



STARS 4 Water

Web-based Story Map for International Networking

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Web-based Story Map for International Networking

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CI	Classified, as referred to EU Decision 2015/444 and its implementing rules	

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Summary

This report briefly introduces the actual deliverable: a Web-based Story Map for International Networking. This Story Map is accessible through this link: <https://arcg.is/0nnqWW1>

As part of the uptake of the STARS4Water approach, a web-based Story Map for International Networking was designed based on the experiences to develop knowledge and tools for operationalising water resilience within the seven river basin hubs in the project. The web-based storyline map captures the main insights and recommendations for adaptation in co-design with stakeholders, which can be tailored to the specific needs of any river basin in Europe and abroad.

The Story Map for International Networking covers the following topics:

- The STARS4Water vision
- The Challenge: managing water in a changing world - the past is no longer enough
- Our River Basin Hubs
- The STARS4Water Journey
- Make evidence visible
- Build capacity and uptake

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1. STARS4Water project

STARS4Water (Supporting Stakeholders for Adaptive, Resilient and Sustainable Water Management) is a four-year Horizon Europe research project that contributes to the implementation of the European Water Resilience Strategy and broader EU water policies. The project seeks to improve understanding of how climate change affects water resources and related vulnerabilities across ecosystems, communities, and economic sectors at the river basin scale.

The ambitions of STARS4Water are:

- To create a new generation of data services and data-driven models tailored to stakeholders' needs and requirements;
- To enhance the knowledge base and the scientific underpinning of climate risks and impacts at river basin scale;
- To provide improved projections on future water resources availability;
- To improve decision making by stakeholders through the development of a safe operating space framework, and the provision of actionable information.

To ensure that project outcomes respond to real-world needs, STARS4Water has applied a stakeholder-driven co-creation approach. Working closely with river basin organisations and other key actors in seven European river basins, namely the Danube, Drammen, Duero, East Anglia, Messara, Rhine and Seine (Figure 1), the project co-designed data services, assessment methods, and decision-support tools tailored to stakeholder requirements. Central to this approach was the establishment of dedicated stakeholder communities within each river basin. These communities provided a platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaborative development, ensuring that STARS4Water solutions were relevant, usable, and capable of supporting climate-resilient and sustainable water management.

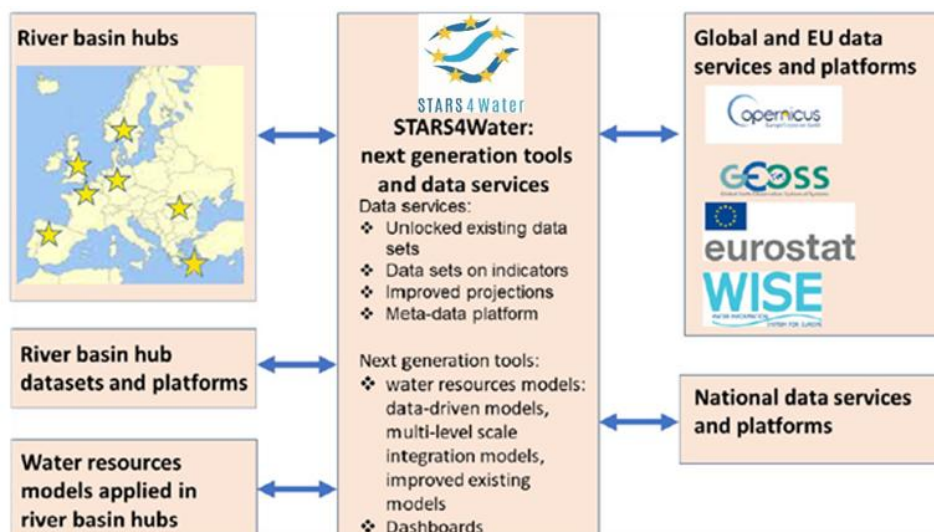


Figure 1. Selected European river basins that serve as living labs (river basin hubs) for innovation.

2. Upscale and uptake for preparedness

This report on Story Map for International Networking forms part of the activities aimed at facilitating the upscaling and uptake of innovations developed within STARS4Water to support the assessment of future water resources and flow regimes under WP5. Figure 2 illustrates the role of WP5 within the overall STARS4Water framework. WP5 builds on the outcomes of the other work packages of the project. Its activities are guided by the stakeholder co-design process undertaken in WP1, draw on the data services developed in WP2 and the modelling innovations developed in WP3, and are informed by the integrated assessments of future water resources conducted in the river basin hubs under WP4. Together, these components provide the knowledge base needed to support the wider adoption and application of STARS4Water innovations.

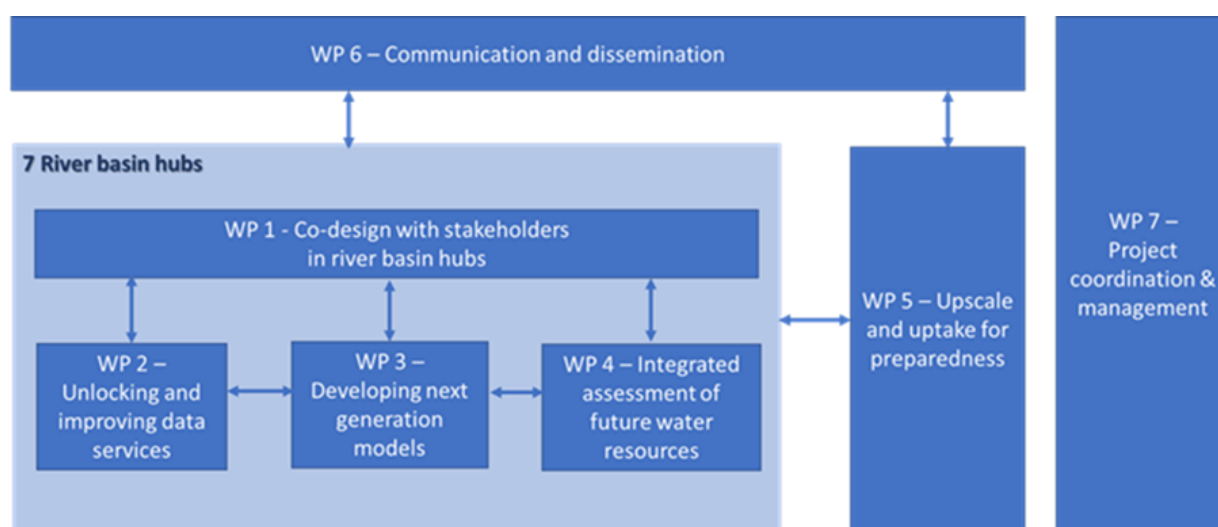


Figure 2. Work package structure of the STARS4Water project, illustrating how the uptake and scaling of STARS4Water innovations build on the co-creation process (WP1), available data sources and services (WP2), next-generation modelling developments (WP3), and assessments of future water resources availability in selected European river basins (WP4).

WP5 consists of the following tasks:

- Task 5.1: Synthesis report for guidance to practitioners to perform climate risk assessments.
- Task 5.2: Upscaling of the data-driven tools to other river basins inside and outside the EU.
- Task 5.3: Technical guidance on data and model innovations to river basin practitioners for capacity building purposes.
- Task 5.4: Create a story-map website for international networking on policy level.
- Task 5.5: Supporting EU policies by preparing a 'blueprint' containing recommendations for strengthening EU policies and actions based on the results of integrated climate risks assessments at river basin level.

This report presents the results of task 5.4.

3. Story Map for International Networking

To improve the communication and accessibility of project outcomes, the integrated climate risk assessment results were translated into river basin-specific Story Maps illustrating future water resources availability under climate change (Klösch et al.). These Story Maps were developed to make complex scientific information accessible to a wide range of stakeholders, including water managers, policymakers, citizens, and private-sector actors, while also facilitating knowledge exchange between river basin hubs. Climate trends, risk assessment outcomes, and water-user vulnerabilities identified through the project were synthesised and visualised in an engaging and user-friendly format. Results generated from the project datasets, modelling tools, and quantitative risk assessments were combined with narratives developed through stakeholder engagement activities and placed within a broader context of climate risks, societal impacts, and potential adaptation pathways. The river basin Story Maps are accessible through this link: <https://stars4water.eu/our-7-hubs/>

Each river basin hub created its Story Map based on the project's commonly established guidelines (Klösch et al., 2026), to ensure that they provide a comprehensible platform to communicate key findings and support stakeholder outreach. To ensure their long-term value as communication and knowledge-sharing tools, each Story Map has a defined "owner" responsible for keeping it update beyond the project's duration.

Moreover, to facilitate the uptake and transferability of the STARS4Water approach, tools, and data services to other river basins across Europe and internationally, a web-based Story Map for International Networking was developed, bringing together the STARS4Water vision and the 7 river basin Story Maps. The Story Map for International Networking captures the key findings, lessons learned, and adaptation recommendations generated through the project and presents them in an accessible and engaging format. The Story Map for International Networking builds upon the Synthesis report (Duel et al., 2026), the Blueprint for Water Resilience Strategy (Kundzewicz et al., 2026) and the Policy Brief of Guiding Principles (Kossida et al, 2026). The Story Map for International Networking connects to the river basin Story Maps.

The main objective of the Story Map for International Network is to inspire river basin organisations, river basin stakeholders and experts in climate-resilient water management and water resources planning on how to prepare for water resilience across sectors and scales in river basins.

The Story Map for International Networking presents a flexible approach that can be applied beyond the STARS4Water case study basins. Through dynamic visualisations, narratives, and concise summaries, the platform translates complex climate risk and water resource assessments into actionable information, thereby supporting awareness raising, stakeholder engagement, and informed decision-making on climate adaptation and water resilience.

4. Specifications of Story Map for International Networking

The Story Map for International Networking is following the basic specifications of the river basin specific Story Maps (Klösch et al., 2026).

The aim of the Story Map for International Networking

The Story Map for International Networking should facilitate the uptake of the STARS4Water approach and output by river basin organisations in Europe and beyond to enhance climate resilient water management at river basin scale. To achieve this, the Story Map for International Networking

- Compiles information for a wide range of stakeholders
- Demonstrates the added value of the STARS4Water approach and outputs.
- Tell the story how to improve the understanding of climate change impacts on water resources availability and the vulnerabilities for ecosystems, society and economic sectors at river basin scale.

The Story Map should clearly demonstrate how international collaboration, knowledge exchange, and cross-basin learning within STARS4Water contribute to strengthening climate-resilient and sustainable water management across Europe.

General appearance

The International Networking Story Map should align with the style and approach used in the river basin-specific Story Maps and adhere to the following principles:

- Visual-first communication: Prioritise images, maps, graphics, and other visual elements over extensive technical text.
- Concise messaging: Keep text brief, clear, and focused on the key messages.
- Strong visual support: Ensure that visuals reinforce and illustrate the accompanying narrative.
- Compelling headings: Use clear, engaging titles and subheadings that immediately communicate the main message and capture the reader's attention
- Self-explanatory design: Present information in an intuitive manner, minimising the need for complex legends, symbols, abbreviations, or lengthy explanations.
- Connected content: Include direct links to the river basin Story Maps and the main STARS4Water outputs, tools, data services, and dissemination materials.
- Broad stakeholder relevance: Ensure that the information is accessible and meaningful to a wide range of stakeholders, including river basin managers, water resources managers, water utility managers, private sector organisations, governments and public authorities at local, regional, national, and international levels, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations, environmental organisations.

Maintenance and Sustainability

Story Map for International Networking is hosted on BOKU University ArcGIS infrastructure. BOKU will maintain this hosting for at least six months after project closure. Long-term hosting will be further explored. When continued maintenance of the interactive ArcGIS Story Map can't be justified, the content should statically be preserved through the STARS4Water website. Further details are available in Future Exploitation and Sustainability Plan (Ter Maat et al., 2026).

5. Outline of Story Map for International Networking

The Story Map for International Networking is accessible through the link: <https://arcg.is/0nnqWW1>

The Story Map for International Networking has the following title:

From evidence to water resilience.

The STARS4Water journey from science to river-basin action.

It covers the following topics:

- **STARS4Water vision:** supporting decision-making through a co-creation process that brings together river basin stakeholders and researchers. Starting from stakeholder information needs, the approach builds a shared understanding of water-related challenges, risks, and opportunities across river basins.
- **The Challenge:** this topic presents the growing challenges facing water managers, including climate change, changing hydrological regimes, increasing water demands, and competing societal needs. Highlight the need for forward-looking, evidence-based approaches to support decision-making under uncertainty.
- **Our River Basin Hubs:** Introduction to the seven STARS4Water River Basin Hubs as living examples of collaboration between science and practice. Demonstrate how researchers and stakeholders worked together to improve understanding of current and future water availability, explore climate risks, and test how new data services, models, indicators, and communication tools can support river basin management.
- **STARS4Water journey:** this topic presents the project's evidence chain: Find → Observe → Understand → Test → Decide → Learn. It shows how data, observations, models, stakeholder knowledge, and decision-support tools are combined to transform information into actionable knowledge for water management.
- **Make evidence visible:** This topic demonstrates how STARS4Water makes scientific information accessible, understandable, and useful for decision-makers. Introduce examples of visualisation tools, indicators, communication products, and data services that help bridge the gap between research and practice.
- **Build capacity and uptake:** A key lesson from STARS4Water is that scientific tools and knowledge alone are not sufficient. Long-term impact depends on people who can use them, organisations that can maintain them, and networks that trust and apply the evidence they provide. This section highlights approaches for strengthening capacity, fostering shared understanding, and building institutional connections that support the uptake of evidence-based decision-making.

- **STARS4Water legacy:** This topic highlights the central lesson emerging from seven diverse European river basins: resilient water management cannot be achieved through a single model, indicator, measure, or plan. It requires a continuous cycle of co-creation, observation, understanding, anticipation, decision-making, and learning. Science provides the evidence, but solutions must be grounded in the realities of each river basin. Water resilience should therefore be viewed as an adaptive and forward-looking operational practice at the river basin scale.
- **Invitation to STARS4Water output:** the Story Map for International Networking concludes with an invitation to the river basin specific Story Maps, the STARS4Water Metadata Portal, the STARS4Water Academy, Impact Reporter and the project deliverables.

6. References

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