

# LIFE WILDisland



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LIFE Platform Meeting on Forest Restoration in Europe

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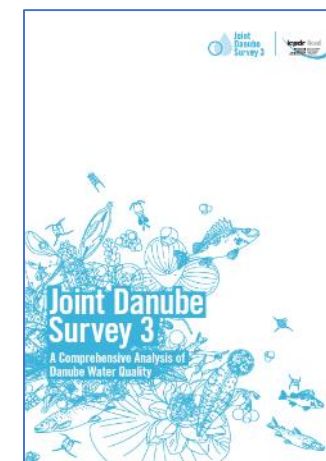




- Islands – „flagship habitats“ for intact river ecosystems;
- WILDIslands – key sites for characteristic riparian species;
- at the Danube, >80 % of the Little ringed Plover breed on islands;



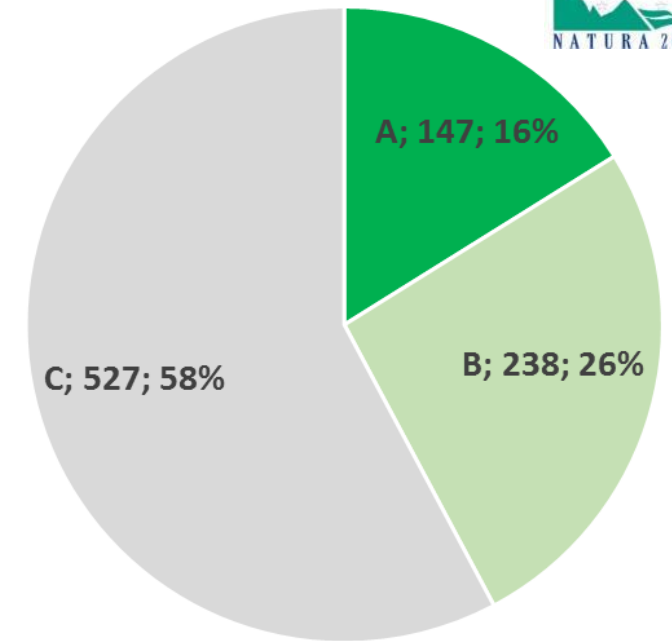
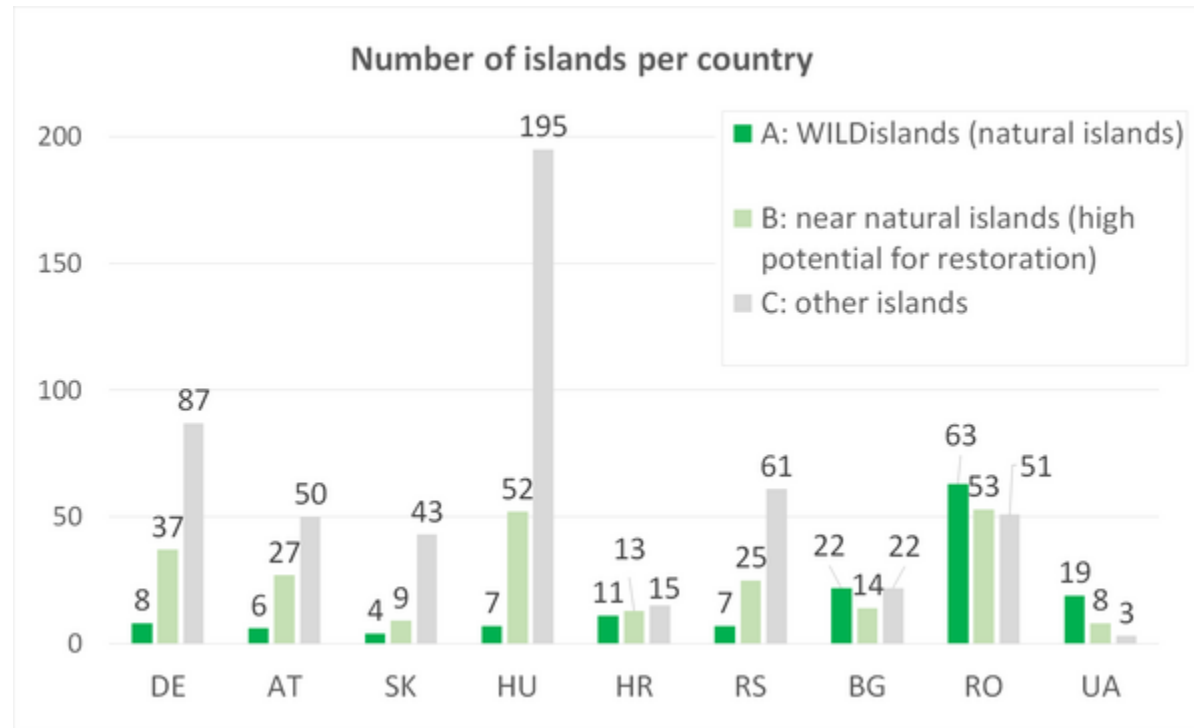
Photos: Donau-Auen National Park/Franz Kern

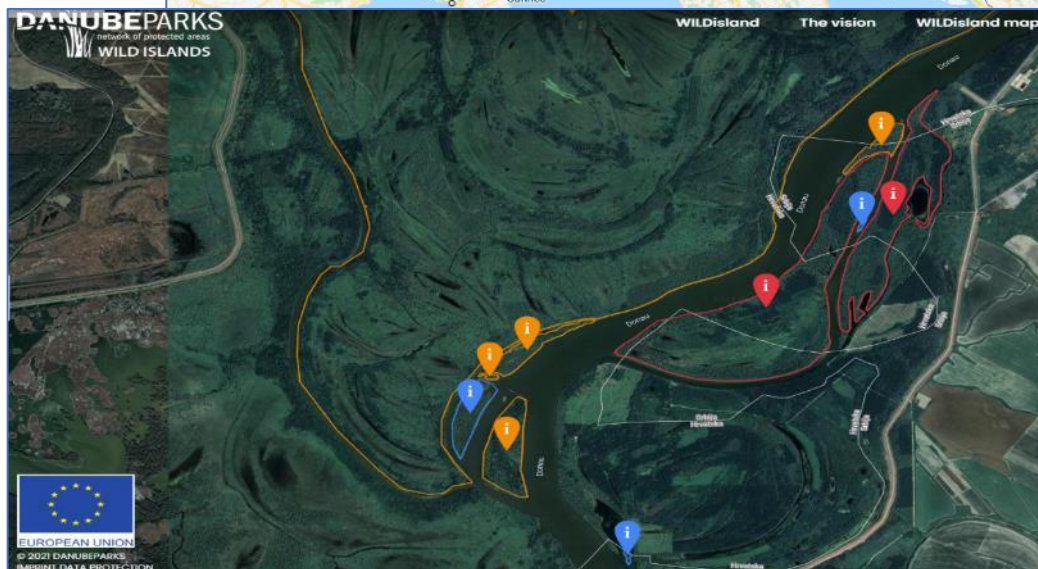
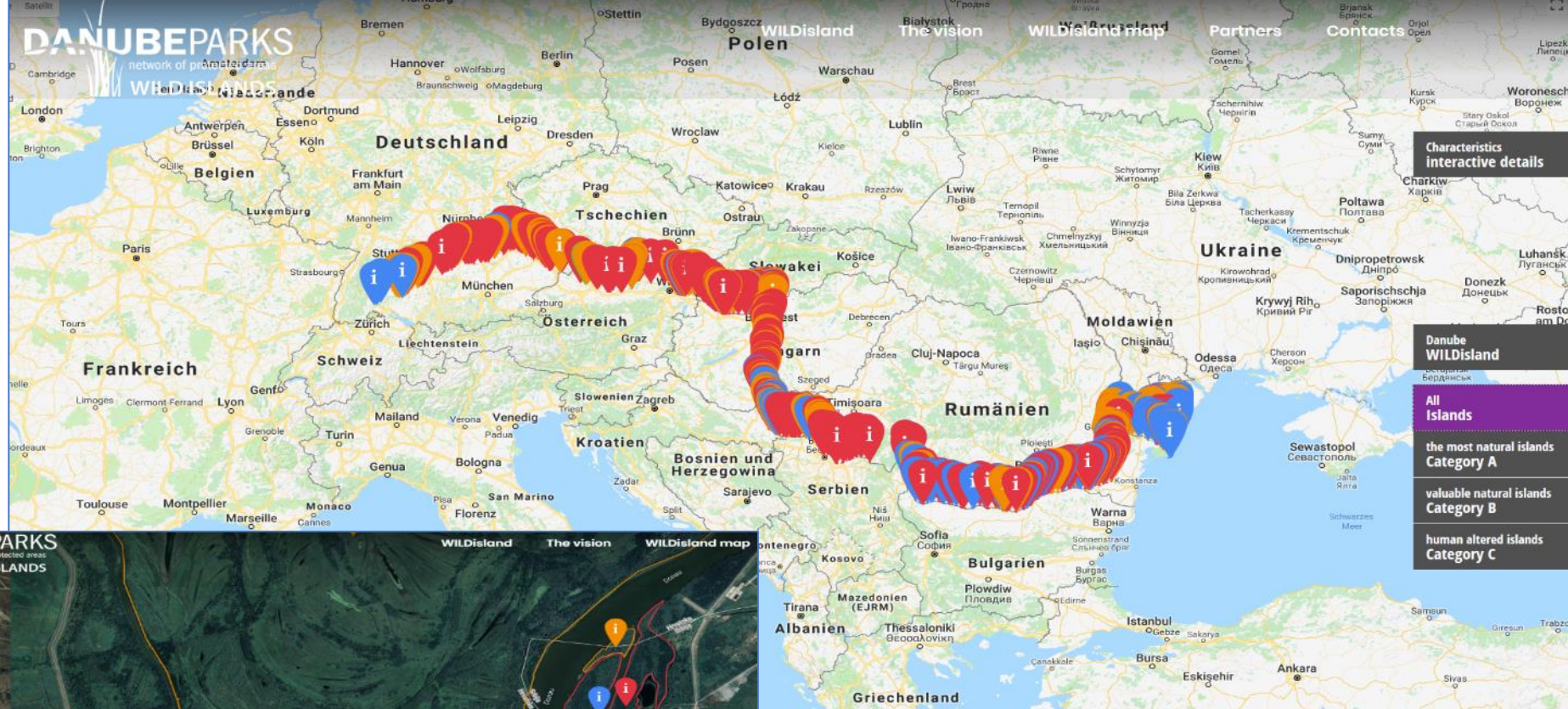




# LIFE WILDisland concept

Total: **912 islands - 138,415 ha**







## Softwood Forests 91E0\*

### Alluvial Forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alna-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)

- Bad/unfavorable conservation status in all biogeographic regions
- 90% of the Danube islands host softwood forests
- on 65% of the islands, riparian softwood forests is the dominant habitat type
- up to 34% of the area of 91E0\* in Natura 2000 is located on Danube islands
- 40% of the softwood forests on islands is in a nature-near status





# LIFE WILDisland: Danube WILDisland corridor

**Project period:** 1<sup>st</sup> Sept. 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2027

**Budget:** 14,2 Mio. € (EU 63,98%)

## Objectives:

- Establishment of **ecological corridor for dynamic riverine habitats** (Danube islands as stepping stones);
- Promotion of river dynamics & non-intervention management & **riverine wilderness**;
- **Restoration** of islands and dynamic riverine habitats;
- Improvement **of conservation status of 91E0\*** as „umbrella habitat“;
- **Cross-sectoral cooperation** (nature conservation, waterway, hydropower, forestry);
- WILDisland habitat eco-corridor as **best practice Green & Blue Infrastructure for large rivers in Europe**;





# LIFE WILDisland Partnership

## Project Partnership:

8 Danube countries, 15 partners, 59 strategic partners

## DANUBEPARKS (Network of Protected Areas):

Donau-Auen National Park(AT)

BROZ (SK)

Duna-Ipoly National Park Directorate (HU)

Duna-Dráve National Park Directorate (HU)

Fertő Hanság National Park Directorate (HU)

Nature Park Kopacki rit (HR)

Persina Nature Park Directorate (BG)

Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (RO)

## • Waterway administrations:

• Viadonau (AT)

• ADUVIZIG (HU)

## • Hydropower:

• UNIPER (D)

• Verbund Austrian Hydropower (AT)

## • Forst Enterprises:

• Croatian Forest (HR)

• Vojvodinašume (RS)

• ROMSILVA (RO)

**Co-Financing:** Energy Efficiency and Environmental Protection Fund (HR), Ministry for Agriculture (HU), Bundesministerium für Landwirtschaft, Regionen und Tourismus (AT), NÖ Landesfischereiverband (AT), Fischereierevierversand II (AT)



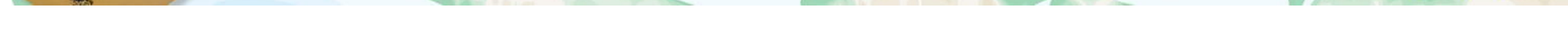


## LIFE WILDisland: Highlights



- total budget 14,2 Mio. € (>70% for concrete conservation actions) to restore 34 Danube islands
- 11 measures for hydro-morphological restoration (7.9 Mio. € = 55%) (e.g. improved waterbodies on > 48 km)
- 12 forest restoration actions (transformation of plantations, IAS Management (1.9 Mio. €)
- Danube-wide conservation of WILDislands (136.000 € - strategic partnerships e.g. with Ramsar, IUCN)

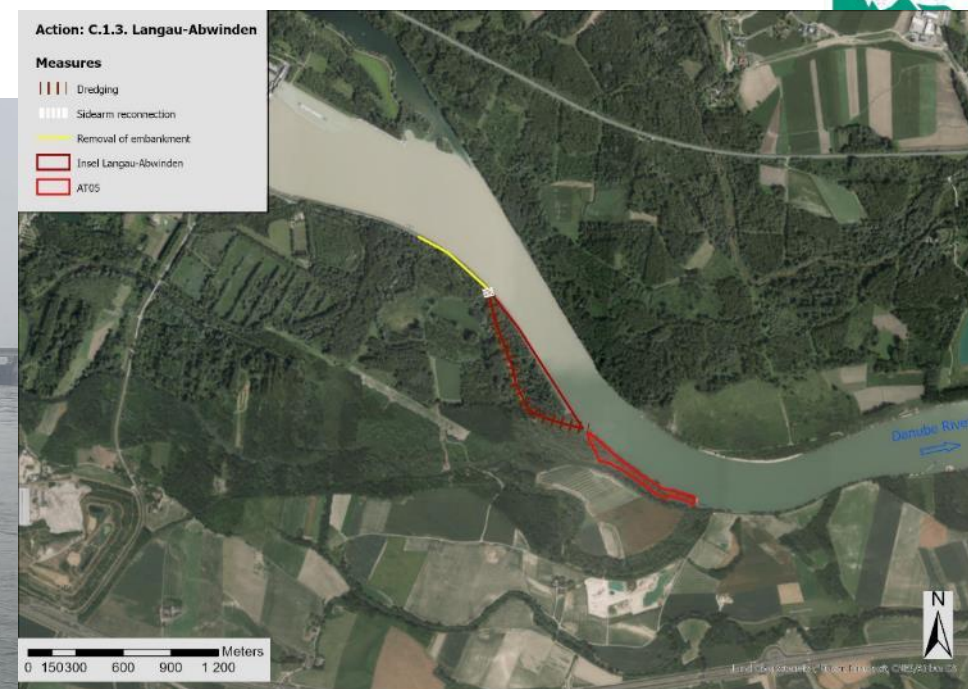






## LIFE WILDisland: Direct conservation

- Restore 91E0\* alluvial forests on 102 ha through the implementation of **three island restoration measures** in Upper Danube sections **heavily impacted by hydropower**;





## LIFE WILDisland: Direct conservation



- Implement five ecological engineering projects and **optimize Grey Infrastructure (navigation)**, resulting in the **revitalization of river dynamics and restoration of the hydrological regime** for 91E0\* alluvial forests of 437 ha in close cooperation with waterway administrations;





## LIFE WILDisland: Direct conservation



- Restore 6 islands and habitats of 91E0\* on 376 ha in the Middle and Lower Danube through **sediment management**.





## LIFE WILDisland: Direct conservation

- Restore 351,9 ha of 91E0\* alluvial forests through **transformation of hybrid poplar plantations, reforestation, and invasive alien species management** in cooperation with the forestry sector





## LIFE WILDisland: Direct conservation



- Debrina-island Forest restoration activities **Lessons learned in 2024**

- Trying new methods can cause failures – experiences for future forest restoration and management !
- Inpredictable floodwaves (2002, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2023-2024, 2024) increase the risk of the activities

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- The climate change significantly affects the output of the restoration (floodwave and extreme heatwave within three month)
- The „dense rows” rejuvenation method (in parcel T3- no activities in 2024) seems the more effective and resilient (good former experience in LIFE DanubelslandForest on Szabadság-island)
- A project duration (app. 3-4 years for implementation) can be too short for a complex forest restoration





## LIFE WILDisland: Policy work

- Develop the conservation strategy and prepare the multilateral WILDisland RAMSAR Regional Initiative for the WILDisland habitat corridor (147 islands Cat. A), with new (strictly) protected areas on 196,7 ha
- Deliver best-practice example for transnational cooperation: 9 Protected Areas, actions covering 39 Natura 2000 sites;
- Help provide better protection for some 900 islands across more than 138,000 ha;
- Raise awareness for pristine nature in Europe, through a Danube-wide campaign, reaching >8 Million people to also enhances the visibility of the Natura 2000 network.





## Expected impacts

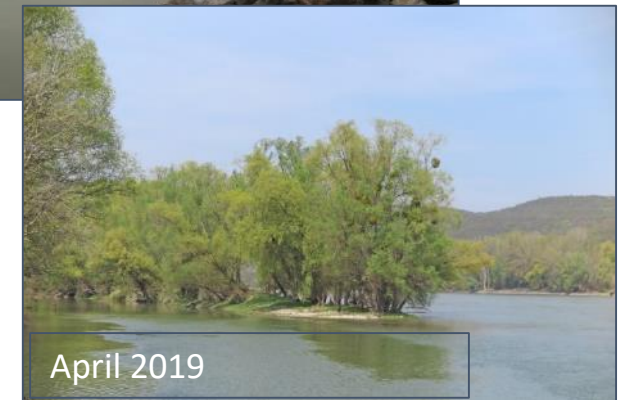
- 34 Danube islands restored (1,267 ha)
- Restoration of water bodies (>48 km)
- Forest restoration of 91E0\* (352 ha, 12 sites)
- Danube-wide conservation concept for WILDIslands (coherent management for 147 islands on 14,018 ha; new strictly reserves on 196,7 ha)



Nov. 2018



Dec. 2018



April 2019



## Main principles

- **No softwood forests without redynamization of hydrological regimes**
- “Let the river do the work”
- Cross-sector approach
- Strategic Danube-wide partnership (DANUBEPARKS Network)
- Best practice for other large rivers in Europe (cooperation with Rhine, Sava ...)
- Anchoring on policy level (EU Green Infrastructure, ICPDR, Ramsar, IUCN)



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Thank you for your attention!

