



Nature-based solutions in Romania to build climate resilient local communities

In a nutshell

The *Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve* is highly vulnerable to climate-induced droughts and floods. In response, local communities have developed ecological restoration projects, turning agricultural lands into wetlands, thus bolstering biodiversity, sustainable tourism, and fisheries. This successful model would be applied to develop financial mechanisms, governance adaptations, and stakeholder engagement, driving a shift towards a climate-smart economic framework.

OBJECTIVES

- Transition drained wetlands into community-managed resilient ecosystems.
- Develop climate-smart financial, economic and governance models.

ACTIONS

- Publish a study assessing the implementation of nature-based solutions.
- Gain public endorsement of new governance model at regional level.



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RESULTS (IMPACT)

In *Romania's Danube Delta*, efforts to restore former wetlands and build climate-resilient communities gained traction through C4C. The project supported the transition from drained agricultural lands back to biodiverse, community-managed wetlands. This shift enhanced local livelihoods through sustainable tourism, fisheries, and conservation, while improving resilience to climate-induced droughts and floods. The project team published a study assessing the implementation of Nature-Based Solutions (NbS, using natural processes to address societal challenges), helping anchor the case for broader policy reform and new governance models at the regional level.

One major challenge identified was the tension between EU subsidies promoting agriculture, including land drainage, and the EU's own climate and biodiversity goals. Addressing this lack of coherence became central to the project's advocacy efforts. Lessons from similar forestry-based NbS in Europe were valuable for adapting governance and financial strategies suited to the Delta's unique conditions.

Progress was made in developing tailored financial mechanisms to incentivise wetland restoration, though, wider institutional support is still needed. Community engagement remained strong, supported by inclusive discussions and facilitated through the C4C network.

Looking ahead, the project aims to scale this model, supported by climate-smart governance and EU-aligned incentives that reflect the ecological and economic value of wetlands.



GOOD PRACTICES | POLICY LESSONS

By restoring former agricultural lands into wetlands, the initiative is enhancing biodiversity, supporting sustainable fisheries and tourism, and creating a model for climate-smart development that is both ecological and community-led.

One of the most valuable practices was aligning ecological restoration with local identity and long-term economic interests. The vision is clear: transform drained lands into community-managed, resilient ecosystems. Drawing inspiration from forestry-based NbS models elsewhere in Europe, the project adapted strategies to fit the unique wetland dynamics of the Delta.

A key lesson is the importance of designing financial mechanisms that reflect local realities. Current EU subsidies often incentivise intensive agriculture, counterproductive in this fragile ecosystem. Policy must evolve to support wetland restoration through targeted funding, reducing subsidies for harmful practices while promoting regenerative ones.

The project also underscored the value of stakeholder engagement and cross-sector governance. Regional endorsement of new governance models showed that change is possible when driven from the ground up. With the right policy support, the *Danube Delta* can become a flagship for nature-based climate resilience in Europe.

