ProCleanLakes Call for Associated Regions

Funded by the European Union

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Contents

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
AMD	Acid mine drainage
AR	Associated Region
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
RS	Replication Site

1 Background and objectives

The overarching aim of the project ProCleanLakes is to facilitate the deployment of the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters at regional and local levels in Europe through development of a pan-European **Action Plan for remediation and protection of European natural lakes (ENL)** with involvement of a wide range of stakeholders including public that integrates

- Improved ecological and chemical status of ENL, including biodiversity by using new integrative nature-based solutions (NbS)
- Using new 4.0 Digital solutions for supporting ecosystem monitoring, restoration, protection, and knowledge transfer to other regions
- Enabling business activities based on circular economy concept, assuring the transition from Blue to Green Economy
- Raising awareness, empowering, building capacities and co-develop solution with citizens and stakeholders related to problems and disruptive challenges associated with restoration and protection of ENL

The goal of the ProCleanLake´s call for associated regions is to showcase the feasibility, replicability and scalability of the solutions developed within the project, in other areas (the so called 'replication sites'). ProCleanLakes will provide scientific and technical advisory support to 3-5 replication sites conducting training and field workshops for the direct transfer/ exchange and experience between demonstration sites actors and replication sites.

2 Open call objective

ProCleanLakes is seeking to select local and regional authorities from Replication Sites (RS) for scaling up, replication and exploitation of the solutions and approaches developed at the project demonstration sites. The project will use the Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) mechanism for this aim with a total budget of € 300.000.

RSs are expected to team-up with the ProCleanLakes partners to adopt the project´s outcomes and knowledge and integrate them in a Roadmap for restoration and protection of ENL located in the replication sites, which will be integrated in a pan-European Action Plan for remediation and protection of ENL.

3 Eligible beneficiaries

Financial support to third parties can only be awarded to local and regional authorities from an associated region. 'Associated regions' are understood as areas with similar ecosystems problems that can benefit from the demonstration activities and/or less-developed regions, with the view to build capacity to implement the innovative solutions proposed for restoration and protection of ENL.

ProCleanLakes defines local and regional authorities as **governmental or administrative bodies that operate at the local (municipal or city) and regional (state, provincial, or district) levels**. These authorities are responsible for **managing, regulating, or overseeing water resources, including lakes and lake catchments**,

within their respective jurisdictions (e.g. local water departments and agencies, municipalities, environmental protection agencies etc.). These local and regional authorities act as the project beneficiary and, in case of cooperation of more entities, as the Lead partner.

Only legal entities, established in an EU Member State or in Horizon Europe's Associated Countries[1] other than those that are part of the project consortium can apply. **Third parties from the following countries are therefore excluded**: Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Greece, Germany, France, Italy, Norway, Romania and Spain.

Third parties can apply as a single entity or build up a partnership of more partners. Other entities, such as academia, business etc., could be eventually a subcontractor under the leadership of a Lead partner. Each "Associated Region" shall benefit only once from the Financial Support to Third Parties provided under topic HORIZON-MISS-2023-OCEAN-01-04 within the duration of the project. The involvement of 'associated regions' that have not yet participated in any Horizon Europe Mission projects will be encouraged.

EU restrictive measures [2]are also applicable for financial support to third parties.

All official communications are carried out in English, and thus it is expected that all applicants should have a good command of the language.

The successful proposers must ensure the following obligations of the Grant Agreement, namely Articles 12 (conflict of interest), 13 (confidentiality and security), 14 (ethics), 17.2 (visibility), 18 (specific rules for carrying out action), 19 (information) and 20 (record-keeping)3.

The successful proposers commit to **carry out the following activities** in their role as associated region to the ProCleanLakes project:

- Actively participate in capacity building and knowledge transfer from ProCleanLakes to the stakeholders of the Associated Region (citizens, interested businesses, policy makers, authorities, experts in water quality and biodiversity), specifically through:
  - In 2026 – 2027, together with ProCleanLakes, co-organize and participate in:
    - On-site workshop for stakeholders to develop protection & restoration solutions in cooperation with other stakeholders
    - Round table with citizens and other stakeholders to develop protection & restoration solutions;

[1] Associated coutries: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/europe-world/international-cooperation/association-horizon-europe_en

[2] Entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) will not be eligible to participate as recipients of FSTP. Entities must also follow the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506 of 15 December 2022 on measures for the protection of the Union budget against breaches of the principles of the rule of law in Hungary.

[3] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/agr-contr/general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

        - On-line workshop for stakeholders to develop protection & restoration solutions;
    - Participate in workshops on the solutions developed by ProCleanLakes at one of the Demonstration Lake
    - In 2028, participate in:
        - ProCleanLakes final conference
        - ProCleanLakes pan-European online training
- Develop replicable and scalable **guidelines** for ecosystem services upscaling: a guideline that emphasizes the potential of each implemented solution to improve several ecosystem services in collaboration with ProCleanLakes
- Develop a customized implementation **roadmap** by September 2027 of restoration actions for their region to support the replication of ProCleanLakes solutions and tools. The roadmap will be based on the solutions developed in ProCleanLakes and will be technically assisted by ProCleanLakes partners via capacity building, trainings and guidance on structure and content.

The replication sites located in the associated regions must have access to a lake and should show similar environmental conditions and problems as the Demonstration sites of the project ProCleanLakes to be able to replicate and scale up the solutions developed in ProCleanLakes. The Demonstration sites and their major problems are:

1. Trichonis Lake (Greece): chemical pollution partly form agriculture, water abstraction, climate change, biodiversity loss.
2. Brates Lake (Romania): anthropogenic pollution, nutrients enrichment, pollution by pesticides, heavy metals, and possible emerging pollutants
3. Langvatnet Lake (Norway): runoff of acidic waters, acid mine drainage (AMD) and metal pollution

A detailed characteristics of the three demonstration lakes is described in Annex 3.

4 Timeline

Figure 1: Call timeline

Call open date: 1st January 2025

Call deadline: 31st March 2025 24:00

Evaluation and selection: 1st April 2025 – 30th June 2025

Project start date: 1st October 2025 – 31st January 2026

Project end date: 30th September 2027

Duration: 20 – 24 months

The overall timeline of the Call is depicted on Fig.1.

5 Funding & eligible costs

The grant takes the form of a lump sum grant.

The max. granted amount per project is €100,000 and the minimum grant to be requested is €60,000.

No of approved projects: 3 - 5

Funding rate: 100 %

The financial support to each Associated Region will be provided in the form of lump sum which will be defined up-front based on estimated project costs. Each project must include an implementation plan including milestones and deliverables, and a cost estimate justifying the costs and resources in relation to the implementation plan. Third parties will receive funding upon the execution of specific activities/deliverables:

- 50 % of the total contribution at the start of the project
- 50 % of the total contribution upon completion of all milestones and/or deliverables.

Lump sums are eligible if:

- They are set out in the estimated overall budget of the project;
- The work packages are completed and the work is properly implemented by the beneficiaries and/or the results are achieved, in accordance with the project description.

Activities which are already funded under another third-party funding are NOT eligible.

5.1 Eligible costs categories

Instructions for calculation of project costs are stated in Annex 2. Eligible costs are:

- Personnel costs (based on average unit costs)
- Travel costs and subsistence
- Other goods & services
- Subcontracting
- Overheads

5.2 Other participants involved in the action

Associated partners must implement the action tasks attributed to them; however, they may not charge contributions to the action and the costs for their tasks are not eligible.

Third parties giving in-kind contribution to the action (i.e., personnel, equipment, other goods, works and services which are free-of-charge). Third parties giving in-kind

contributions do not implement any action tasks. They may not charge contributions to the action and the costs for the in-kind contributions are not eligible.

Subcontractors may participate in the action, of necessary for the implementation. Subcontractors must implement their action tasks in accordance with the project work plan. The beneficiaries´ costs for subcontracting are considered entirely covered by the lump sum contributions for implementing the work packages (irrespective of the actual subcontracting costs incurred, if any).

6 Submission

Following documents are to be submitted before the project deadline by the project Lead:

- Project application based on a call-specific proposal template (see Annex 1)
- Budget breakdown (see Annex 2)

Both documents must be sent **by the 31st March 24:00 CET** to the e-mail address lada.fialova@boku.ac.at Proposals submitted after this deadline or by any other means will not be accepted for evaluation.

English is the official language for the open call and it is mandatory to submit all documents in English to be considered a valid submission.

All Call documents can be found on https://procleanlakes.eu/news/.

7 Evaluation

The open call and the selection process of the third parties to be funded follow the: standards of excellence, transparency, objectivity, fairness principles, equal treatment, conflict of interest and confidentiality which govern European Commission Calls. All received applications will be evaluated by an evaluation board composed by the ProCleanLakes experts. The selection process will be composed of two steps:

1. Eligibility screening: All ineligible proposals will be excluded

2. Evaluation of the Technical annex. The evaluation board will rate the proposal against a scoreboard linked to the following criteria:

- **Environmental suitability**: Does the proposed site have environmental conditions, hydrological characteristics, lake size and morphology, and climate vulnerability similar to the demonstration sites?
- **Water quality indicators / pollution level**: Is the lake experiencing similar environmental challenges as the demonstration sites (e.g., pollution, habitat loss)?
- **Pollution Sampling Data:** Are there existing data or studies on pollution levels in different areas of the lake, especially near potential sources?
- **Pollution Sources:** Does the proposed site have similar pollution sources as the demonstration lakes?
- **Replication potential:**

  - Can the solutions applied at the demonstration sites (e.g., water quality management, habitat restoration, invasive species control) be effectively replicated in the proposed site?
  - Does the site have the capacity to monitor key ecological indicators (e.g., water quality, biodiversity) to measure the success of the restoration efforts?
  - Is there a plan to adapt restoration strategies based on initial results and changing conditions?
- **Economic feasibility:** Is the local economy reliant on the lake (e.g., fishing, tourism)? Will the restoration efforts provide direct economic benefits (e.g., through tourism, fisheries, water resources for agriculture)?
- **Social and stakeholder engagement:** Will the local community be supportive and engaged in the restoration efforts (e.g., through consultations, volunteering, or other participatory approaches)?
- **Environmental impact and urgency:** Do the lake face urgent environmental risks (e.g., severe pollution, biodiversity loss) that make it a priority for restoration?
- **Site readiness and capacity:** Is the site ready for immediate implementation of the proposed restoration activities, or is additional preparatory work required?

3. Interview: Preselected replication sites will be invited for and interview to assess the real engagement of the applicant.

4. Final selection: The top three replication sites will be chosen based on the overall score in the detailed evaluation. The selection will prioritize regions with high replication potential, environmental urgency, and the ability to sustain long-term benefits.

The selected third parties will conclude a Subgrant Agreement compliant with the ProCleanLakes Grant Agreement and the Consortium Agreement.

8 Privacy

Personal data that will be collected, will be processed and published in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679, also known as GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation).

9 Contacts

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YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@ProCleanLakes

ANNEX 1: Application form

Instructions:

An editable form of the proposal template will be available in the download section of the Call website.

Max. length of the proposal: 7 pages in total

Call for ProCleanLakes replication sites

Title of the planned action	*Max. 150 characters*
Acronym	
Beneficiary	*Only local and regional authorities are eligible as beneficiaries*
Country	
Website (optional)	
Contact details of the person representing the applicant	*Name, surname, function, institution, e-mail contact*
Contact details of the person authorized to sign Subgrant Agreement	
Abstract	*Max. 1500 characters*

Challenge	*Please clearly define the challenge in your associated region and why you believe that your lake ecosystem restoration and protection could support the goals for the EU Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters" reflecting the objectives of ProCleanLakes (max 1000 characters)*
Related challenges	*The selected RSs must show a certain degree of similarity with the ProCleanLakes demonstration sites to enable replication and scale up of the solutions developed at ProCleanLakes demonstration sites (for their detailed description, see Annex 3).* *Please clearly describe in what extent are the following criteria applicable to your replication site (max 3 pages):* **Climate and environmental similarity:** What environmental conditions does the RS have similar to the ProCleanLakes demonstration sites? **Hydrological Characteristics:** What hydrological features of the RS (e.g., inflow/outflow patterns, watershed characteristics, that could influence pollution dynamics) are comparable with the demonstration sites? **Lake size and Morphology** **Climate Vulnerability:** Is the region vulnerable to climate change impacts (e.g., drought, extreme weather)? **Current water quality status** (nutrient levels, acidification, contaminants, biological indicators) **Pollution Sampling Data** (Are there existing data or studies on pollution levels in different areas of the lake, especially near potential sources?) **Pollution Sources** (Does the proposed site have similar pollution sources as the demonstration lakes?) **Suitability for Replicating Restoration Solutions:** How can the solutions applied at the demonstration sites (e.g., water quality management, habitat restoration, invasive species control) be effectively replicated in the proposed site? **Monitoring and Data Collection Capacity:** What capacity does the RS have to monitor key ecological indicators (e.g. water quality, biodiversity) to measure the success of the restoration efforts?

	Adaptive Management: What plan does the replication site have to adapt restoration strategies based on initial results and changing conditions? **Economic Dependency:** In which extent is the local economy reliant on the lake (e.g., fishing, tourism)? **Local Economic Benefits:** What direct economic benefits (e.g., through tourism, fisheries, water resources for agriculture) can the restoration provide? **Funding and Co-Funding Availability:** Is there existing funding or co-funding available to complement the grant provided through this program? If yes, please specify. **Long-Term Financial Sustainability:** Is there a financial plan for maintaining and monitoring the lake post-restoration? **Community Involvement**: How will be the local community engaged in the restoration efforts (e.g., through consultations, volunteering, or other participatory approaches)? **Social and Cultural Benefits: How w**ill the restoration improve the quality of life, recreation, or cultural value for local residents? **Local Governance Support:** Is there institutional or government support for the project, ensuring alignment with local policies and long-term sustainability? If yes, please, specify. **Cultural and Historical Significance:** What cultural or historical value does the lake hold? **Social Equity**: Will the project promote social equity (e.g., water access, ecosystem services)? Please, specify.
Environmental Impact	*Please, describe the following criteria (max 1 page).* **Urgency of Restoration of the RS:** Does the lake face urgent environmental risks (e.g., severe pollution, biodiversity loss) that make it a priority for restoration? Which? **Positive Environmental Impact:** What measurable environmental improvements, such as enhanced water quality or increased biodiversity will be caused by the restoration activities? **What do you hope to gain from the ProCleanLakes project for your RS?**

Implementation / work packages	
List of work packages	*Please, describe what work packages (WP) do you plan to have in the project. For each WP, provide a list of deliverables*

	and milestones. More rows can be added to the table. Max 1 page.
WP1:	
WP2:	
WP3:	
WPxx:	

ANNEX 3: Detailed characteristics of ProCleanLakes demonstration lakes

Demonstration site 1 (DS1)- Trichonis Lake (Greece)

General data: Trichonis lake is the largest lake in Greece, covering an area of 95.8 km^2, a maximum length of 21.5 km, a maximum depth of 58 m, and surface elevation 15 m, with a water temperature varying from 4° to 25° C), with great biodiversity and a rich wild life (endemic species of algae, birds and fishes).

Pressures and stressors that affect the ecological status of DS One of the main pressures consist in human activities, which have degraded large parts of the shoreline habitats, but the following can be added: chemical pollution partly from agriculture (mainly from the wastes of olive oil mills), water abstraction, climate change, biodiversity loss.

Historical and existing data/previous actions: *data from previous research projects: "Hydrobiological surveillance for a biotypological classification and management of inland waters of Greece- The Aetolian-Akarnanian water basin, Central Western Greece" (1984-1987)* – creating databases related to hydrobiological parameters in order support the adoption of ecosystem protection plan; "*Aerobic post-treatment of the anaerobic pre-treated liquid waters from olive oil mills by using a rotating disc reactor with longitudinal flow*" (1984-1985) - developing treatment solutions in order to minimize the environmental impact of agriculture waste water within Trichonis lake area; "*Limnological Studies of the Aetoloakarnanian Lakes*" (1985-1988) – limnological framework for reconstruction; publications and organization of meetings of the past years) are available and will be used as a part of the NbS development.

Importance of lake: Trichonis lake is used mostly for agriculture/irrigation/food supply/fishing and secondly for recreation/tourism (religious tourism due to many monasteries around) providing added value to the community.

Proposed solutions: After quality assessment of the ecological status based on biodiversity, NbS will be applied, e.g., vegetation buffer strips extended in different habitat types, installed around the lake or on specific sections, are proposed as an NbS, Also, wetland integration might be considered as a possible NbS solution in order to increase the resilience of Trichonis lake to point source pollution.

Demonstration site 2 (DS2) - Brates Lake (Romania)

General data: Brateş lake had a water surface of 27,000 ha (about a century ago), representing an important pillar of blue economy sustainability in the Romanian Lower Danube Region. Starting with the third decade of the 20th century, the lake

underwent important transformations, mostly of anthropogenic origin turning Brates Lake into a heavily impacted ecosystem with a total surface of only 2,120 ha.

Pressures and stressors that affect the ecological status of DS: Currently, Brateș Lake is heavily affected by anthropogenic pollution, having an average water depth of approximately 1-1.2 m. and recording nutrient enrichment; pollution by pesticides, heavy metals, and possible emerging pollutants; accumulation of large quantities of sediments which are transported by the affluent; water quality of the affluent.

Historical and Existing data/previous actions: Few historical data are available. No holistic monitoring had been performed in the last decades, fact that creates a serious knowledge gap and imposes pre-monitoring of ecological status.

Importance of lake: Important resources (fish, wood, reeds, reeds, pastures, gardens, hunting fund, tourist potential, aesthetic value) and ecological services (hydrological control of waters in the Chineja river basin, improvement of water quality through sedimentation and filtration of suspensions and retention of nutrients from stored water, environment for reproduction and growth of the fry of semi-migratory and stagnophilic fish. Ihtiofauna of Brateş Lake is varied and abundant, represented by 46 species of fish belonging to 31 genera and 11 families.

Proposed solutions: Vegetation buffer strips extended in different layers and vegetation types, planted around the lake or on a section, are proposed as an NbS. Also, solutions for counteracting the sediment accumulation on the entire lake area will be applied (sediment barriers/nature sedimentation areas) - floating wetlands can be considered as a solution.

<u>Demonstration site 3 (DS3)-Langvatnet lake (Norway)</u>

General data: Langvatnet lake is located in Fauske Municipality in Nord land county, northern Norway, approximately 10,7 km long and 0,9 km wide, stretching in NW-SE direction, with a total area of 5,63 km^2

Pressures and stressors that affect the ecological status of DS: The whole mining area drains into Lake Langvann in the Sjønstå River system which creates the major ecological threat: runoff of acidic waters (acid mine drainage, AMD) and metal pollution. AMD occurs as a result of oxidation of sulphide-rich rocks. The water flows through and out old mine shafts, adits, smelter, and waste rocks piles both via rapidly infiltrating surface waters and groundwaters.

Historical and Existing data/previous actions: Historical data recorded in the last decades are available. Remediation efforts to mitigate the effect of mining activities were performed during various years. Underground mines of the northern part of the mining district were flooded with water in order to prevent the oxidation of sulphide minerals and further the openings were sealed using concrete plugs. This however did

not lead to decrease in heavy metals concentration. Measurements were also taken in 2001-2005 when control of the outlets from mines.

Importance of lake: The Langvatnet lake was for decades an environmental catastrophe for Nordland County due to continuous leaching of heavy metals from historical mining operation. Due to this, the area could not be properly used by local people for fishing, reindeer farming, husbandry, and leisure time activities.

Proposed solutions: Vegetation buffer strips extended in different layers and vegetation types, planted around the lake or on a section, are proposed as an NbS. Also, floating wetlands could be a solution in order to decrease the level of pollutants concentration.