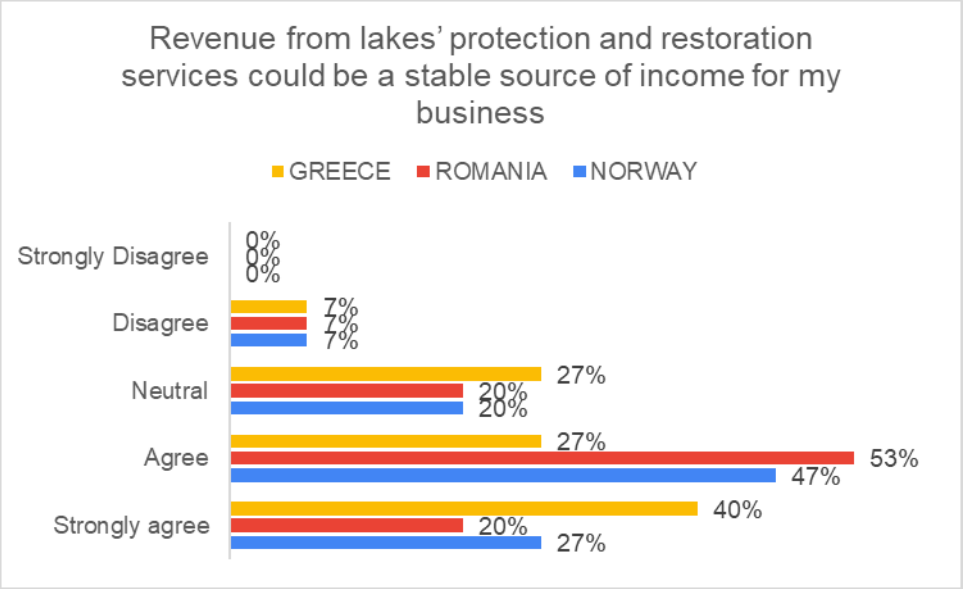

Figure 39 – Entrepreneurs' aware of revenue from lake's protection and restoration services. Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents indicate strong optimism, with 53% agreeing and 20% strongly agreeing that these services could provide a stable source of income. 20% remain neutral, while 7% disagree, reflecting a general positive outlook with minor reservations.

In Norway, 47% agree and 27% strongly agree with the statement. 20% remain neutral, and 7% disagree, suggesting a moderately positive view with some neutrality.

Greek respondents display mixed responses, with 40% strongly agreeing and 27% agreeing. 27% remain neutral, while 7% disagree, indicating a broader spectrum of opinions.

Crowdfunding and public-private partnerships have emerged as innovative approaches for financing environmental initiatives, including lake protection and restoration. These funding mechanisms not only provide financial resources but also foster collaboration between various stakeholders, enhancing the impact and scalability of projects. The *third item* delves into how entrepreneurs across three countries perceive the feasibility and effectiveness of these options in supporting their business objectives. Crowdfunding and public-private partnerships are explored as viable funding mechanisms for lake protection and restoration projects. The responses, Figure 40, reveal different levels of agreement among the three countries:

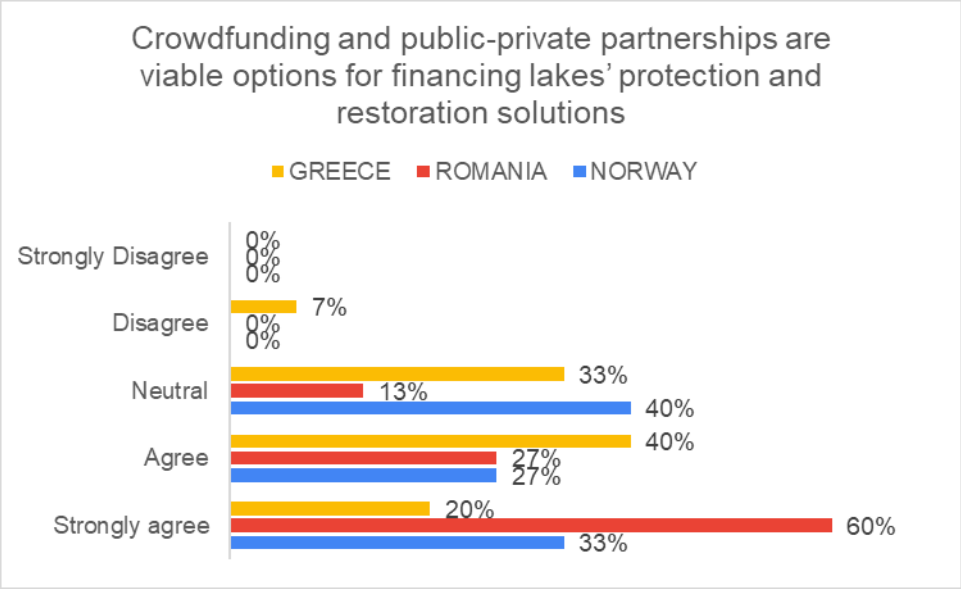

Figure 40 – Entrepreneurs' awareness of crowdfunding and public-private partnerships. Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents demonstrate strong agreement, with 60% strongly agreeing and 27% agreeing. Only 13% remain neutral, highlighting a high level of confidence in these funding approaches.

In Norway, 33% strongly agree and 27% agree that crowdfunding and public-private partnerships are viable options. 40% remain neutral, reflecting some uncertainty.

Greek respondents show agreement, with 20% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing. 33% remain neutral, and 7% disagree, suggesting a lack of consensus or experience with these methods.

Romanian respondents display the highest levels of agreement, showcasing strong confidence in the viability of these funding mechanisms. Norwegian respondents demonstrate a positive trend with some neutrality, suggesting cautious optimism. Greek respondents exhibit a significant level of neutrality, reflecting possible barriers to adoption or a lack of awareness.

Adopting nature-based solutions in business models is often associated with both environmental and economic benefits. By integrating these solutions, companies potentially achieve significant long-term cost reductions while contributing to sustainability goals. The *fourth item* examines how entrepreneurs from three countries perceive the cost-saving potential of these innovative approaches, shedding light on their strategic priorities and level of optimism toward sustainable practices.

The responses to this question, from Figure 41, highlight the perceived potential for cost savings from adopting nature-based solutions in business models across the three countries.

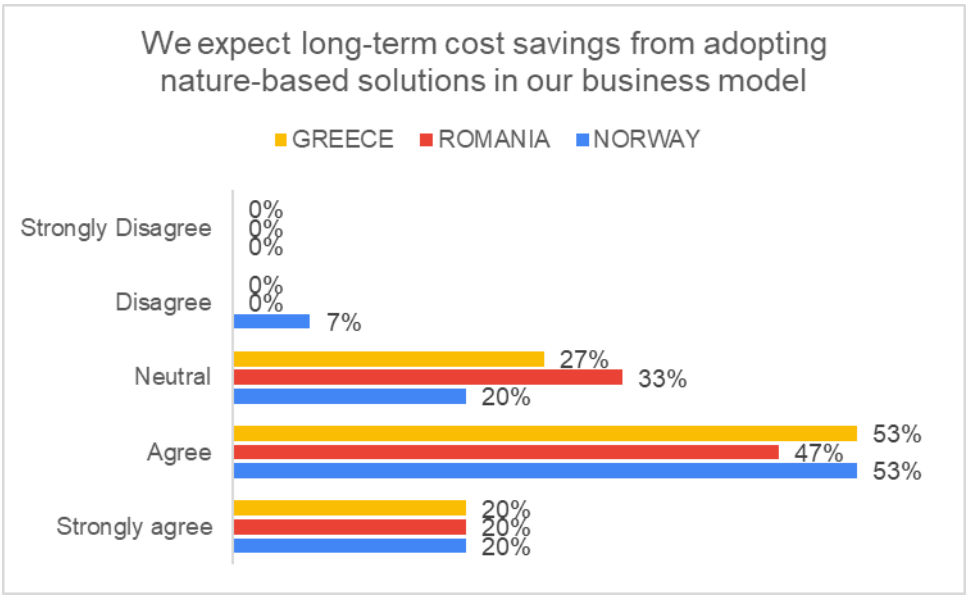

Figure 41 – Entrepreneurs' awareness of long-term cost savings from adopting nature-based solutions in their business model. Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents demonstrate significant optimism, with 47% agreeing and 20% strongly agreeing that adopting nature-based solutions could lead to long-term cost savings. 33% remain neutral, reflecting a largely positive outlook with minor reservations.

In Norway, 53% agree and 20% strongly agree with the statement. 20% remain neutral, and 7% of respondents disagree.

Greek respondents show a positive trend, with 53% agreeing and 20% strongly agreeing. 27% remain neutral, and no respondents disagree, reflecting cautious optimism.

The demographic data reveal a well-educated, experienced group of respondents actively engaged in industries relevant to sustainability and lake protection. Gender distribution and industry involvement vary by country, potentially influencing perspectives on survey topics. All of this data is represented in the graphs from Figure 42 to Figure 46.

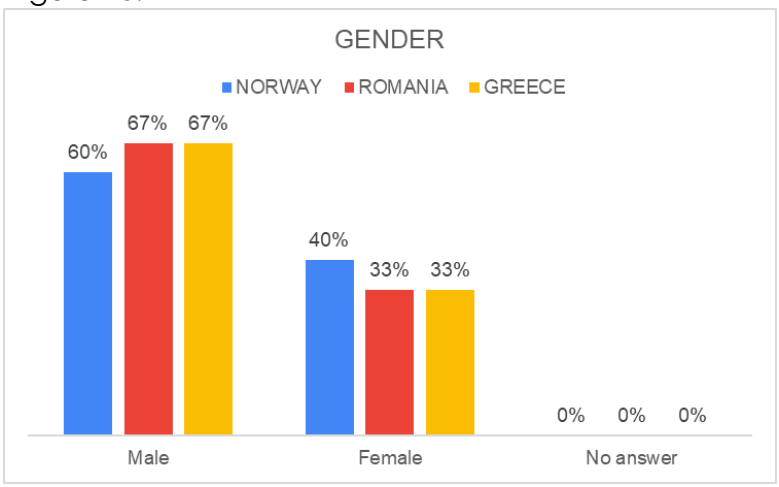

Figure 42 – Demographics data of entrepreneurs - Gender

Source: data retrieved from the online survey

In Romania, the respondent group is predominantly male (67%), with females representing 33%. In Norway the gender distribution shows 60% male and 40% female respondents. Similar to Romania, Greek respondents are 67% male and 33% female.

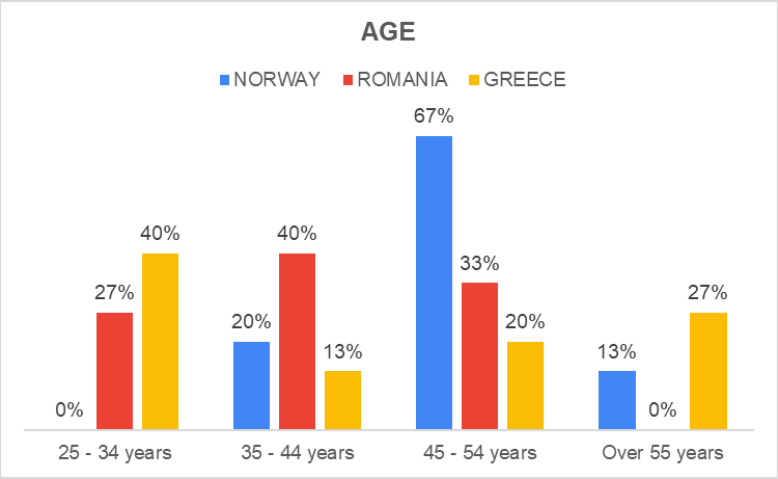

Figure 43 – Demographics data of entrepreneurs - Age
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

In Romania the majority of respondents are aged 35-44 years (40%) and 45-54 years (33%), with a smaller proportion 25-34 years (27%). In Norway, respondents are predominantly aged 45-54 years (67%), followed by 35-44 years (20%) and over 55 years (13%). Greek respondents show a balanced age distribution across 25-34 years (40%), 35-44 years (13%), 45-54 years (20%), and over 55 years (27%).

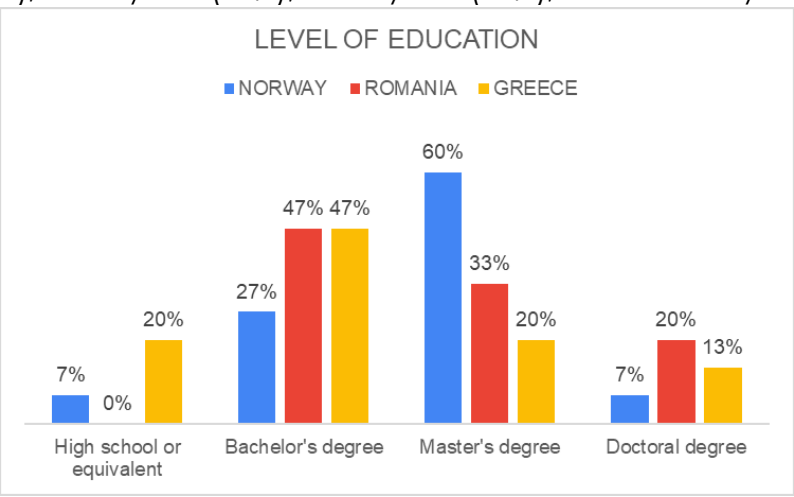

Figure 44 – Demographics data of entrepreneurs – Level of education
Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents hold a Bachelor's degree (47%) or a Master's degree (33%), with 20% having a Doctoral degree. In Norway, a significant proportion has a Master's degree (60%), followed by a Bachelor's degree (27%) and Doctoral degree (7%). In Greece, education levels are distributed across Bachelor's degree (47%), Master's degree (33%), and Doctoral degree (13%).

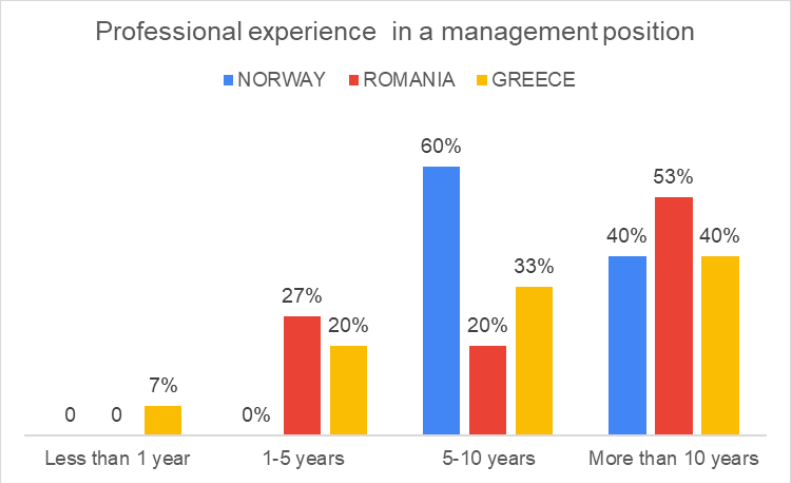

Figure 45 – Demographics data of entrepreneurs – Professional experience in a management position. Source: data retrieved from the online survey

In Romania, most respondents have over 10 years of management experience (53%), followed by 1-5 years (27%) and 5-10 years (20%). Norwegian respondents predominantly have 5-10 years of experience (60%) or over 10 years (40%). Similar to Romania, Greek respondents have over 10 years of experience (40%) or 5-10 years (33%).

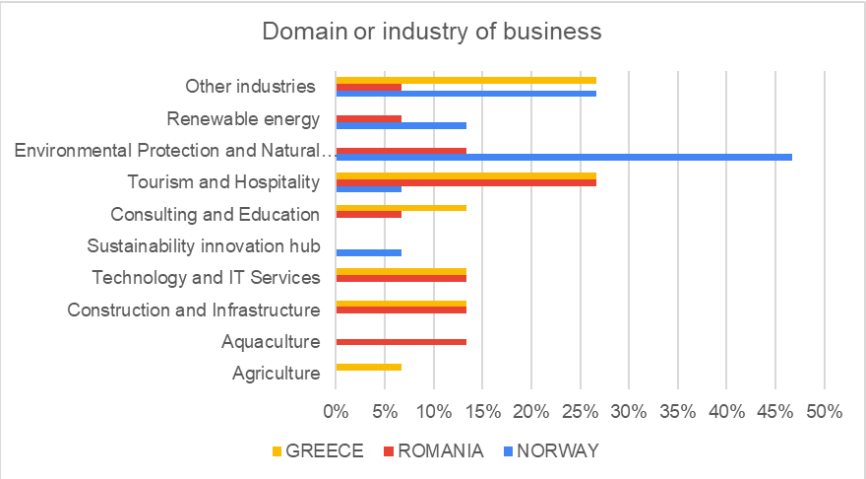

Figure 46 – Demographics data of entrepreneurs -Domain or industry of business Source: data retrieved from the online survey

Romanian respondents are primarily involved in tourism and hospitality, technology and IT services, aquaculture, and environmental protection. in Norway, most respondents are engaged in environmental protection, renewable energy and other industries. In Greece, the largest representation is from tourism and hospitality and other industries.

4. Qualitative Analysis - Comparison of the three interviews: in-depth analysis

We conducted three interviewees, each representing a different demo site, bringing diverse expertise and perspectives on sustainability, innovation, and potential economic development of restored lakes.

The interviewee from Trichonis Lake, Greece, is an experienced agronomist and an active member of the Local Action Group (L.A.G.) within a regional development company. Her expertise lies in sustainable agricultural practices and rural development, particularly in integrating ecological conservation with economic growth. With a deep understanding of the environmental and socioeconomic challenges surrounding lake ecosystems, she contributes to policy planning and the implementation of nature-based solutions for sustainable development. The interview was conducted on **12 December 2024**, in Greek, with English subtitles, allowing broader accessibility for an international audience interested in sustainable rural development initiatives.

The interviewee from Brates Lake, Romania, is the founder and manager of a company specializing in renewable energy solutions. His entrepreneurial endeavours focus on developing and implementing sustainable energy technologies, particularly in harnessing clean energy sources to mitigate environmental degradation of this lake. His company seeks to bridge the gap between technological advancements and environmental sustainability, promoting energy independence through innovative and scalable business models. The interview, conducted on **2 December 2024**, in Romanian with English subtitles, provides insights into the motivations, challenges, and opportunities in the renewable energy industry, particularly for businesses seeking to align profitability with ecological responsibility.

The interviewee from Langvatnet Lake, Norway, serves as the director of a virtual reality (VR) cluster, specializing in digital innovation and immersive technology applications. His role involves integrating VR solutions into various sectors, including environmental education, tourism, and business development. He aims to create engaging and interactive experiences that enhance public awareness of environmental issues, particularly in relation to lake conservation and sustainable tourism. His expertise outlines the growing intersection of technology and sustainability, highlighting how digital transformation support ecological preservation efforts. The interview took place on **19 December 2024**, in English, providing a global perspective on the application of emerging technologies to environmental and business challenges.

1. Theme 1: The Importance of lake protection

The central theme of the interviews is the vital role that lakes play in maintaining environmental, social, and economic stability. Despite their shared recognition of this importance, the respondents highlight different facets of lake protection, reflecting their unique geographic, cultural, and professional contexts.

1. **The Norway interviewee's environmental focus:**

His perspective centers around the idea of lakes as vital ecosystems, emphasizing the relationship between water quality and the survival of diverse species. His concern is rooted in the idea that poor management practices could have devastating ecological impacts, potentially leading to the collapse of delicate ecosystems. While describing the high level of life within lakes, he points out that every drop of water contains a vast array of living organisms, and the health of these ecosystems is directly tied to human actions. He positions lake protection as a personal responsibility, suggesting that each individual's awareness and actions are crucial to maintaining ecological balance. The idea of personal responsibility for environmental stewardship is a key take-away here.

2. **Romanian interviewee's socio-economic perspective**

He broadens the discussion by considering the socio-economic implications of lake degradation. His focus is not only on biodiversity but on the broader consequences for human society. He argues that clean lakes support not only the natural environment but human livelihoods as well. The connection between clean lakes and economic well-being is emphasized, particularly through the lens of agriculture, eco-tourism, and the availability of potable water. In his view, lakes are essential not only for ecological sustainability but for ensuring long-term human prosperity. This interconnectedness of environmental health with human well-being suggests a more systemic approach to lake protection, where economic policies, environmental regulations, and sustainable development goals intersect.

3. **Greek interviewee's ecological and cultural integration**

She presents a nuanced argument, framing lakes as integral to both ecological systems and the cultural identity of local communities. In her view, lakes represent more than just natural resources; they are symbols of cultural heritage and community identity. Her argument resonates with local knowledge and traditions that have historically relied on lakes for sustenance and cultural practices. Her framing elevates the conversation beyond ecology and economics to include the intangible cultural value of lakes. This broadens the scope of lake protection by emphasizing the human connection to the environment, suggesting that efforts to protect lakes must consider local traditions and societal values. It stresses the importance of preserving these landscapes as cultural landmarks, in addition to ecological treasures.

2. Theme 2: Challenges in Lake Restoration

The respondents offered different insights into the primary challenges faced when attempting to restore and protect lakes. While pollution and climate change were common concerns, each interviewee emphasized a unique set of obstacles.

1. **Norway interviewee's focus on awareness and education**

He identifies the need to raise awareness as a fundamental first step in lake restoration. He suggests that many people are unaware of the specific threats facing lakes, and education is key to inspiring change. His use of virtual reality (VR) as a tool for simulation highlights the potential for innovative methods of raising awareness. Through immersive experiences, users can visually grasp the effects of pollution and climate change on lake ecosystems, which might otherwise be abstract or difficult to comprehend. He views technology, particularly VR, as a powerful tool to engage the public in a way that is both educational and emotionally resonant. He focuses on social engagement and public understanding as a pivotal mechanism for restoration.

2. **Romanian interviewee's economic barriers**

His analysis centres on financial constraints as one of the key obstacles to effective lake restoration. His perspective underscores the significant initial investment required for green technologies, such as floating solar systems or biofiltration systems, which can help improve water quality. While acknowledging the long-term environmental and economic benefits of such technologies, He highlights that the upfront costs remain a major challenge, particularly in countries with limited resources. Thus, financial support from governments, international organizations, and private investors is critical for scaling these technologies. His call for more financial backing touches on a broader issue of resource allocation, stressing the need for an integrated economic framework that supports sustainable lake management.

3. **Greek interviewee's governance and bureaucracy issues**

She draws attention to the challenges posed by poor governance and bureaucratic inefficiencies. She criticizes the lack of clear policies surrounding lake protection and the overwhelming bureaucracy that often stymies effective action. Local communities, she suggests, are often unable to implement restoration projects due to complex regulations and slow-moving government structures. This suggests that restoring lakes requires more than just technological solutions or financial investments; it also requires systemic reforms in policy and governance. Her argument emphasizes the need for more agile, responsive systems of governance that empower local communities to take action swiftly and effectively.

3. Theme 3: The Role of Technology and Innovation

All three respondents agree that technology has a crucial role to play in lake protection, but they each highlight different innovations and applications.

1. **Norway interviewee's advocacy for Virtual Reality**

His passion for virtual reality (VR) underscores his belief that this technology can serve as an educational tool, allowing users to visualize the impact of pollution and restoration efforts. VR enables people to see the lake's past and potential future conditions, which he believes could dramatically enhance both public engagement and policy-making. He sees VR as more than just a tool for learning, it's an opportunity to connect emotionally with audiences, making them care more deeply about lake restoration. His vision centers on immersive experiences that can lead to tangible changes in behavior, attitudes, and ultimately, policy.

2. **Romanian interviewee's integration of renewable energy**

He focuses on integrating renewable energy technologies into lake restoration, specifically through the use of floating solar panels. He argues that such innovations could address two challenges simultaneously: reducing water evaporation while also generating renewable energy. This dual-purpose approach could make lake conservation more financially viable by providing an economic return. His emphasis on floating solar systems exemplifies his broader vision of sustainable, environmentally friendly technology that can be deployed as part of lake management efforts. His focus on energy generation reflects a broader trend in environmental conservation that seeks to integrate renewable technologies into ecosystem restoration.

3. **Greek interviewee's focus on wastewater treatment**

She emphasizes the importance of modern infrastructure, particularly wastewater treatment, in reducing pollution at the source. She suggests that the implementation of advanced treatment systems can drastically improve water quality in lakes and rivers, mitigating the impact of industrial and urban effluents. This practical solution addresses the root causes of lake degradation and, in her view, should be a foundational component of lake restoration strategies. Her emphasis on infrastructure highlights a more utilitarian approach, focusing on the immediate, tangible solutions needed to restore lake ecosystems.

4. Theme 4: Collaboration in Lake Protection

Collaboration emerged as a key theme in all three interviews, although each respondent presented different strategies for fostering cooperation.

1. **Norway interviewee's digital collaboration**

He highlights the use of collaborative platforms to facilitate multi-stakeholder engagement. By using digital platforms, stakeholders could work together in real time, visualize changes, and contribute to restoration strategies. This approach fosters cross-disciplinary dialogue, allowing scientists, policymakers, and the public to collaborate seamlessly. He sees technology as an essential enabler of cooperation, capable of breaking down barriers between groups and aligning them towards common goals.

2. **Romanian interviewee's entrepreneurial and policy-based leadership**

He advocates for a hybrid model of collaboration that combines entrepreneurial leadership with governmental support. He believes that entrepreneurs can serve as catalysts for innovation, driving new solutions and models for lake protection. However, he stresses that such initiatives need to be supported by clear government policies and financial incentives. This combination of bottom-up innovation and top-down support creates an environment conducive to long-term, sustainable lake management.

3. **Greek interviewee's grassroots engagement**

She places significant emphasis on local, community-driven efforts to restore and protect lakes. She believes that grassroots movements, driven by cultural initiatives and local knowledge, are critical for creating long-lasting change. Local engagement helps ensure that lake protection efforts are tailored to specific cultural and social contexts, making them more effective and sustainable. Her view suggests that collaboration must not only occur between governments and corporations but also between local communities and external stakeholders.

5. Theme 5: The Vision for the Future

All three respondents shared an optimistic vision for the future, where lakes are restored and transformed into models of sustainability.

1. **Norway interviewee's vision of emotional engagement**

He envisions lakes becoming symbols of sustainability, where immersive technologies like VR help convey the urgency of lake restoration in emotionally compelling ways. He believes that storytelling through technology can inspire a global movement for lake conservation. By creating an emotional connection to lakes, he imagines a world where people are not only aware of the environmental crises but also motivated to act.

2. **Romanian interviewee's vision of economic and environmental symbiosis**

He envisions lakes as hubs of eco-tourism and renewable energy, combining environmental conservation with economic development. He imagines a future where lakes become self-sustaining ecosystems that generate economic value through tourism and energy production. This vision reflects his belief that economic incentives can drive ecological restoration, creating a win-win scenario for both the environment and local economies.

3. **Greek interviewee's vision of cultural and ecological harmony**

She calls for a future where the cultural and ecological value of lakes are harmonized. She envisions a world where lake restoration projects are not only about environmental sustainability but also about preserving the cultural significance of these landscapes for future generations. Her vision emphasizes the need to align ecological and cultural objectives, ensuring that both are protected and celebrated.

Results of the interviews are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of interviews

Theme	Norway interviewee	Romanian interviewee	Greek interviewee
Importance of Lake Protection	He underscores the ecological significance of lakes as critical ecosystems for biodiversity and life. He emphasizes individual responsibility in protecting water quality.	He highlights the multi-dimensional importance of lakes, framing them as vital for biodiversity, human health, and economic stability, particularly through agriculture, eco-tourism, and water supply.	She presents lakes as central not only to ecological health but also to cultural heritage, asserting their integral role in the identity of local communities.
Challenges in Lake Restoration	He identifies a fundamental challenge in raising public awareness and fostering education about the impact of lake pollution. He suggests the use of virtual reality (VR) to illustrate the long-term consequences of pollution.	He emphasizes the financial challenges faced in adopting green technologies, particularly the high initial investment required. He advocates for increased financial support and incentives to scale such solutions.	She points to systemic governance issues, particularly the lack of clear, coherent policies and excessive bureaucracy, which hinder effective action at the local level.
Role of Technology and Innovation	He advocates for the use of virtual reality (VR) as a transformative tool for education, enabling users to visualize the effects of pollution and	He suggests integrating renewable energy technologies, such as floating solar panels, into lake restoration projects. These systems provide both environmental	She emphasizes the importance of advanced infrastructure, particularly modern wastewater treatment plants, to mitigate

Theme	Norway interviewee	Romanian interviewee	Greek interviewee
	the potential outcomes of restoration efforts.	benefits (reducing water evaporation) and economic returns through energy production.	pollution at its source and protect lake ecosystems.
Collaboration in Lake Protection	He highlights the potential of digital platforms for fostering real-time, collaborative engagement between various stakeholders in lake restoration, particularly through VR.	He advocates for a model of collaboration that combines entrepreneurial leadership with governmental support, including clear policies and financial incentives to drive innovation.	She emphasizes the significance of grassroots movements and community-driven initiatives, underscoring the role of local engagement and cultural initiative in lake protection efforts.
Vision for the Future	He envisions a future in which lakes are symbolized as models of sustainability, utilizing VR storytelling to foster emotional engagement and inspire global action for lake restoration.	He envisions the transformation of lakes into hubs of eco-tourism and renewable energy, integrating environmental conservation with economic development to create a mutually reinforcing system.	She envisions a future where ecological restoration is aligned with the preservation of cultural heritage, promoting the idea that both ecological and cultural values of lakes must be integrated and protected.
Key Takeaways	His perspective highlights the importance of individual responsibility and the role of innovative technologies (e.g., VR) in raising awareness and engaging diverse audiences in lake conservation.	He underscores the necessity of financial investment and the integration of green technologies to address both environmental and economic challenges in lake restoration.	She emphasizes the need for effective governance, community involvement, and the integration of cultural values in the restoration and protection of lakes.

5. Description of business stakeholders' profiles included in the project database

This section of the market analysis report provides an in-depth overview of the business stakeholders registered in the project database, categorized by their respective roles and contributions to lake protection and restoration. The stakeholders include entities from diverse sectors, highlighting their expected impact in environmental conservation and sustainable economic development of the three lakes assigned as demos sites in this project.

There are 26 business stakeholders from the **Norway demo site** registered in the project database; they represent a diverse range of sectors that contribute to environmental sustainability of Langvatnet lake. The energy sector in this area is represented by power plants and innovative renewable solutions such as solar energy on floating islands and floating power systems with solar panels. Mining industries, including copper mining and sustainable iron ore production, represent a significant part of the industry in resource extraction in Langvatnet lake area. The information services sector supports data management and digital infrastructure, while tourism services contribute to local economic growth. Business clusters and communities of startups foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic synergy. Water resource management is a key focus, with business stakeholders involved in lakes protection, water ecosystem protection, water clusters, and monitoring of water quality, ensuring the sustainable use and conservation of aquatic resources. The environmental sector is well-represented through environmental protection, hydrology and water environment research, environmental monitoring, and environmental research. Additionally, biotechnology and green biotechnology drive advancements in sustainable solutions for Langvatnet lake protection and restoration. Business innovation consulting and knowledge networks for sustainable business provide support for economic development and corporate sustainability. The manufacturing sector is represented by boat manufacturers, which contribute to transportation on this lake.

The business stakeholders involved in **Langvatnet lake protection and restoration** fulfill various **roles** based on their expertise and engagement. Business partners are involved in funding, supporting, and implementing sustainable practices to safeguard water resources. They contribute by investing in environmentally responsible solutions and collaborating with regulatory bodies and research institutions. Technical partners are developing and applying innovative technologies for monitoring, treatment, and restoration of Langvatnet lake ecosystems. Research partners, often collaborating with technical stakeholders, contribute to scientific studies, data collection, and the formulation of evidence-based strategies for Langvatnet lake conservation. Environmental advocacy partners focus on promoting awareness, influencing policy, and engaging communities in conservation efforts.

The **targeted areas in Langvatnet lake protection and restoration** focus primarily on pollution reduction, which appears as the most frequently mentioned priority. This indicates a strong emphasis on mitigating contaminants and preventing further

degradation of water quality. Water quality improvement is another key focus, often linked with pollution reduction and water resource recovery, highlighting efforts to restore and maintain clean and sustainable water systems. Community education is also a significant component, emphasizing the need to raise awareness and involve local communities around Langvatnet lake in conservation efforts. Additionally, biodiversity conservation is a targeted goal, ensuring the protection of aquatic ecosystems and their native species. Sustainable tourism and sustainable fishing appear as strategic approaches to balancing economic activities with environmental preservation in this demo site.

There are 14 business stakeholders in our database, being associated with Trichonis Lake – **the demo site from Greece**; they encompass a variety of sectors that collectively contribute to the region's environmental sustainability and economic vitality. The agricultural sector is prominent, with activities such as irrigation and food production being central to the local economy. Fishing also plays a significant role, providing both sustenance and livelihood for the community. Tourism, particularly religious tourism, is facilitated by the numerous monasteries surrounding the lake, adding cultural and economic value to the area. Environmental initiatives are evident through the implementation of nature-based solutions, such as the establishment of vegetation buffer strips and the integration of wetlands, aimed at enhancing the lake's resilience against pollution and preserving its rich biodiversity. These stakeholders engage in activities that balance economic development with ecological preservation, ensuring the long-term health and sustainability of Trichonis Lake.

The stakeholders involved in the **protection and restoration of Trichonis Lake** have various **roles** in ensuring its ecological balance and sustainability. Business partners constitute the majority, contributing through investments, responsible resource management, and engagement in environmentally friendly practices that promote sustainable economic activities such as tourism, fishing, and agriculture. Partners for environmental protection are advocating and implementing conservation measures, focusing on pollution reduction, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable land and water management strategies. Research partners, especially universities, contribute to scientific studies, monitoring water quality, and assessing ecological health to develop evidence-based conservation strategies. Their expertise ensures the implementation of sustainable restoration techniques and long-term environmental management plans. Additionally, other stakeholders include local authorities, NGOs, or community organizations that support conservation through advocacy, awareness campaigns, and local engagement.

The **targeted areas in Trichonis Lake protection and restoration** primarily focus on sustainable tourism, which appears frequently as a key strategy for balancing economic growth with environmental conservation. It indicates a strong emphasis on eco-friendly tourism practices that minimize ecological impact while promoting the natural and cultural heritage of the lake. Pollution reduction is another predominant priority, highlighting efforts to control and mitigate contaminants affecting water quality and aquatic ecosystems. Closely linked to this is biodiversity conservation, which aims to protect and restore the rich ecological diversity of Trichonis Lake, ensuring the survival of native species and maintaining ecological balance.

Community education also emerges as a crucial aspect, emphasizing the need for local engagement and awareness programs to foster sustainable practices among residents and visitors. Additionally, initiatives for water resource recovery and sustainable fishing demonstrate a commitment to responsible resource management, ensuring that water quality and fish stocks in this lake remain viable for future generations.

There are 50 business stakeholders registered to our database, assigned to the Brates Lake – the **Romanian demo site**. They represent a diverse range of sectors that contribute to both economic development and environmental restoration. The tourism sector is illustrated by businesses promoting eco-friendly activities that attract visitors while preserving the lake's natural beauty. A notable example of successful tourism investment in degraded water landscapes is the Zaga Zaga Resort on the Siret River, where the business owner transformed a previously degraded area into a magnificent resort featuring an artificial delta that enhances local biodiversity and offers unique accommodations. Similar opportunities exist for Brateș Lake, where tourism entrepreneurs are increasingly interested in developing sustainable resorts and recreational facilities. Agriculture and aquaculture are also central activities in the region near Brates Lake, providing economic opportunities while maintaining responsible water use practices to protect the lake's ecosystem. Local fishery businesses emphasize sustainable aquaculture methods, ensuring the conservation of aquatic biodiversity while supplying high-quality products to the market. The real estate sector has contributed significantly to the transformation of the area, with developers creating residential villas and lake-view properties, enhancing the attractiveness of the region for both local and international investors. These real estate developments not only bring economic growth but also encourage the sustainable management of natural resources to maintain the Brates lake's scenic and ecological value. Additionally, consulting firms are supporting the restoration and conservation of Brates Lake by helping businesses secure European Union funding for environmental projects. An emerging area of interest is renewable energy, with entrepreneurs and investors keen on exploring floating solar power systems on Brates Lake.

Notably, the growing entrepreneurial interest in Brates Lake's potential is reflected in the increasing number of business stakeholders registering in the stakeholder database, demonstrating a collective commitment to unlocking new opportunities for sustainable tourism, green energy, and environmental protection.

The stakeholders involved in the **protection and restoration of Brates Lake** assume different **roles** in ensuring the sustainability and ecological balance of the area. The business partners represent a significant weight of the stakeholders, contributing through investments in eco-tourism, real estate development, aquaculture, and sustainable agriculture. Their involvement will drive economic growth while ensuring that business operations align with environmental conservation. Some of these partners are interested in investing in innovative solutions, such as renewable energy, floating solar power, and sustainable infrastructure.

A large group of environmental protection collaborators actively work to monitor, analyze, and implement conservation strategies for the lake. These experts contribute through scientific research, pollution reduction initiatives, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable water management practices.

The public sector partners are regulating activities, securing funding, and enforcing environmental policies that support the protection of Brates Lake. They facilitate collaboration between business entities, environmental experts, and policymakers to implement effective restoration projects. Additionally, technical expertise partners and researchers provide specialized knowledge on water quality monitoring, ecosystem restoration, and innovative environmental solutions.

The **targeted areas in Brateș Lake protection and restoration** focus primarily on pollution reduction, which appears as a dominant priority. It reflects a significant commitment to controlling water contamination, reducing industrial and agricultural runoff, and improving waste management to safeguard the lake's ecosystem. Closely tied to this is water quality improvement, ensuring that restoration efforts enhance the clarity, chemical balance, and overall ecological health of the lake.

Another critical area of focus is community education, which is very important in fostering awareness, engagement, and responsible environmental practices among local residents, businesses, and tourists. Community involvement is also linked to the promotion of sustainable tourism, encouraging eco-friendly activities that contribute to economic development while preserving natural resources.

Biodiversity conservation emerges as another key priority, emphasizing the protection of native species, restoration of habitats, and implementation of ecological safeguards. This aspect is particularly important for maintaining the ecological balance of the Brates Lake and its surrounding environment.

Additionally, sustainable fishing is identified as an important factor in preserving the Brates lake's aquatic life while allowing for responsible economic activity. This approach aligns with water resource recovery, which focuses on efficient water use, ecosystem rehabilitation, and sustainable management of aquatic environments.

6. Conclusions

These quantitative and qualitative studies provide insights into the perspectives of entrepreneurs from Norway, Romania, and Greece regarding lake protection and restoration. The findings emphasize the role of businesses in advancing sustainability and highlight the diverse motivations, challenges, and opportunities they encounter in this endeavour.

The analysis revealed strong interest across all three countries in developing innovative business models that align with long-term sustainability goals. However, the degree of optimism and readiness to engage in such initiatives varies, shaped by factors such as regulatory environments, financial resources, and access to skilled labour. These variations underscore the importance of tailoring strategies to address country-specific needs and barriers.

Moreover, the demographic data contextualize the survey responses, illustrating how factors like education, professional experience, and industry representation influence entrepreneurial engagement in lake sustainability. For instance, the high level of education and significant management experience

among respondents reflect a strong foundation for implementing sustainable practices.

The qualitative study highlights the diverse perspectives on lake protection and restoration across Norway, Romania, and Greece, revealing unique priorities and challenges influenced by geographic, cultural, and economic contexts. While all respondents emphasize the ecological, social, and economic importance of lakes, their approaches diverge. The business owner from Norway underscores individual responsibility and the use of innovative technologies like virtual reality to enhance public awareness and engagement. The business owner from Romania focuses on the socio-economic interdependence of lakes and communities, advocating for financial support and renewable energy integration. The business owner from Greece integrates cultural heritage into environmental restoration, stressing the need for governance reform and grassroots involvement.

These studies lay the groundwork for more elaborated correlational studies, supporting the goals of the ProCleanLakes project, by understanding and addressing the unique perspectives and challenges of both aspiring and existing entrepreneurs,

7. ANNEXES

1. Questionnaire Section 1 (aspiring entrepreneurs)

Link: https://forms.gle/DkwMEeVMRoS2d5nd6

Motives for Starting a Business in Lakes Protection and Restoration

1. I am motivated to start a business to protect natural lakes and promote sustainability.
2. Environmental concerns about lake degradation inspire me to consider entrepreneurship in this field.
3. We expect a growing demand for businesses that focus on lakes' protection and restoration services.
4. Lake protection projects align with my personal values and long-term professional goals.

Entrepreneurial Needs for Business Creation

1. I would need assistance in finding funding opportunities for a business targeting lakes' protection and restoration.
2. Access to market analysis and competitive insights would help me develop my business.

3. I need training on innovative technologies and best practices in lake restoration.
4. Building a network with stakeholders in lake restoration enables the launch of my business.

Constraints and Challenges

1. Securing financial resources for a startup focused on lakes' protection and restoration would be challenging.
2. There is insufficient information available about market readiness for lakes protection and restoration services.
3. Fast-changing environmental regulations for lakes protection and restoration projects is a barrier to starting my business.
4. Competition in the lakes protection and restoration field may be a challenge for new entrepreneurs.

Interest in Innovation and Business Models

1. I am interested in exploring sustainable aquaculture business models related to lakes protection and restoration.
2. The use of algae in circular economy projects seems like a promising business opportunity.
3. Renewable energy projects, such as floating solar farms, could be integrated into my potential business.
4. I am interested in providing sustainable tourism services that contribute to lake restoration efforts.

Funding Opportunities and Revenue Streams

1. I am aware of various funding sources, such as grants or crowdfunding, for starting a business targeting lakes' protection and restoration.
2. There is potential for revenue generation through partnerships with local governments or private entities in lakes' protection and restoration.
3. I believe that nature-based solutions are able to generate stable and scalable revenue streams.
4. Public-private partnerships seem like a viable option for funding my business in lakes protection and restoration.

Note: All responses are assessed through a 5 points Likert scale:

- **Strongly disagree**
- **Disagree**
- **Neutral**
- **Agree**
- **Strongly agree**

2. Questionnaire Section 2 (business owners)

Link: https://forms.gle/YVn8zz7AYy9YPLaz7

Interest in Innovation and New Business Models

1. We are interested in developing innovative business models related to sustainable lakes protection and restoration.

Motives for Expanding the Business Portfolio

1. Expanding our business into nature-based solutions aligns with the company's long-term sustainability goals.
2. Our business is motivated to protect natural lakes as our mission is to bring a positive impact on the environment.
3. Developing new services for lakes' protection and restoration will enhance our business's reputation.
4. Entering the markets for lakes protection and restoration offers significant growth opportunities for our company.

Business Needs for Development

1. Our business needs more access to funding opportunities for lakes protection and restoration projects
2. The development of new technologies for lakes' protection and restoration is essential for expanding our business operations.
3. Our company would benefit from partnerships with government agencies in the area of lakes' protection and restoration.
4. Additional training and coaching services would help our business succeed in lakes' protection and restoration projects.

Constraints and Challenges

1. Regulatory requirements for lakes protection and restoration projects are difficult to address.
2. The cost of implementing lakes' protection and restoration solutions is a barrier to business growth.
3. There is a lack of skilled labour to implement nature-based solutions in our region.
4. We face difficulties accessing markets for eco-friendly lakes protection and restoration services.

Funding Opportunities and Revenue Streams

1. We are aware of multiple funding opportunities for lakes protection and restoration projects, including grants and private investments.

2. Revenue from lakes' protection and restoration services could be a stable source of income for my business.
3. Crowdfunding and public-private partnerships are viable options for financing lakes' protection and restoration solutions.
4. We expect long-term cost savings from adopting nature-based solutions in our business model.

Note: All responses are assessed through a 5 points Likert scale:

- **Strongly disagree**
- **Disagree**
- **Neutral**
- **Agree**
- **Strongly agree**

3. Interview guidelines

Contents:

Interviewer:
Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. As part of our ongoing efforts to protect and restore European lakes, we're seeking insights from key stakeholders like yourself. Your perspective as an entrepreneur is valuable, and we aim to understand the role of businesses in safeguarding these vital ecosystems while pursuing sustainable growth.

General overview:

1. Could you share some insights about your business and how it connects with the principles of lakes' protection and restoration?

2. Why do you believe that it's important to focus your business model on lakes' protection and restoration?

Current challenges:

3. From your perspective, what are the biggest environmental challenges facing European lakes today, especially from an entrepreneurial or business standpoint?

4. How do you think human activities, such as tourism, agriculture, or urban development, have contributed to the degradation of these lakes? What could be done differently?

Entrepreneurial solutions:

5. What role do you see for businesses, particularly entrepreneurs, in contributing to the restoration and protection of European lakes?

6. Have you or your business implemented any specific strategies or practices to minimize negative environmental impacts on lakes or other freshwater systems? If so, could you share some examples?

7. In your opinion, how could businesses work alongside governments, NGOs, and local communities create effective solutions for lake conservation?

Innovation and opportunities:

8. What innovative solutions or technologies do you believe have the potential to help restore and protect European lakes? Are there any emerging trends that you find particularly promising?

9. How could entrepreneurs leverage sustainable business models to contribute to the long-term health of European lakes while still achieving economic success?

10. Are there any examples of businesses or industries that have successfully integrated lake or water ecosystem protection into their core operations? What can we learn from their approaches?

Collaboration and policy:

11. What types of support or collaboration would you like to see from policymakers, environmental organizations, or other stakeholders to help businesses like yours engage more effectively in lakes' protection and restoration efforts?

12. Are there any regulatory or policy barriers that you believe hinder entrepreneurial efforts to support the restoration of European lakes? If so, what changes would you suggest?

Future vision:

13. What is your vision for the future of European lakes, and how do you think businesses could contribute to achieving this vision in the next 10 to 20 years?

14. How do you think public awareness and education could be enhanced to encourage more entrepreneurs and businesses to prioritize lakes' protection?

15. Finally, what advice would you offer to other entrepreneurs who are looking to engage in environmental protection efforts, particularly in the context of freshwater ecosystems like lakes?

4. Registration form in business stakeholder database

Link: https://forms.gle/2tGz4BhRYJEQNhqSA