



Deliverable 8.13: Summary of policy briefs

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1.0 INTRODUCTION	5
2.0 POLICY BRIEFS DEVELOPED IN ARSINOE	5
First and Second policy briefs	5
Third Policy Brief	7
3.0 THIRD POLICY BRIEF: ADVANCING SYSTEMIC WATER RESILIENCE IN EUROPE	7
Pathways towards a Climate and Water Resilient Europe	8
Recommendations	8
3.0 CONCLUSION	11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ARSINOE is an EU funded innovation action that brings together 41 partners from 15 countries and intends to be a game-changer for shaping pathways to resilience by delivering regional innovation packages that build an ecosystem to develop and implement innovative climate change adaptation measures and solutions across Europe. This deliverable summarizes the actions of the three policy briefs developed for the project, with an emphasis on the third one. This final policy brief focuses on translating the project's scientific outputs, demonstrator experiences, and stakeholder insights into concrete regulatory and implementation recommendations for European water and climate policy. The brief aligns the project outcomes with key EU legislative processes, including the Water Framework Directive, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Climate Adaptation Strategy, Sustainable Finance initiatives, and the Water Resilience Strategy. A set of recommendations has been developed to provide feedback to European policymakers for the implementation of the European legislation or for their revisions. DG CLIMA, DG ENV, and EU financial authorities are identified as key audiences for policy uptake.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This deliverable presents an overview of the policy support actions undertaken within the ARSINOE project, focusing on the development and dissemination of three policy briefs.

The first two policy briefs, issued during the course of the project, served to introduce ARSINOE and its objectives, as well as to highlight the importance of stakeholder engagement in fostering systemic resilience to climate change. Building on these earlier efforts, the present document also details the preparation of a third and final policy brief, which advances the project's contribution to European policymaking by emphasising the potential regulatory and implementation pathways that can be informed by ARSINOE findings.

The objective of this deliverable is therefore twofold: first, to summarise the actions that supported the production and dissemination of the initial policy briefs, and second, to present the rationale, content, and strategic orientation of the final brief. This third policy brief reflects the project's ambition to move beyond awareness-raising, and to suggest political and legal recommendation to enhance Europe's water and climate resilience.

By capturing the lessons learned from ARSINOE scientific outputs, demonstrator case studies, and cross-project collaborations, this document also highlights the alignment of ARSINOE's work with key European legislative dossiers, including the Water Framework Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Nature Restoration Regulation, the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, and the European Water Resilience Strategy.

Therefore, the document starts with a presentation of the required deliverables, meaning the two first policy briefs before considering the development of the third policy brief. In a second part, the document provides the content of the policy brief which grasps the outcomes of ARSINOE and aims to be disseminated in September and beyond the end of the project.

2.0 POLICY BRIEFS DEVELOPED IN ARSINOE

Water Europe, in cooperation with the partners of the project, developed three policy briefs. Two of them were issued during the project and a third one has been prepared and integrated into the deliverable.

First and Second policy briefs

The first two policy briefs aimed to present the project, with the first providing an overview from its launch in 2022, and the second focusing specifically on stakeholder engagement. This second one was developed in collaboration with other European Funded projects. These policy briefs are:

- Policy Brief 1: released in September 2022. It is a general presentation of ARSINOE as we were at the beginning of the project¹.
- Policy Brief 2: joint policy brief within the booster activities of the European Commission² in collaboration with REGILIENCE, IMPETUS and TransformAr.³

The dissemination of these two policy briefs is based on two main approaches:

¹ARSINOE Consortium. *ARSINOE Policy Brief*. Horizon 2020 Innovation Action, September 2022. Grant Agreement No. 101037424. Accessed August 12, 2025. Water Europe. <https://watereurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/ARSINOE-Policy-brief.pdf>

²European Commission. *Horizon Results Booster*. Accessed August 31, 2025. <https://www.horizonresultsbooster.eu/>.

³Regilience, TransformAr, IMPETUS, and ARSINOE. 2024. *Stakeholder Engagement in Climate Adaptation & Resilience: Learnings from EU Mission on Adaptation Projects*. Horizon Results Booster policy brief, July. Accessed August 12, 2025. https://arsinoe-project.eu/securstorage/2024/11/Policy-brief_stakeholder-engagement-in-climate-adaptation-and-resilience_a4-1.pdf.

- A broad dissemination through ARSINOE's communication channels. This approach is also supported by Water Europe which disseminated the policy brief across its own channels, mainly composed of water experts and European policymakers.
- A targeted communication based on a mapping exercise done by Water Europe which aims to maximise the impact of the project. It leveraged the meetings that Water Europe organized to promote the outcomes of the project.

Regarding more specifically the second policy brief, it was primarily disseminated through events targeting actors from EU-funded projects (potentially adapted to different formats), due to its focus on stakeholder engagement and the fact that it was dedicated to the Booster. The policy brief was disseminated in Water Knowledge Europe (Q4 2024 and Q2 2025 editions). Particularly, the 2025 edition featured a joint session with NEXOGENESIS and ARSINOE on outcomes related to the WEFE nexus and participation of non-water sector stakeholders.

In parallel of the preparation of this second policy brief, the conclusions from the first and second briefs were also conveyed through:

- Letters to several European Commission Directorates-General: Agriculture, Regional Policy, Research & innovation, Health, Maritim policy and Neighbourhood policy.
- Contribution to the EU Parliament COP29 resolution (Sept. 2024), particularly through collaboration with NEXOGENESIS on stakeholder engagement and the WEFE nexus.

Additionally, the policy briefs' recommendations (or equivalent formats) were shared with:

- The Policy Advisory Committee of Water and particularly contributed to the debate and WE position on the Water Resilience Strategy.
- Various EU policymakers met by Water Europe on different European dossiers such as the Water Resilience strategy and its strategy engagement process for the new European Commission (Q4 2024 – Q2 2025). Water Europe engaged also with members of the European Parliament on water related discussion including its link with the climate policy (e.g. Mr. Kanev, M. Clergeau, M. Allione, etc.).
- Participated in different workshops. For example, Water Europe disseminated ARSINOE perspective in a policy workshop on water scarcity, organised online by Technopolis Group for the European Commission and held on the 4th of December 2024. This workshop contributed to the report *The future of water availability and use in the EU: A foresight study and policy options to address water scarcity*⁴, requested by the European Parliament and aimed at offering an analysis of water scarcity, availability, and usage in the face of climate change. The interview of Dr. Maria Kottari took several elements shared during the meeting by Water Europe on behalf of different EU projects, including ARSINOE⁵.

⁴ Scholten, C., M. Kottari, J. Puerta Pereira, C. Erven, J. Garcia Gutierrez, O. Gewald Sieme, I. Oomens, P. Van der Duin, H. A. J. Van Lanen, and A. Zehnder. *The Future of Water Availability and Use in the EU: A Foresight Study and Policy Options to Address Water Scarcity*. 2025. <https://technopolis-group.com/fr/report/the-future-of-water-availability-and-use-in-the-eu-a-foresight-study-and-policy-options-to-address-water-scarcity/>

⁵ Technopolis Group. "Water Scarcity in Europe: A Shared Challenge Demanding EU-Wide Action." *Technopolis Group*. Accessed August 31, 2025. <https://technopolis-group.com/fr/water-scarcity-in-europe-a-shared-challenge-demanding-eu-wide-action/>

Third Policy Brief

A third policy brief has been prepared and integrated in this deliverable to be disseminated in September 2025 and beyond. Given the breadth of ARSINOE's content, this third brief attempts to capture the key contributions from the project while maintaining a clear and focused message.

This final brief takes a more regulatory and implementation-focused angle, aiming to identify where ARSINOE's results could contribute to ongoing or future legislative actions at the EU level:

- Water Framework Directive (WFD)⁶ – *current discussion on the implementation.*
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)⁷ – *revision planned.*
- Nature Restoration Regulation (2024/1991)⁸.
- COM(2021) 82 on Climate Adaptation⁹ – *public consultation open with a possibility to provide a reply on behalf of ARSINOE with the PB attached. Deadline 4th Sept.*
- COM(2021) 390 on Sustainable Finance¹⁰ – *OMNIBUS under discussion.*
- COM(2025) 280 on Water Resilience Strategy¹¹ – *implementation up to 2030 (incl. Digitalisation Action Plan).*

The policy brief includes the outcomes of the analysis of the different deliverables and scientific publications as well as the input received by project partners in December 2024. It also reflects the discussions held during Water Projects Europe 2025 in Warsaw (May 2025), where ARSINOE and NEXOGENESIS shared conclusions and cross-fertilized outcomes.

This document will be particularly relevant for Directorates General Climate and Environment of the European Commission, although the section on finance, supported by D7.5, also links the project outcomes with the ongoing Multiannual Financial Framework discussions and OMNIBUS regulations on sustainable finance and environment.

For its dissemination, the policy brief will be designed as the first one. Water Europe will ensure a general dissemination in cooperation with GACT through ARSINOE's communication channels. Water Europe will also use its communication channels to disseminate the policy brief to the EU water community (e.g. external newsletters, LinkedIn account). A more targeted dissemination will be also developed and implemented by Water Europe to target specific European policymakers that can be interested in the regulatory dossiers mentioned in the policy brief. The communication will run from the publication of the third policy brief and continue beyond the end of the project.

3.0 THIRD POLICY BRIEF: ADVANCING SYSTEMIC WATER RESILIENCE IN EUROPE

[ARSINOE](#) is an EU-funded project aimed at creating climate resilient-regions through systemic solutions and innovations. ARSINOE shapes the pathways to resilience by bringing together the Systems Innovation

⁶ European Union. *Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council Establishing a Framework for Community Action in the Field of Water Policy*. Official Journal of the European Communities L 327/1, October 23, 2000.

⁷ European Union. *Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council Establishing a Framework for Community Action in the Field of Marine Environmental Policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)*. Official Journal of the European Union L 164/19, June 25, 2008.

⁸ European Union. *Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulations (EU) 2023/839, (EU) 2021/2115 and (EU) 2018/841, and Directives 2000/60/EC and 2008/56/EC*. Official Journal of the European Union L, 2024.

⁹ European Commission. *Forging a climate-resilient Europe – the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change*. COM(2021) 82 final, 24 February 2021.

¹⁰ European Commission. *Strategy for Financing the Transition to a Sustainable Economy*. COM(2021) 390 final, 6 July 2021.

¹¹ European Commission. *Communication on the Water Resilience Strategy*. COM(2025) 280 final. Brussels, 2025

Approach (SIA) and the Climate Innovation Window (CIW) to build an ecosystem for climate change adaptation solutions. This approach is showcased in nine demonstrators, as a proof-of-concept with regards to its applicability, replicability, potential and efficacy. This policy brief synthesizes ARSINOE's scientific outputs and pilot experiences, providing actionable recommendations to strengthen EU water and climate policy frameworks.

Pathways towards a Climate and Water Resilient Europe

Five years after the European Green Deal, the European Water Resilience Strategy outlines urgent actions to restore water cycles, promote smart use, and prepare for increasing water-related risks. Meanwhile, the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) remain the cornerstone of EU water policy within a source-to-sea approach.

During the last years, the ARSINOE consortium has worked to complement these frameworks. In nine case studies with distinct climate-vulnerabilities ARSINOE carried out, scientific analysis and developed innovation packages¹² aimed at increasing the climate resilience of the focus regions. In doing so the project relied strongly on stakeholder engagement and aimed at supporting systemic solutions and progress towards the European Green Deal' goals.

ARSINOE highlights the need for flexible, inclusive, and knowledge-driven policy to address Europe's water resilience challenges and - and to advance towards a Water-Smart Society. Integrating ARSINOE innovations into EU instruments in the different demo cases such as River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) would improve the resilience of the targeted regions. ARSINOE also demonstrates the need for financial support and mechanisms adapted to the local context.

Based on the project outcomes, ARSINOE has set up a list of key recommendations. More details can be found below:

- **Mainstream Systemic Resilience Assessment Frameworks in the EU Water Acquis**
- **Adopt Integrated WEFE Nexus Planning**
- **Tailor Water Strategies to Islands and Border Regions**
- **Leverage Nature-Based and Hybrid Solutions**
- **Promote Digital Twins and Smart Forecasting**
- **Support Participatory Governance & Emotional Intelligence**
- **Embed Sustainable Finance Tools in MFF & OMNIBUS**

Recommendations

Mainstream Systemic Resilience Assessment Frameworks in the EU Water Acquis

In line with the recommendations of NEXOGENESIS, the project identified a gap in the development of RBMPs and consideration of the water-energy-food-ecosystem (WEFE) nexus¹³. It also emphasises the importance of multiscale systemic forecasting tools for connecting hydrological modelling and forecasting from global to local scales¹⁴. ARSINOE recommends:

¹² ARSINOE Project. *Deliverable D4.3 – Innovation Packages: Integration of Solutions and Participatory Processes*. Horizon 2020, Grant Agreement No. 101037424, 2024.

¹³ Water Project Europe, Warsaw, 15th May 2025. ARSINOE and NEXOGENESIS project co-organised an event to exchange on the integration of the WEFE nexus into the environmental policies implementation at the regional and local levels.

¹⁴ Emerton, Rachel, Hannah L. Cloke, Elizabeth Lewis, and Florian Pappenberger. "Connecting Hydrological Modelling and Forecasting from Global to Local Scales." *Journal of Flood Risk Management* 16, no. 1 (2023): e12937. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfr3.12937>.

- Integrate cross-sectoral risk and resilience indicators in RBMPs¹⁵ (article 13 WFD & art.5 MSFD), in line with a *source-to-sea* approach and the Water Resilience objectives to restore the water cycle and ensure access to water and sanitation for all.
- Align Climate and Water Resilience Indicators¹⁶ by embedding water KPIs in the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) Guidelines¹⁷ contributed to achieve the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change.
- Replicate the proposed integrated systemic models for regional resilience developed in the project¹⁸.

Adopt Integrated WEFE Nexus Planning

In line with article 5 of the WFD, ensure infrastructure investments in the regions reflect WEFE trade-offs to maximise benefits and synergies between the different policies¹⁹.

In addition, specific attention should be given to embed into the Strategic Plans of the Common Agriculture Policy water resilience considerations as expressed in the Water Resilience Strategy. Agriculture remains one of the most important water users across Europe.

Tailor Water Strategies to Islands and Border Regions

ARSINOE demonstrated that islands and border regions are in a special situation when implementing the water acquis and WEFE approaches. Water strategies for these territories, especially in the outermost regions of Europe, should be tailored to them and their challenges. This requires dedicated financial support²⁰.

Leverage Nature-Based and Hybrid Solutions

Contributing to achieving good ecological status (Article 4 WFD), ARSINOE demonstrates the potential of nature-based and hybrid solutions to deliver multiple benefits for water retention and absorption, flood mitigation, and ecosystem recovery:

- Pilot actions in La Palma and Gran Canarias illustrate how these approaches can complement conventional infrastructure, especially in water-scarce and island territories.
- The Main River Basin case study has developed an integrated WEFE approach that can lead to more sustainable land use. Photovoltaic and heat pumps use much less space than biomass production for the same amount of heat. This way, the newly available space can support organic farming for water protection and flood as well as drought prevention and biodiversity.

Furthermore, these solutions align with implementation priorities of the Nature Restoration Regulation (2024/1991), which mandates the restoration of natural hydrological functions across ecosystems.

¹⁵ Biddau, Federica, Laura Maranghi, Andrea De Bonis, and Elena Verdolini. "Embedding Systemic Thinking in Policy Frameworks: The Case of Climate Change Adaptation." *Environmental Sciences Europe* 36, no. 1 (2024): 7. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-023-00864-5>.

¹⁶ Guerreiro, Sofia B., Rachael E. James, Shabeh ul Hasson, and Elena Paglialunga. "Water-Related Climate Risk Indicators and Their Use in Decision-Making." *Sustainability* 15, no. 8 (2023): 8045. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su150808045>; ARSINOE Project. *Deliverable D4.4 – Report on Early Warning Systems and Performance Indicators for Decision Support*. Horizon 2020, Grant Agreement No. 101037424, 2024.

¹⁷ European Union. *Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action*. Official Journal of the European Union L 328/1, December 21, 2018.

¹⁸ D4.4 – Risk-based Early Warning System for Resilient Water Management.; Giordano, Raffaele, Claudia Laio, Marta Lanzoni, et al. "A Framework for Resilience-Oriented Nexus Assessment." *Sustainability* 16, no. 7 (2024): 7603. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su160707603>.

¹⁹ ARSINOE Project. *Deliverable D7.5 – Consolidated Portfolio of Policy Recommendations and Financial Pathways*. Horizon 2020, Grant Agreement No. 101037424, 2024.; Psomas, Achilleas, Hariklia Papaioannou, Nikos Skondras, et al. "Advancing the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus: A Regional Application in Sardinia and Thessaly." *Sustainability* 15, no. 12 (2023): 12715. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151812715>.

²⁰ ARSINOE Project. *Deliverable D7.5 – Consolidated Portfolio of Policy Recommendations and Financial Pathways*. Horizon 2020, Grant Agreement No. 101037424, 2024.

Promote Digital Twins and Smart Forecasting

ARSINOE has shown how digital simulations enhance early warning systems, stakeholder engagement, and scenario-based decision-making. The projects recommend to:

- Encourage the use of digital tools in the implementation of the WFD and more proactively if the WFD is revised. Sensors like in the Black Sea case study can facilitate quality and quantity monitoring with a source-to-sea approach²¹.
- Consider in the Digitalisation Action Plan serious gaming interfaces and their integration with platforms like GloFAS²² to achieve the EU water resilience, as implemented in the Torbay & Devon County case study.

Support Participatory Governance & Emotional Intelligence

ARSINOE promotes inclusive and participatory planning processes. It introduces a set of tools (e.g. serious games, citizens engagement options) that help communities and institutions work better together²³. These tools can support the drafting of River Basin Management Plans and climate adaptation strategies, contributing to the implementation of Article 14 of the Water Framework Directive. They also encourage the uptake of solutions aligned with the objectives of the Water Resilience Strategy by fostering the use of nature-based and digital approaches and reducing social conflict in water-scarce regions.

Embed Sustainable Finance Tools in MFF & OMNIBUS

ARSINOE introduces a comprehensive suite of sustainable finance tools, including a Finance Registry, a Readiness Self-Assessment Tool, a Hybrid Financial Reporting Framework, and a Social Cost-Benefit Analysis method. These instruments are designed to help local authorities and stakeholders structure robust, bankable investment portfolios aligned with both resilience goals and environmental sustainability²⁴. In the case of Sardinia, an effort has been done to identify different instrument to help municipalities, farming cooperatives, and agro-industry actors prepare bankable projects and unlock national and EU climate funds. Therefore:

- As the EU prepares the 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework and advances the OMNIBUS legislative initiatives on sustainable finance and the environment, ARSINOE provides concrete tools to support investment flows into nature-based solutions, digital infrastructure, and inclusive planning.
- It also contributes to the operationalization of the EU taxonomy criteria and also demonstrates the need for such tools to advance climate and water resilience in Europe.

²¹ Water Project Europe, Warsaw, May 2025.

²² ARSINOE Project. *Deliverable D4.2 – Toolkit for Stakeholder Engagement, Serious Games, and Participatory Methods*. Horizon 2020, Grant Agreement No. 101037424, 2023.; ARSINOE Project. *Deliverable D4.4 – Report on Early Warning Systems and Performance Indicators for Decision Support*. Horizon 2020, Grant Agreement No. 101037424, 2024.; Emerton, Rachel, Hannah L. Cloke, Elizabeth Lewis, and Florian Pappenberger. "Connecting Hydrological Modelling and Forecasting from Global to Local Scales." *Journal of Flood Risk Management* 16, no. 1 (2023): e12937. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfr3.12937>.

²³ ARSINOE Project. *Deliverable D4.2 – Toolkit for Stakeholder Engagement, Serious Games, and Participatory Methods*. Horizon 2020, Grant Agreement No. 101037424, 2023.

²⁴ ARSINOE Project. *Deliverable D7.5 – Consolidated Portfolio of Policy Recommendations and Financial Pathways*. Horizon 2020, Grant Agreement No. 101037424, 2024.

3.0 CONCLUSION

ARSINOE has demonstrated that building climate- and water-resilient regions in Europe requires more than isolated technical solutions. It requires integrated, systemic approaches grounded in science, stakeholder engagement, and financial viability. By coupling the Systems Innovation Approach with concrete demonstrators across diverse climatic and socio-economic contexts, ARSINOE has generated practical tools, models, and governance methods that can be directly embedded into EU water and climate policy frameworks for their implementation.

This deliverable demonstrates that the consortium disseminated the project's vision and objectives through two policy briefs, as well as its outcomes on stakeholders' engagement. The third and final policy brief aims to translate the innovations of the project into recommendations for European policymakers that align with ongoing legislative processes. The proposed measures provide a coherent roadmap for operationalising Europe's climate and water resilience objectives up to 2030 and beyond.

The relevance of ARSINOE's outputs could be valuable for DG CLIMA, DG ENV, and European financial governance, offering concrete pathways to integrate resilience into the European regulatory frameworks. By adopting these recommendations, EU institutions and Member States can accelerate the transition towards a climate-resilience and Water-Smart Society, ensuring that Europe's water resources are safeguarded, restored, and managed for the benefit of people, economies, and ecosystems in an era of increasing climate uncertainty.

About the project

Systems Innovation Approach (SIA) addresses the growing complexity, interdependencies and interconnectedness of modern societies and economies, focusing on the functions of the cross-sectoral system as a whole and on the variety of actors. The Climate Innovation Window (CIW) is the EU reference innovations marketplace for climate adaptation technologies. ARSINOE shapes the pathways to resilience by bringing together SIA and CIW, to build an ecosystem for climate change adaptation solutions. Within the ARSINOE ecosystem, pathways to solutions are co-created and co-designed by stakeholders, who can then select either existing CIW technologies, or technologies by new providers (or a combination) to form an innovation package. This package may be designed for implementation to a specific region, but its building blocks are transferable and re-usable; they can be re-adapted and updated. In this way, the user (region) gets an innovation package consisting of validated technologies (expanding the market for CIW); new technologies implemented in the specific local innovation package get the opportunity to be validated and become CIW members, while the society (citizens, stakeholders) benefits as a whole. ARSINOE applies a three-tier, approach: (a) using SIA it integrates multi-faceted technological, digital, business, governance and environmental aspects with social innovation for the development of adaptation pathways to climate change for specific regions; (b) it links with CIW to form innovation packages by matching innovators with end-users/regions; (c) it fosters the ecosystem sustainability and growth with cross-fertilization and replication across regions and scales, at European level and beyond, using specific business models, exploitation and outreach actions. The ARSINOE approach is show-cased in nine widely varied demonstrators, as a proof-of-concept with regards to its applicability, replicability, potential and efficacy.



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