Shared Prosperity and Transboundary Water Cooperation in South-east Europe

UNESCO IHP - WWAP

Euro-Mediterranean Water Forum 2026 · 29 September – 2 October · La Nuvola, Rome

KEY INFORMATION

Date	29 September 2026
Time	12:00 -13:00
Room	Atlante
Format	Presentation
Language(s)	English

SUMMARY

Global changes, including climate change, and growing demands are increasing pressure on finite water resources, underscoring the growing importance of water diplomacy for strengthening regional cooperation, preventing disputes, and advancing sustainable water governance. However, comparatively little attention has been devoted to strengthening the human and institutional capacities required to negotiate and sustain transboundary water cooperation, highlighting the need to equip water leaders with strong competencies in water diplomacy.

IHP (via the UNESCO Office in Venice) and WWAP organizes this high-level roundtable discussion to explore opportunities, priorities, capacity needs, and potential partnerships for engagement on water diplomacy in South-East Europe.

Bringing together high-level decision makers, youth representatives, and development partners, the forum will generate evidence-based recommendations to inform UNESCO's future engagement on water diplomacy while contributing regional perspectives to the broader international dialogue leading to the 2026 UN Water Conference.

AGENDA & SPEAKERS

Time	Speaker Name & Title	Organization	Role / Topic
12:00	**Introduction**		
	Miguel Doria, Coordinator	UNESCO WWAP	Speaker
	Welcome remarks		
	Magdalena Landry, Director UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, Venice	UNESCO	Speaker
	Maciej Zalweski, Vice-Chairperson Group II, Eastern Europe, IHP	UNESCO Chair on Ecohydrology and Applied Ecology	Speaker
	Mariam Diallo, Senior Deputy Secretary General	Union from the Mediterranean	Speaker
12:20	**Ministerial Messages**		
	Sofjan Jaupaj	Ministry of Environment, Albania	Speaker
	Muamet Hoxha	Minister of Environment and Physical Planning, North Macedonia (video message)	Speaker
	Hamdo Tinjak	Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Speaker
	Tanja Miškova	Ambassador-in-Charge of Water Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Slovenia	Speaker
12:50	**Key reflections and Conclusions**		
	Magdalena Landry, Director UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, Venice	UNESCO	Speaker

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

Water is strategic for sustainable development, peace, and international cooperation. Across Europe, more than 150 transboundary rivers and numerous shared aquifers connect countries, economies, and ecosystems. Global changes, including climate change, are altering hydrological regimes, increasing the frequency and intensity of droughts and floods, while growing demands from agriculture, energy production, industry, and cities are intensifying competition for finite water resources. These trends underscore the growing importance of water diplomacy as a means of strengthening regional cooperation, maximising benefits, preventing disputes, and advancing sustainable water governance.

Despite growing investments in water infrastructure and governance, comparatively little attention has been devoted to strengthening the human and institutional capacities required to negotiate and sustain transboundary water cooperation. Most decision-makers, diplomats, and water professionals have access to limited training in water science and transboundary governance, while many water professionals have little exposure to diplomacy, negotiation, or multilateral processes. At the same time, Europe benefits from a vibrant ecosystem of youth water networks, universities, UNESCO Chairs, National IHP Committees, and river basin organisations, yet few initiatives explicitly focus on equipping water leaders with strong competencies in water diplomacy.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- High-level policymakers and decision-makers from governments and institutions involved in water resources management, foreign affairs, regional cooperation, and transboundary water governance.
- Water diplomacy practitioners, experts, and academic institutions, including professionals working on negotiation, conflict prevention, and transboundary water cooperation.
- Youth representatives and emerging water leaders, with an interest in water diplomacy, regional cooperation, and sustainable water governance.
- International organizations, development partners, donors, and regional institutions supporting capacity development, water diplomacy, and cooperation in South-East Europe.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- **Enhanced understanding of capacity needs and priorities** for strengthening water diplomacy and transboundary water cooperation in South-East Europe.
- **Identification of key competencies, institutional capacities, and training needs** required to equip current and future water leaders to effectively address transboundary water challenges.
- **Strengthened partnerships and opportunities for collaboration** among governments, regional institutions, youth, international organizations, and development partners on water diplomacy.
- **Evidence-based recommendations for UNESCO's future engagement** on water diplomacy, while bringing South-East European perspectives into the broader dialogue towards the **2026 UN Water Conference**.