

# **European Living Lakes Association - ELLA**

## **2023/2024 Biennial Strategy**

### **Background**

One central environmental challenge in Europe is to develop an appropriate strategy to protect and restore our aquatic ecosystems, which have significantly deteriorated over the last decades. Various factors, among others climate change, eutrophication, pollution, water abstraction and land use changes, have considerable negative effects on the health of these ecosystems and their biodiversity. Lakes and wetlands fulfill crucial functions that contribute to climate regulation, economic development and physical and mental well-being. The EU Green Deal requests all Member States to restore damaged ecosystems and improve their ecological status. The European Living Lakes Association (ELLA), as a civil society network, aims to play a significant role in supporting this objective considering that there is a need for more collaboration between experts, companies, environmentalists and other interest groups to protect European lake regions.

### **ELLA's Mission**

ELLA's mission is to enhance the protection, restoration and rehabilitation of lakes, wetlands, and other terrestrial water bodies in Europe - including their catchments.

### **ELLA's Vision**

All lakes, wetlands and other freshwater bodies in Europe shall be healthy ecosystems and - where they are being used by humans - should be sustainably used without damaging the environment.

### **ELLA's Objectives**

ELLA aims at a fruitful collaboration between all relevant stakeholders in lake regions, i.e. regional and local authorities, businesses, civil society organisations and scientific institutions to promote the protection and restoration of lakes and their connected ecosystems.

### **ELLA Goals 2023 – 2024**

- Continuously extending the ELLA network aiming at representing 20+ lakes and wetlands from Europe;
- Focus on the protection of ecosystem services of lakes and wetlands in order to underline their importance as hotspots of biodiversity;
- Support activities that underline the human right for a clean and healthy environment and access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation;
- Promote important and appropriate legal frameworks in Europe such as the Water Framework Directive and the UN Watercourses Convention and, linked to that, effective and affordable measures to improve the quality of aquatic ecosystems in Europe;
- Promote activities on climate mitigation and adaptation in lake regions in Europe;
- Initiate new projects on sustainable development of lake regions in Europe in collaboration with other lake organizations or networks;

- Involve the business sector in strategies and projects for the protection of aquatic ecosystems and their biodiversity in Europe;
- Represent ELLA at events in Europe relevant for the protection of lakes and wetlands;
- Promote successful measures for habitat management and restoration, education and community development, sustainable agriculture and fishery and sustainable tourism;
- Intensify the focus on applied science, participatory monitoring, and participatory lake stewardship;
- Intensify the involvement of youth.

### ***ELLA Tools***

ELLA will evolve within the next five years using a wide range of tools and methods. The most relevant are model projects carried out by and in collaboration with the ELLA member organizations and other partners. Furthermore, ELLA events and conferences, publications and a website shall provide a platform for exchange and cooperation between NGOs and other interested parties in Europe and beyond.

### ***Individual Goals of the ELLA Members***

Besides the common goals of ELLA as a European network, all ELLA members identified concrete goals to achieve during the next five years in order to improve the situation of “their” lakes and wetlands. These goals are based on individual challenges lakes and lake regions are exposed to and on the activities and capacities of the ELLA member organization. Municipalities in lake regions have a special responsibility for the protection of “their” lakes and wetlands. They also have a special interest, because often they are directly affected by the degradation or destruction of lakes and their ecosystem services. Most of the ELLA members are already collaborating successfully with municipalities.

### ***ELLA Biennial Strategy 2023 – 2024***

ELLA organizes regular workshops (every 1-2 months) on pressing topics for the preservation and sustainable management of European lakes and wetlands, bringing together experts from different organizations (NGOs, scientific institutions, conventions, etc.) and countries. The topics of these workshops include ecosystem restoration, carbon sequestration potential of lakes and wetlands, climate and biodiversity friendly agriculture, and more. The workshops focus on best practice examples to promote climate and biodiversity protection and are offered virtually to allow a wide participation. The final conference, planned for the last quarter of 2023, will bring together over 100 experts & decision makers to further discuss urgent topics. The events organized by ELLA support an intensive exchange and discussions about the current state of scientific research and applied methods. A Europe-wide transfer of the results to lake and wetland managers, environmental NGOs, political decision makers and stakeholders from the private sector will be realised.

ELLA will motivate and support private sector actors (companies) in lake regions - starting in the four pilot countries Germany, Hungary, Estonia and Spain - to integrate biodiversity as a significant aspect of sound corporate management. Practical tools such as a Biodiversity Check designed for lake regions will be applicable for larger companies as well as SMEs. The project will promote the consideration of biodiversity in decision processes of companies and will help to foster a local (legal) framework with favourable conditions for the development of pro-biodiversity-businesses in lake regions. To achieve the goals of the ambitious EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, a strong involvement of the private sector is required.