

WP 2: Awareness raising and pilot activities



D 2.10.4

Agreements with municipalities and associations

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Document description	This document describes how the project partners have specifically engaged and entered into collaboration agreements with the Municipalities and associations of the Brenta river area. The objective of these agreements is to formalize the commitment of all parties to reduce waste abandonment and protect the river's environment. The document also includes the text of the agreement that was signed.				

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1. Introduction

1.1. WASTEREDUCE project

The "WASTEREDUCE" project (Integrated waste reduction strategies and solutions in protected and Natura 2000 areas) is a cross-border cooperation initiative, part of the Interreg Italy-Croatia program and co-financed by the European Union, created to address one of the most pressing environmental challenges for the Adriatic basin: waste management in protected natural areas and Natura 2000 sites.

Italy and Croatia share not only the Adriatic Sea but also the challenges related to its pollution. a significant portion of the waste that ends up in the sea originates from the mainland. Rivers, often flowing through valuable natural areas, act as conveyor belts for abandoned waste, which eventually reaches the coast and the sea, severely threatening marine ecosystems. Compounding this problem is the strong anthropogenic pressure, particularly from tourism, which is concentrated in these vulnerable areas, leading to an uncontrolled accumulation of waste and endangering biodiversity. The absence of coordinated management strategies and the differing levels of awareness and legislation between the territories make a cross-border approach not only useful but necessary to achieve effective and long-lasting results.

The project aims to generate tangible change on multiple levels: improving existing management policies and practices, raising awareness and changing the behaviors of visitors and stakeholders, reducing the environmental and socio-economic costs associated with waste, and, finally, strengthening cooperation between public and private entities at the local, national, and cross-border levels.

To achieve these goals, the project adopts a holistic and participatory approach, called the "WASTEREDUCE approach", which for the first time addresses waste pollution from diffuse sources by applying a landscape-level vision rather than just a site-specific one. This approach is based on the impact mitigation hierarchy and is structured in four operational phases:

1. Measure: the first phase consists of monitoring and understanding the problem. Through the use of technologies such as remote sensing and direct field observations, the project maps the critical areas of waste accumulation. In parallel, in-depth analyses of people's behaviors are conducted to understand the psychological and contextual motivations that lead to littering.
2. Prevent: based on the data collected, a targeted strategy has been developed to prevent waste generation at its source, aimed at both visitors and economic operators active within the protected areas.

3. Reduce: the project actively promotes waste reduction, with a particular focus on single-use items, and encourages virtuous practices such as proper recycling.
4. Mitigate: the final phase focuses on implementing concrete solutions to mitigate the impact of existing waste and to make its management more efficient within the vast and complex natural areas.

The analyses conducted in the pilot areas, including the Middle Brenta, have revealed a worrying situation. Field observations have documented significant, and at times "substantial", accumulations of waste, mainly composed of plastics, cigarette butts, cardboard, and glass, especially during periods of high visitor traffic.

Surveys of visitors and stakeholders have shown that the main cause of littering is related to the lack of convenience in proper disposal. Although visitors claim they want to act responsibly, practical difficulties (e.g., lack of bins) become an insurmountable obstacle for them.

An innovative aspect of the project is the analysis of the environmental and social costs of waste, which include not only the direct management expenses but also "externalized" damages such as pollution, risks to public health, and the loss of tourist value of the areas.

Since these costs primarily burden municipal budgets, which in turn are supported by residents and not by the occasional visitors who are often the main producers of waste, the WASTEREDUCE project also explores innovative financing mechanisms to ensure the long-term sustainability of its actions.

1.2. Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to formalize and secure the long-term commitment of the Municipalities to adopt and implement the waste management strategies developed by the project. This ensures the sustainability of the results beyond the conclusion of the project's funding.

Specifically, the objectives are:

- formalize collaboration: to transform the informal involvement of the municipalities into an official commitment to implement the practices and policies developed during the project;
- integrate strategies into local plans: to ensure that the WASTEREDUCE approach and its related action plan are integrated into municipal planning tools and regulations, particularly concerning waste management in areas of significant natural value;

- guarantee the durability of results: to commit the municipalities to maintaining the implemented measures, such as environmental surveillance, awareness campaigns, and waste collection infrastructure, even after the project ends;
- define roles and responsibilities: to clarify the active, albeit non-financial, role of each municipality in applying the pilot actions, monitoring the territory, and engaging with the local community and visitors.



Rubbish abandoned near a bin along the Brenta River.

2. Description of the Middle Brenta pilot area

The Brenta River, along its middle section which spans approximately 70 km from Bassano del Grappa to Padova, constitutes a riverine ecosystem of fundamental ecological importance. This area is recognized at a European level and has been designated as part of the Natura 2000 network (the "Grave e zone umide della Brenta" site). It stands out for its rich habitats, including wetlands, floodplains, and riparian vegetation, which are crucial for biodiversity conservation and maintaining water quality. The river, with its nearly torrential flow, serves as a vital ecological corridor for numerous wildlife species, including rare amphibians and a wide variety of migratory birds.

Despite its high natural value, the Middle Brenta is subject to significant human pressures. Urban development, intensive agriculture, and industrial activities along its banks contribute to habitat fragmentation. Furthermore, the aquifers of the Middle Brenta have a strategic importance, supplying drinking water to over 1.5 million residents.

One of the most evident critical issues is related to waste management. The frequentation of the area, especially during the spring and summer months, exacerbates problems with parking and waste abandonment. Field observations have revealed alarming levels of littering and illegal dumping of bulky and inert materials along the riverbanks.

Protecting the Middle Brenta requires a complex governance system and the active collaboration of multiple stakeholders.

At the center of the governance structure is the Brenta River Basin Council (Consiglio di Bacino Brenta), which coordinates the municipalities of the Optimal Territorial Area (Area Territoriale Ottimale, ATO) and guides the management of the Natura 2000 site. This body plays a key role in developing shared strategies for environmental protection and water resource management. Alongside it, the Brenta Waste Basin Council (Consiglio di Bacino Brenta per i rifiuti) operates for the management, collection, recycling, and disposal of waste in the territory.

A fundamental operational role is entrusted to ETRA S.p.A. Società benefit, a multi-utility company that handles integrated waste management, environmental monitoring, and targeted waste collection in the river area. Through its Academy, ETRA also promotes environmental education, helping to combat the phenomenon of littering.

The riparian municipalities, environmental associations, and volunteer organizations are essential partners in day-to-day management, often engaged in cleanup activities, civic monitoring, and education.

Finally, local residents, farmers, and tourists represent both a resource, if they act responsibly, and a challenge, if their behavior harms the ecological balance of the area.

2.1. Roles of of the municipalities in the pilot areas

Riparian municipalities play a significant and active role in waste management and in safeguarding the Brenta River and its habitats. They act both as entities responsible for managing the local territory and as integrated partners within a broader governance structure.

The municipalities are primarily responsible for local land management. They are integrated and coordinated within a unified vision through the Brenta River Basin Council, for both water services and waste management. Within this system, they actively participate in defining territorial policies, contributing resources, specific expertise, and regulatory instruments.

Their central contribution is manifested in various forms:

- resources: Municipalities often provide resources to support protection initiatives;
- expertise: they offer specific knowledge of the territory, which is essential for effective management;
- regulatory instruments: they use their regulatory powers to enforce safeguarding policies at the local level;
- contacts: they maintain contacts with local associations that operate along the Brenta River.



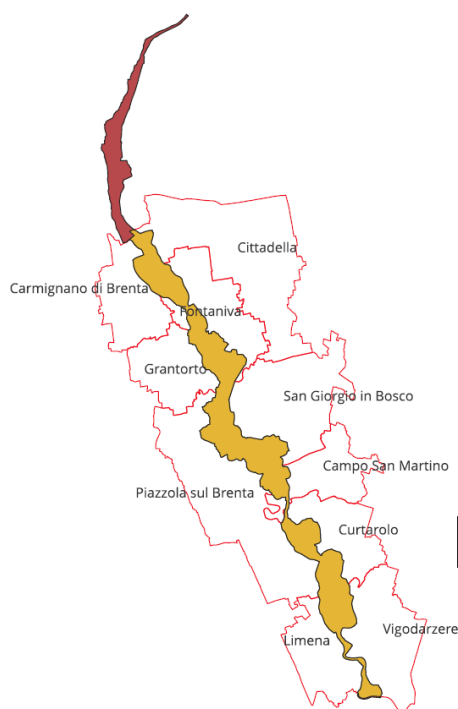
Aerial view of the Brenta River.

3. Agreements with municipalities and associations

3.1. Signatory Municipalities

The Municipalities that signed the agreement, as well as all the Municipalities involved in the project, are:

- Campo S. Martino
- Carmignano Di Brenta
- Cittadella
- Curtarolo
- Fontaniva
- Grantorto
- Limena
- Piazzola sul Brenta
- San Giorgio Bosco
- Vigodarzere



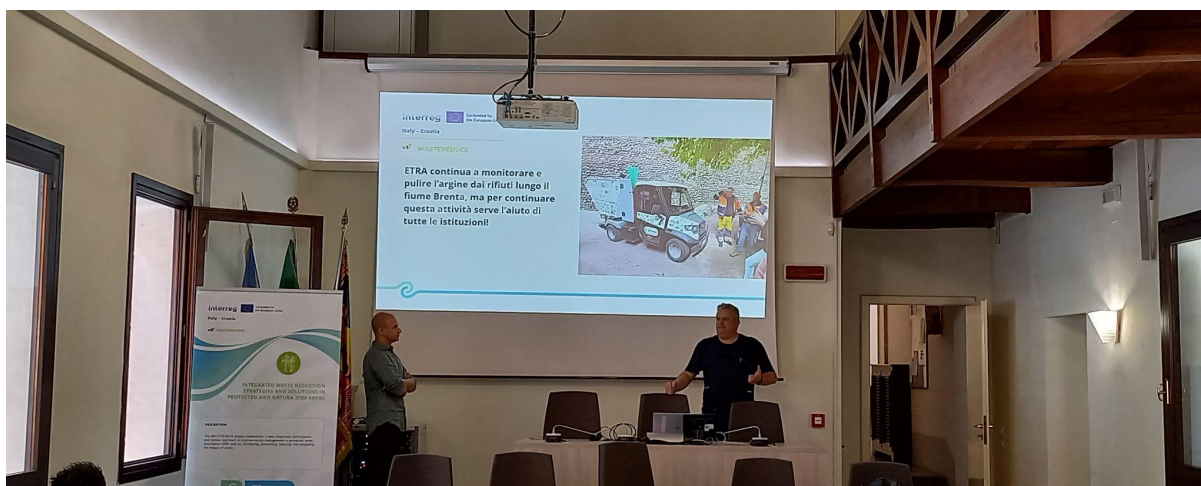
Map of the signatory municipalities, with their position along the Middle Brenta.

3.2. Engagement methods

To achieve the signing of the agreement with the riparian municipalities of the Middle Brenta, a strategic approach was adopted that combines information, participation, and civic valorization.

To ensure the active involvement and collaboration of the municipalities in the Middle Brenta area, a multi-stage engagement process was implemented. This culminated in a dedicated event that combined informational sessions, participatory workshops, and a public act with strong symbolic value.

The first step was to formally invite the mayors and representatives of the riparian municipalities to a specific event. The agenda for this event clearly outlined the signing of the WASTEREDUCE project participation agreement as the concluding moment. This immediately established the meeting's objective, framing the signing not as a simple bureaucratic act, but as the culmination of a shared journey. To facilitate their participation, a formal communication was sent (via certified email) describing the project and specifying the strategic and operational nature of the collaboration, with no direct financial commitment required from the municipal budgets.



Testimonies from those involved in waste collection along the Brenta River, during the meeting with the Municipalities.

3.3. Workshop

Before the signing, an interactive workshop was held, which was the core of the engagement strategy. This work session was attended not only by representatives from the municipalities (mayors and technicians) and some associations operating along the river, but also by the project's venetian partners (ETRA, ETIFOR, ARPAV) and the Brenta River Basin Council.

The workshop had a dual purpose:

- inform and share: to present in detail the objectives of the WASTEREDUCE project, the proposed waste management strategy for the Brenta area, and the relevant regulatory framework, such as the "Salvamare" law;
- gather and co-create: through working groups, participants were invited to engage in an active dialogue to identify the specific critical issues in their territory and to gather concrete ideas and proposals for safeguarding the river and reducing littering.

This approach transformed the municipalities from mere recipients to active protagonists in defining solutions, ensuring that future actions would be relevant, realistic, and supported at the local level.



Discussion moment during the workshop.

3.4. Signature and press conference

The event culminated with a press conference, during which the mayors in attendance publicly signed the participation agreement.

This moment was also strategically planned to have a dual impact:

- formalizing the commitment: the public signing officially sanctioned the municipalities' commitment to actively collaborate on the project's goals, such as organizing ecological days, supporting awareness campaigns, and facilitating dialogue with the community;
- disseminating to citizens: holding the signing for the media allowed the message to be amplified, communicating to a wider audience not only the project's aims but also the civic values that the signatory mayors intended to promote.

The act became a public testament to the administrations' commitment to a cleaner environment and the protection of a common asset like the Brenta River.



Press conference and signing of agreements with the Municipalities.

4. Conclusion

The signing of the agreements with the riparian municipalities and associations of the Middle Brenta represents the culmination of a strategic engagement process. It transforms the WASTEREDUCE project's goals into a concrete, shared local commitment.

Through a participatory approach, focused on dialogue and co-creation during the workshop, the municipalities and associations became active protagonists in defining solutions for safeguarding the Brenta River. The agreement formalizes this alliance, laying the operational and institutional foundation for the effective implementation of future waste reduction actions and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the results.



Representatives of the municipalities that signed the agreement.

ATTACHED A: Accordo di partecipazione al Progetto Interreg Italy-Croatia "WASTEREDUCE"

**Oggetto: Accordo di partecipazione al Progetto Interreg Italy-Croatia
"WASTEREDUCE" (ID ITHR0200425 - CUP H93B23000040007)**

Accordo tra:

Etra S.p.A - Società benefit, C.F. e P.I. 03278040245 con sede legale in Largo Parolini, 82B 36061 Bassano del Grappa (VI) nella persona del Presidente del C.d.A. dott. Flavio Frasson (di seguito denominato "Etra");

e

Il Comune di [Municipality] rappresentato dal proprio Sindaco/Rappresentante Legale (di seguito denominato "Comune Partecipante");

Premesso che:

- in data 14/03/2023 è stato approvato il progetto **"Integrated waste reduction strategies and solutions in protected and Natura 2000 areas"**, acronimo **WASTEREDUCE**, finanziato dal programma Interreg Italy-Croatia della durata complessiva di 24 mesi (scadenza 31/07/2026);
- il progetto mira a migliorare la gestione dei rifiuti nelle aree protette e nei siti Natura 2000 attraverso l'implementazione di azioni concrete e congiunte per affrontare il fenomeno dell'abbandono dei rifiuti da diverse angolazioni e metodi di intervento;
- il Comune Partecipante è situato in aree che includono o sono adiacenti a zone protette e/o siti Natura 2000 e pertanto è direttamente interessato dalle problematiche relative alla gestione dei rifiuti in tali contesti;
- il progetto adotta un approccio integrato, partecipativo e olistico a livello paesaggistico per minimizzare gli effetti dannosi dell'abbandono dei rifiuti, con particolare attenzione ai fiumi e alle aree limitrofe;
- la collaborazione con il Comune è fondamentale per il successo del progetto, in quanto esso rappresenta un livello amministrativo e territoriale chiave per l'attuazione delle strategie e delle azioni previste.

Si conviene e si stipula quanto segue:

Articolo 1 - Obiettivi e Finalità del Progetto

Il progetto si pone l'obiettivo generale di **migliorare la gestione dei rifiuti nelle aree protette e nei siti Natura 2000** utilizzando un approccio paesaggistico per monitorare, prevenire, ridurre e mitigare l'impatto dei rifiuti.

Le principali finalità del progetto sono:

- migliorare le politiche e le pratiche esistenti di gestione dei rifiuti;
- sensibilizzare e modificare il comportamento dei visitatori e degli altri portatori di interesse;
- ridurre i costi ambientali e socio-economici della gestione dei rifiuti e degli impatti correlati;
- migliorare la cooperazione tra i portatori di interesse a livello transfrontaliero, nazionale, regionale e locale nel campo della gestione dei rifiuti;
- sviluppare, testare e implementare un nuovo approccio integrato e partecipativo alla gestione dei rifiuti, adattato alle specificità delle aree protette e Natura 2000, descritto nel documento di progetto "D1.11.2 Report on the developed strategies for each pilot".

Articolo 2 - Ruolo del Comune Partecipante

Il Comune Partecipante, in quanto ente territoriale direttamente interessato, svolgerà un ruolo attivo nel progetto, contribuendo in particolare a:

- **contestualizzare la strategia di riduzione dell'abbandono dei rifiuti** nel proprio territorio, partecipando a processi partecipativi promossi dal progetto;
- **organizzare e supportare giornate ecologiche** per coinvolgere i cittadini in attività di pulizia e sensibilizzazione;
- **stabilire accordi con associazioni locali** per ridurre la presenza di rifiuti abbandonati;
- **supportare l'organizzazione di attività di sensibilizzazione** rivolte alla cittadinanza e alle scuole sul tema della corretta gestione dei rifiuti nelle aree protette;
- **collaborare all'individuazione e alla segnalazione di aree** in cui si verifica frequentemente l'abbandono di rifiuti;
- **partecipare a incontri, workshop e seminari** organizzati nell'ambito del progetto per la condivisione di informazioni e buone pratiche;

- **supportare e facilitare l'implementazione di soluzioni** per la raccolta differenziata e lo smaltimento dei rifiuti adattate alle specificità delle aree protette e Natura 2000;
- **facilitare la diffusione dei risultati del progetto** e l'adozione dell'approccio WASTEREDUCE a livello locale.

Articolo 3 - Principali Azioni Coinvolgenti il Comune

Le principali azioni che coinvolgeranno direttamente il Comune Partecipante includono, a titolo esemplificativo e non esaustivo:

- **partecipazione a workshop e tavoli di lavoro** per la definizione di strategie di riduzione dei rifiuti abbandonati;
- **supporto organizzativo per le giornate ecologiche** e le iniziative di pulizia del territorio;
- **collaborazione all'implementazione di eventuali progetti pilota** di gestione dei rifiuti nelle aree protette presenti nel proprio territorio;
- **diffusione di materiale informativo e sensibilizzazione** tra i cittadini;
- **coinvolgimento delle scuole e delle associazioni locali** nelle attività del progetto;
- **fornitura di dati e informazioni utili** per le analisi e le ricerche condotte dal progetto.
- **valutazione della fattibilità di replicare buone pratiche** di gestione dei rifiuti sviluppate nel progetto in altre aree del proprio territorio;
- **partecipazione alla presentazione pubblica dei risultati del progetto** e del piano d'azione per la gestione dei rifiuti.

Articolo 4 - Finalità

Il presente accordo ha la finalità di definire e formalizzare la collaborazione tra ETRA e il Comune Partecipante per la realizzazione del progetto WASTEREDUCE. Attraverso tale collaborazione, si intende contribuire in modo efficace alla protezione e alla valorizzazione delle aree protette e dei siti Natura 2000, promuovendo una gestione dei rifiuti più sostenibile e partecipativa.

Articolo 5 - Durata

Il presente accordo avrà la stessa durata del progetto WASTEREDUCE, con inizio dalla data di sottoscrizione e termine previsto per il 31/07/2026.