



SD-WISHEES

HURDLES FOR TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMMES

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List of acronyms

Acronym	Full title
AGM	Annual General Meeting
CNR	Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche/National Research Council of Italy
CSA	Coordination & Support Action
D[#].[##]	Deliverable number ## of WP[#] (<i>according to SD-WISHEES Grant Agreement</i>)
ERA	European Research Area
EU	European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HORIZON	European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Programme
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
ISPRA	Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale/Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research
JPI	Joint Programming Initiative
JPI CH	JPI on "Cultural Heritage and Global Change"
JPI Climate	JPI on "Connecting Climate Knowledge for Europe"
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
M[#]	Milestone number # (<i>according to SD-WISHEES Grant Agreement</i>)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy / Doctorate degree
PRIMA	Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area
Q[#]	Question number # (<i>according to WP5 survey</i>)
RFO	Research Funding Organisation
RPO	Research Performing Organisation
R&I	Research and Innovation
SD-WISHEES	Supporting and Developing Widening Strategies to tackle Hydroclimatic Extreme Events
SRIA	Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda
Water JPI	JPI on "Water challenges for a changing world"
Water4All	Water4All Partnership – Water Security for the planet
WCCH	Water(hydro)-Climate-Cultural Heritage
WEFE	Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem
WP[#]	Work Package number # (<i>according to SD-WISHEES Grant Agreement</i>)

Executive summary

The Horizon EU **SD-WISHEES-Supporting and Developing Widening Strategies to tackle Hydroclimatic Extreme Events: impacts and Sustainable solutions for cultural heritage** is developing innovative tools and strategies to enable collaboration between different stakeholders in Europe and beyond to inclusively address the sustainable management of cultural heritage threatened by extreme hydroclimatic events, called the “**Water(hydro)-Climate-Cultural Heritage Nexus**” (**WCCH Nexus**).

In this context, from the second half of 2024 to early 2025, **SD-WISHEES involved several stakeholders from different communities and categories in a survey consultation process aimed at understanding the barriers that prevent them from participating in transnational R&I programmes and projects in the WCCH Nexus.** SD-WISHEES partners also responded to the survey, and their responses were analysed to serve as a benchmark for evaluating stakeholder outcomes. This document reports the main findings from the analysis of the survey responses received from stakeholders, providing suggestions for consideration when updating the consultative roadmap on R&I needs and strategic priorities for protecting cultural heritage from the impacts of hydroclimatic extreme events.

The most common barrier for stakeholders when participating in transnational programmes concerns the need to build a sustainable partnership or to find the right consortium. This barrier was selected by more than half of the stakeholders who responded to the survey, both from “widening” and “non-widening” countries. The **high level of competition that characterizes this type of initiative**, along with the **complexity of the rules** for participation, management, and implementation of the projects, and the potential **limitations on the administrative and technical capacity** of the partners/partnership, are among the main hurdles faced by stakeholders. Another barrier mentioned by stakeholders relates to the fact that the **WCCH Nexus is not yet well understood or that WCCH Nexus topics are being addressed separately in projects and initiatives.**

Hence, according to stakeholders, to strengthen transnational R&I cooperation in the WCCH Nexus and reduce the identified barriers, **key priorities should include sustainable funding and better advertisement on funding opportunity, policy harmonization, and incentives for collaboration and inclusiveness among stakeholders with complementary expertise on WCCH Nexus topics.** The involvement of local communities, policy makers, and politicians was also highlighted as important in supporting transnational R&I cooperation.

Capacity building, flexibility and adaptability of the programmes, and knowledge transfer are also essential for boosting participation, particularly in less developed regions. It is **necessary to raise public awareness on the WCCH Nexus**, while also strengthening its place in the global water agenda. It was also stressed that projects for the WCCH Nexus need to emphasize the interdependence between water, climate change, and cultural heritage, to achieve broader impacts.

Furthermore, the Mediterranean Basin is considered a climate change *hotspot*. This means it is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Hence, **focus should be put on the benefit of cultural heritage for setting up adaptation strategies, both for tangible and intangible assets.** This will help raise awareness among all stakeholders, from government to citizen, about the impacts of hydroclimatic extremes on all types of cultural heritage, and the need to adopt sustainable and targeted (also locally) adaptation solutions and strategies.

Additionally, **investment in digital and physical infrastructure and inclusive, socio-economic considerations are crucial for equitable and effective cooperation.**

Addressing these challenges will ensure the strengthening of transnational cooperation and future long-term, high-impact R&I collaborations under the WCCH Nexus across all regions of Europe and beyond.

1. Background

In 2023, sixteen (16) organisations representing research funding organisations (RFOs), research performing organisations (RPOs), foundations, non-governmental organisations and private companies embarked on an ambitious Coordination & Support Action (CSA) project, named **SD-WISHEES Supporting and Developing Widening Strategies to tackle Hydroclimatic Extreme Events: impacts and Sustainable solutions for cultural heritage**¹. The initiative aims to develop innovative tools and strategies to enable and strengthen trans-national collaboration between national research and innovation funding members to address together the protection and adaptation of cultural heritage in Europe and beyond.

The Consortium, which includes 16 members from Albania, Belgium, France, Georgia, Italy, Malta, UK, Kenya, Portugal, Spain, Romania, and The Netherlands, was convened by the European Union (EU)'s Climate Joint Programming Initiative (JPI Climate²) and Water JPI³, under the auspices of the SD-WISHEES project. The SD-WISHEES receives funding from the EU's Horizon Europe Framework Programme (HORIZON), call HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01, under Grant Agreement No. 101095322. It is implemented from 2023–2026, under the coordination of the National Research Council of Italy (CNR).

SD-WISHEES strives to enhance collaboration with widening countries to the Horizon Europe Programme by enhancing the understanding of needs and mechanisms for widening collaboration. The project aims to enable and strengthen strategic coordination and cross-sector collaboration between national research and innovation (R&I) funding members, researchers, innovators, institutions and a wide variety of stakeholders to **address together the cultural heritage protection and adaptation in Europe and beyond in response to increasingly more frequent and severe hydroclimatic extreme events**, such as droughts and floods. **Cultural heritage here refers to historical sites, natural sites, and intangible assets (i.e. knowledge, traditions, ecosystem services).**

Our mission is to develop innovative tools and strategies to enable collaboration between diverse stakeholders in Europe and beyond to inclusively address sustainable management of cultural heritage threatened by hydroclimatic extremes, referred to as “**Water(hydro)-Climate-Cultural Heritage Nexus**” (the **WCCH Nexus**), to support the European Research Area (ERA) aimed at creating a single, borderless market for research, innovation and technology in the EU, and to empower a more connected and competitive scientific community in the WCCH framework.

To achieve these goals, it is necessary to *i)* strengthen cross-sectoral collaborations and strategic coordination among the communities dealing with water, climate and cultural heritage; *ii)* define R&I strategies and priorities; *iii)* understand the barriers that prevent the different stakeholder communities involved in the WCCH nexus from participating in transnational R&I programmes and projects; *iv)* launch and monitor joint activities to measure progress towards widening; *v)* define and test innovative pathways.

The **Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)** is also considered as key element of the SD-WISHEES project to enable greater inclusivity, wider participation, and less discrimination when dealing with R&I solutions for cultural heritage in response to hydroclimatic extreme events in the context of climate change. This is particularly relevant for a project that aims to be inclusive through its widening programme and to ensure consideration of the social benefits associated with tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage.

In the framework of SD-WISHEES, these goals are achieved through a continuous mapping of communities and individual stakeholders dealing with the WCCH Nexus, followed by their direct involvement through showcase events, surveys, interviews, thematic workshops, collaborative events and networking actions, as well as constant communication and outreach activities.

¹ <https://sd-wishees.irs.cnr.it/>.

² <https://jpi-climate.eu/>.

³ <http://www.waterjpi.eu/>.

From the second half of 2024 to early 2025, SD-WISHEES involved several stakeholders from different communities and categories in a survey consultation process aimed at understanding the barriers that prevent them from participating in transnational R&I programmes and projects in the WCCH Nexus. The responses provided by stakeholders were then collected and analysed, and several statistics were produced to highlight common obstacles and the strategies (good practices) adopted to overcome them. SD-WISHEES partners also responded to the survey, and their responses were analysed to serve as a benchmark for evaluating stakeholder outcomes

This report summarises the main findings from the analysis of the survey responses, providing suggestions for consideration when updating the consultative roadmap on R&I needs and strategic priorities for protecting cultural heritage from the impacts of hydroclimatic extreme events (reported in SD-WISHEES Deliverable D2.1 – Towards a Roadmap).

2. Understanding barriers in transnational cooperation: the WP5 survey

Within SD-WISHEES, a specific work package (hereinafter referred to as WP5), coordinated by the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA), has been defined with the aims to strengthen the ERA by promoting more effective and in-depth R&I collaborations to protect cultural heritage from hydroclimatic extremes, whose impacts are expected to be exacerbated by climate change and anthropogenic pressures. WP5 also intends to assess widening and alignment actions by considering how global challenges are being addressed in Europe and beyond.

To this end, WP5 activities focus on *i)* identifying existing barriers that prevent, or reduce the effects of, the participation in transnational R&I initiatives on topics covered by the WCCH Nexus and best available solutions/good practices for the adaptation, promotion and protection of cultural heritage in response to hydroclimatic extremes, and *ii)* fostering the development of innovative solutions dealing with the WCCH Nexus, with the engagement of affected communities, including policy makers, managers, practitioners, researchers, etc., as well young people (e.g., university students, recent graduates, PhD students).

The assessment of barriers, enablers, and good practices aims at:

- Enhancing cooperation over the WCCH Nexus.
- Contributing to the widening and alignment strategy (in Europe and beyond).
- Enhancing the impacts of the R&I investments.
- Supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations in 2015.

In this context, a survey ([Annex A. The WP5 survey](#)) has been defined with the support of the SD-WISHEES Consortium and submitted to and distributed among selected stakeholders ([Table 1](#)) to understand the hurdles that prevent some of them from participating in transnational cooperation for R&I programmes in the WCCH Nexus. The definition of the survey contents was not limited to the interaction between WP5 partners alone but was also possible thanks to the full and active cooperation of all SD-WISHEES partners.

The entire Consortium's involvement was necessary to adapt, improve, and finalize the survey's structure and questions. To achieve this goal, at the end of 2023, SD-WISHEES partners was asked to answer the following questions:

- *When you think about possible barriers to participating in transnational R&I programmes, what is the first thing you think of?*
- *Which are major barriers for you (or other similar organizations) to participate in projects and initiatives addressing the water(/hydro)-climate-cultural heritage nexus?*
- *Do you see differences between regions?*

The answers to these questions contributed to draft the survey, from which the final version was then defined to be submitted to and distributed among stakeholders. SD-WISHEES partners were also the first to respond to the survey during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the project, held in Paris (FR) in November 2023.

The partners' survey responses also serve as a reference point/benchmark for the analysis of the responses of the various communities/stakeholder categories involved in this process. For this reason, SD-WISHEES partners' responses were analysed and reported separately from those received from stakeholders, and the resulting statistics for partners and stakeholders are indeed presented here in two separate chapters.



Table 1: Survey process with the active involvement of the SD-WISHEES Consortium: from the launch of the survey to the realization of the present report containing survey's outcomes and statistics.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACTIONS	MILESTONE/ DELIVERABLE DATE
Collecting thoughts/feedback from SD-WISHEES partners on barriers to participating in transnational R&I programmes, especially linked to the Water(/hydro)-Climate-Cultural Heritage Nexus (WCCH nexus)	08/11/2023
Defining survey for stakeholders' engagement	19/11/2023 (M13)
Testing the survey with SD-WISHEES partners @ AGM 2023	22/11/2023
Selection of relevant stakeholders (w/ emails) from WP2 mapping	DEC 2023 (M14)
Survey contents updated based on testing and following feedback	End of 2023–Start of 2024
Finalization of the survey contents	First half of 2024
Survey initially sent only to stakeholders from the “ <i>Government sector/ policy makers/local authorities</i> ” category	JUL 2024
Survey sent to stakeholders identified in the other categories and to other relevant stakeholders	From SEP 2024
Ad-hoc survey session during the SD-WISHEES Workshop organized within the AFRICA24 Conference (+ survey reminder to the workshop participants)	NOV 2024 (DEC 2024)
Survey reminders to stakeholders	JAN–MAR 2025 (M15)
Closure of the survey	31/03/2025
Analysis of partners' and stakeholders' responses to the survey	First half of 2025
Conclusion of the analysis and realization of the present report	JUN–JUL 2025 (D5.1)

3. Stakeholders involved in the survey process

Different stakeholder communities and categories were involved in the survey process. The identification of the relevant stakeholders was mainly derived from the actions of the SD-WISHEES WP devoted to drive the strategic planning of the collaboration across Europe and in widening countries, specifically including in the Balkans and Africa (hereinafter referred to as WP2). To achieve this objective, WP2 aims at identifying not only the main R&I needs in the WCCH Nexus, but also stakeholders for consultation and involvement in project activities. The goal is to engage with 1) R&I experts from the climate, environmental and cultural heritage communities; 2) policy makers and managers; 3) representatives of RFOs, and 4) public-social and civil society human rights players. This stakeholder engagement plays a key role in identifying areas for the protection, adaptation, and resilience of cultural heritage in the context of climate change and anthropogenic pressures, with a view to greater and stronger R&I cooperation.

At the beginning of the project, a stakeholder mapping was conducted within WP2 (reported in SD-WISHEES Deliverable D2.2 – Stakeholder Mapping, hereinafter referred to as *WP2 mapping*). The WP2 mapping was based on guidelines and a template for gathering information on potential stakeholders, agreed upon by partners. The stakeholder mapping process was launched in October 2023. Contributions from SD-WISHEES partners were received by November 2023, resulting in the creation of an initial list of stakeholders grouped into the following six categories:



- Government sector/policy makers/local authorities.
- Regional and EU level.
- Academia & research organizations.
- NGOs and Civil Society.
- Private Sector.
- Media and general public.

This list was initially considered for the submission of the WP5 survey, considering only stakeholders with a personal email address available, rather than a generic email address associated with their organization. This allowed for a direct approach to stakeholders. The first category of stakeholders considered for the survey was that of the “Government sector/policy makers/local authorities”. Stakeholders grouped in WP2 mapping under this category received the survey in July 2024 (see [Table 1](#)). Then, from September 2024, the survey was sent to those stakeholders identified in the other five categories within the WP2 mapping.



At the same time, it was decided to increase the number of stakeholders involved in the consultation process to strengthen the analysis, also directing the survey to stakeholders contacted directly by SD-WISHEES partners or who participated in initiatives related to the project. Hence, the survey involved representatives of NGOs working on water and climate as **UN-Water partners**, experts participating in projects funded by the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) initiatives, and participants to the SD-WISHEES Workshop “Climate-induced threats to cultural heritage: bridging knowledge and action via collaboration and sharing knowledge”, organized in Mombasa (Kenya) on 28 November 2024, as a part of the **AFRICA24 Conference**. This was a stakeholder consultation workshop that

brought together a diverse group of specialists for the WCCH Nexus from across the African continent and experts involved in R&I cooperation activity in Africa. The workshop discussions highlighted several critical issues regarding the protection of cultural heritage from extreme hydroclimatic events and the promotion of enhanced R&I and collaboration between Africa and EU, and a session of the workshop was devoted to the WP5 survey on hurdles for transnational programmes.

Between December 2024 and March 2025, several reminders were then sent to stakeholders for recalling the survey compilation, and finally, at the end of March 2025, the survey was closed (see [Table 1](#)).

At the end of the process, **82 people provided responses to the WP5 survey ([Annex B. Survey responses](#)), of which 16 representatives of SD-WISHEES partners, 8 UN-Water partners, 10 participants in the AFRICA24 Workshop, and the remaining 48 stakeholders both present in the WP2 mapping and experts directly involved by SD WISHEES partners or through projects funded by PRIMA.** On average, the survey was sent to about 360 potential stakeholders (excluding from the counting the partners of the SD-WISHEES Consortium) and the survey response rate by stakeholders was around 18%, in line with initial expectations depicted in the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) set up for this WP5 activity at the beginning of the project (see Table 1 reported in SD-WISHEES Deliverable 1.2 – Monitoring) and other similar initiatives. The response rate to the survey exceeds 20% if SD-WISHEES partners are also considered in the count.

The analysis of the survey's responses was conducted by ISPRA, the WP5 leader, in the first half of 2025 and preliminary analysis outcomes were presented during the monthly project core teams held during that period. The analysis was then concluded in June 2025, when then started the realization of the present report.

The outcomes of the survey are presented here as follows. [Chapter 4](#) reports the outcomes referred to the SD-WISHEES partners. These outcomes represent the survey's benchmark. All stakeholders' outcomes are, instead, depicted in [Chapter 5](#), while [Chapter 6](#) focuses on some statistics derived from the responses of AFRICA24 Workshop participants. Given the small sample of responses collected from these participants, the statistics reported are for illustrative purposes only and are intended to serve as indicators and incentives for future stakeholder engagement efforts through dedicated workshops. Finally, the conclusions of the analysis are reported in [Chapter 7](#).

4. The point of view of the SD-WISHEES partners

As mentioned previously, the outcomes of the analysis of the SD-WISHEES partners' responses to the survey served a dual purpose. On the one hand, these responses were necessary to better define the content of the survey itself, which would then be circulated among identified stakeholders; on the other, they serve as a benchmark for the evaluation of the survey outcomes from the stakeholders involved in the survey process.



This allows us to understand both how different the hurdles and barriers encountered by the SD-WISHEES Consortium in transnational cooperation within the WCCH Nexus are from those encountered by the stakeholders consulted through the survey, who represent a more heterogeneous group, and to identify possible similarities in the issues encountered in transnational cooperation.

The similarities and differences thus gathered will provide useful information to better target SD-WISHEES's next initiatives and actions for stakeholder engagement, as well as to produce policy/technical briefs at the end of the project that will reflect the perspectives of a diverse range of stakeholders, in addition to those represented by the participants to SD-WISHEES Consortium.

4.1 Analysis of the outcomes

The main outcomes of the analysis are reported as follows. The first information required by the survey allow us to characterize the respondents from the SD-WISHEES partnership in terms of gender ([Figure 1](#)), age ([Figure 2](#)), and level of education ([Figure 3](#)). According to the results, a slight majority of SD-WISHEES respondents are women (56%), half of the respondents belong to the 36–50 years age group, a quarter belong to the 21–35 years age group while the remaining part belongs equally to the older age groups (the 51–65 years age group, and the 66 years or older group).

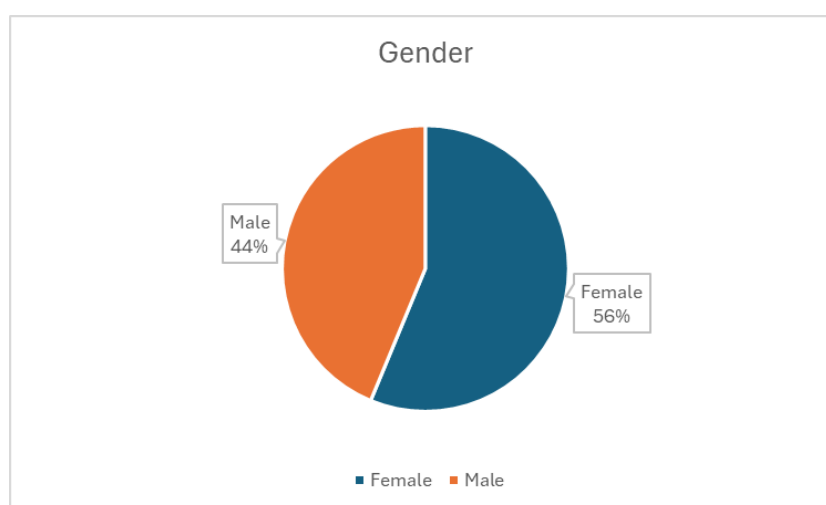


Figure 1: Gender of the SD-WISHEES partners that responded to the WP5 survey.

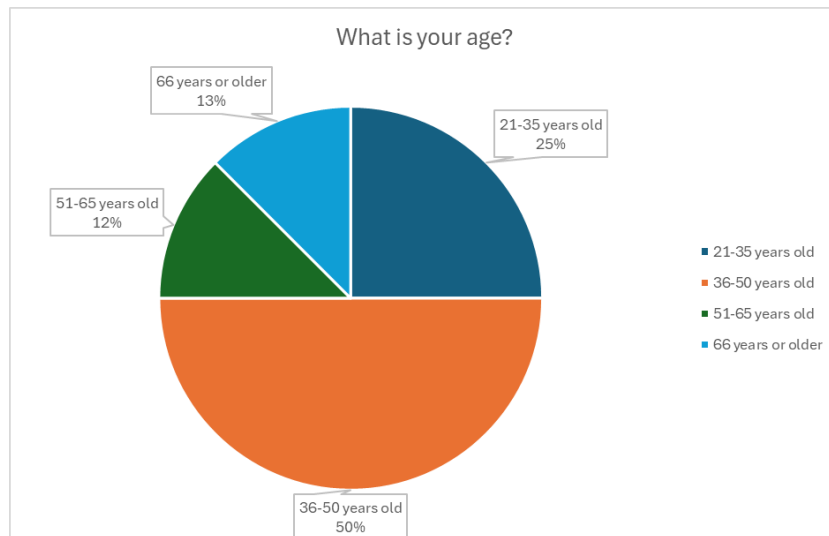


Figure 2: Age of the SD-WISHEES partners that responded to the WP5 survey.

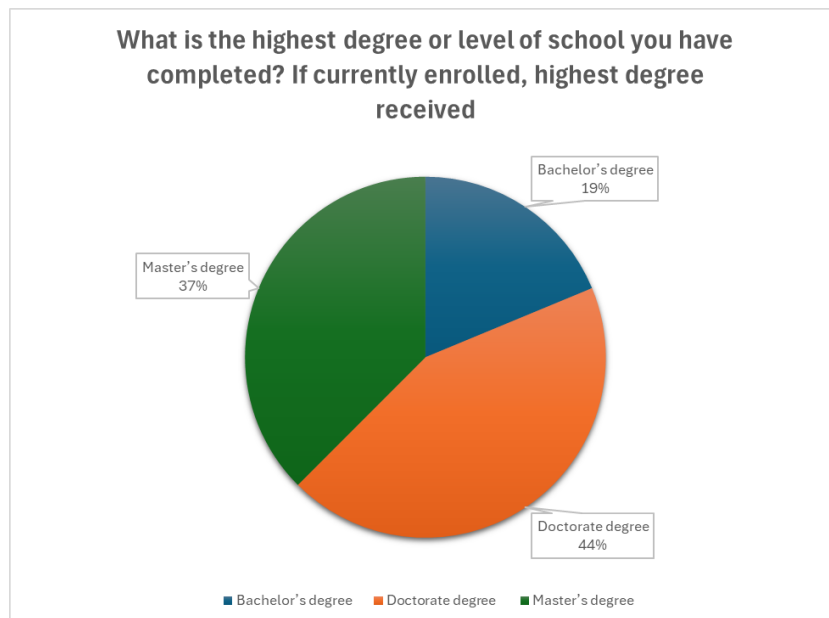


Figure 3: Level of education of the SD-WISHEES partners that responded to the WP5 survey.

The next questions (Q) in the survey aim at characterizing the institution/organization/agency represented by respondents: Q1) which category best describes the entity ([Figure 4](#)); Q2) if the entity funds transnational R&I programmes or initiatives ([Figure 5](#)); Q3) topics funded within the WHCC Nexus at both national and transnational level ([Figure 6](#)); Q4) if the entity is also funded (or it has looked for funds) over the same topics ([Figure 7](#)).

The majority of respondents represent either the “Government sector/policy makers/local authorities” group (6 of them) or the “Academia & research organizations” group (6), whereas the minority of them represent the “NGOs and Civil Society” group (2) and the “Companies (SMEs & Large Enterprises)” (1), “Regional and EU level organisations” (1) groups (reported to as “Other” in [Figure 4](#)).

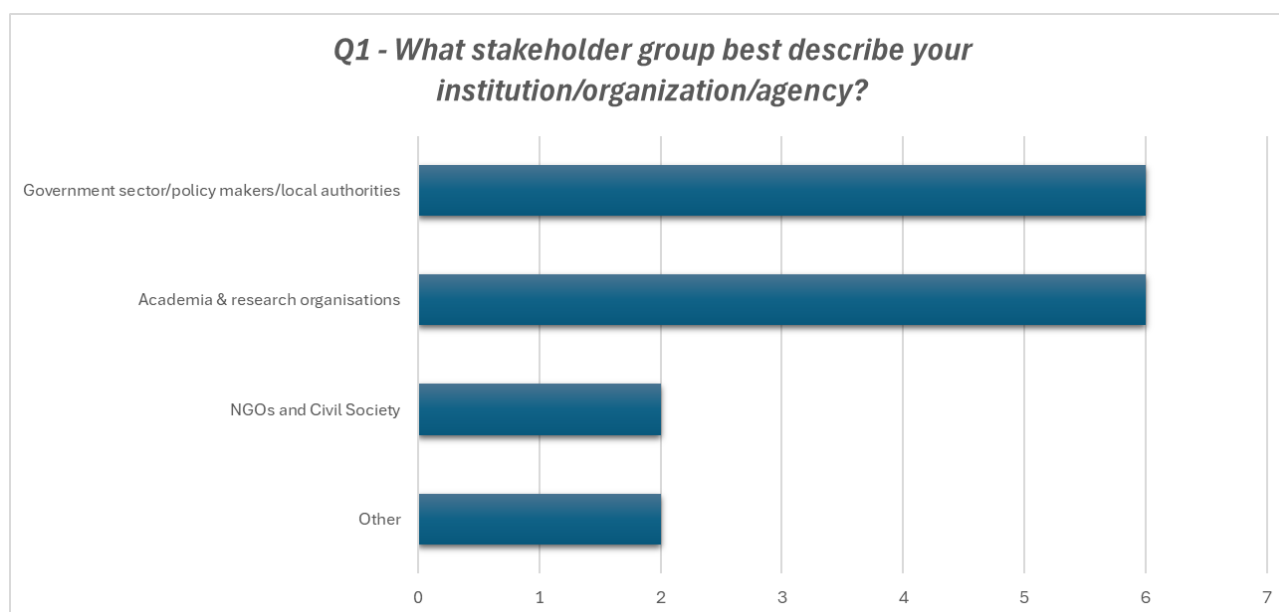


Figure 4: Category of the institution/organization/agency represented by the SD-WISHEES partnership.

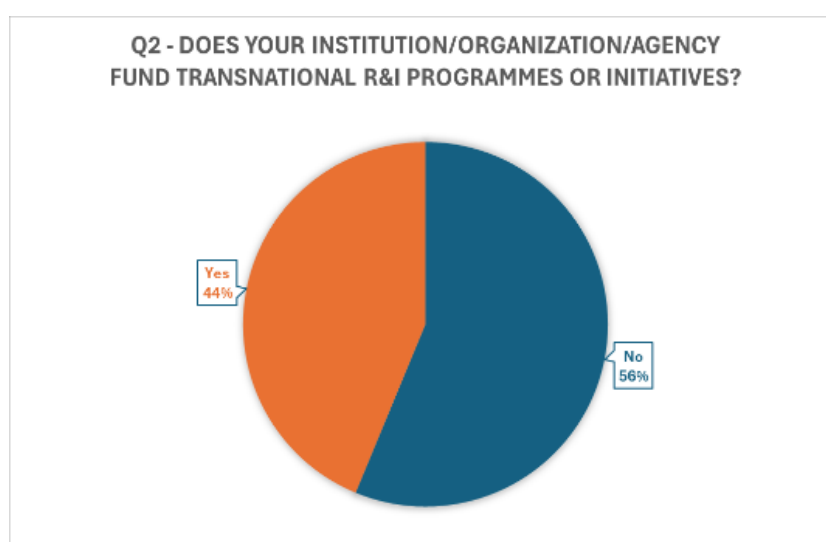


Figure 5: Percentage of institution/organization/agency within SD-WISHEES funding transnational R&I programmes or initiatives.

Among the SD-WISHEES partners who responded to the survey, just over half do not finance transnational R&I programmes or initiatives ([Figure 5](#)). Most of the entities represented by the respondents provide fundings mainly for the theme “*Water*”, followed equally by the themes “*Cultural heritage*”, “*Climate-water-energy nexus*” and “*Hydro-meteorological extremes*” ([Figure 6](#)). The WCCH Nexus, which is the topic covered by SD-WISHEES CSA, is not among the most funded topics.

“*Water*”, “*Cultural heritage*”, “*Climate-water-energy nexus*” and “*Hydro-meteorological extremes*” are also the topics for which these organizations most frequently request fundings. Among all these, “*Water*” is the topic with the highest funding requests ([Figure 7](#)).

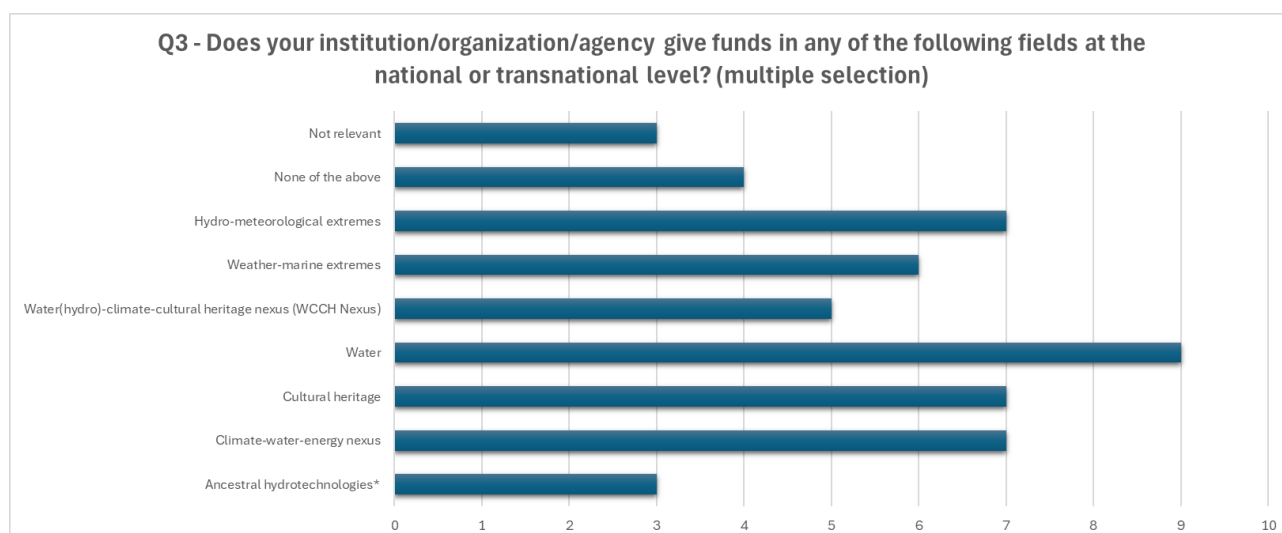


Figure 6: Topics funded by SD-WISHEES partners in the WHCC Nexus framework, at both national and transnational level.

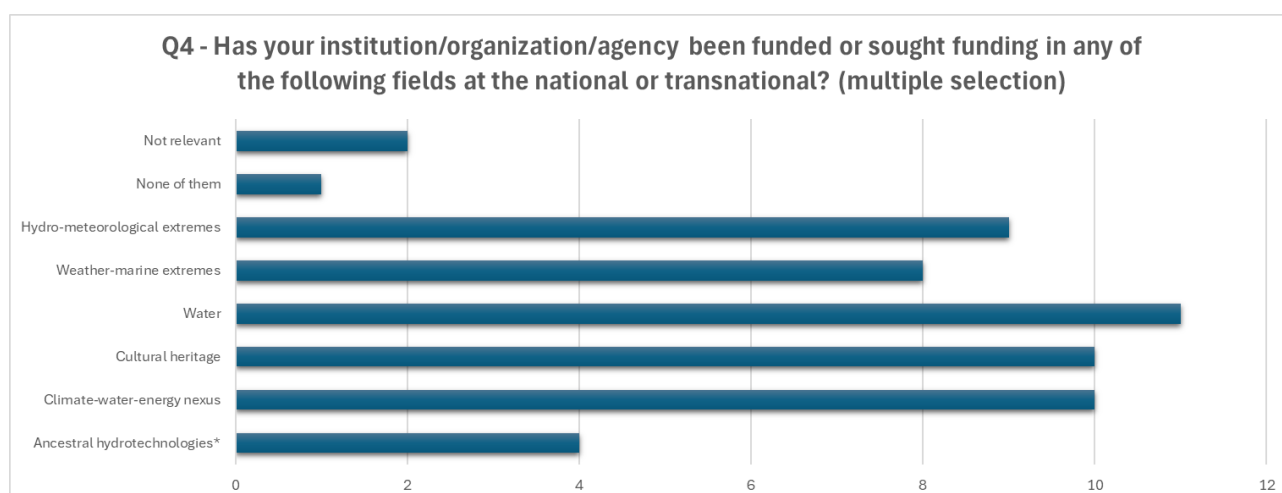


Figure 7: Topics for which the SD-WISHEES partners have requested or require funding.

Question Q5) aims to test the knowledge that the topic “*Cultural heritage*” refers to both historical and natural sites (tangible) and intangible assets (i.e., knowledge, traditions). Obviously, all SD-WISHEES respondents were aware that the topic includes both tangible and intangible assets ([Figure 8](#)).

Question Q6) addresses the barriers that concern SD-WISHEES partners when participating in transnational programmes ([Figure 9](#)). The most common barrier refers to “*The need to build a sustainable partnership or to find the right consortium*”, followed by two barriers that refer to the administrative and/or management/implementation “*rules*”, and the difficulty that can arise in a transnational programme when national rules (i.e., management, implementation, financing, reporting mechanisms, etc.) are not aligned with each other.

The least chosen answers were (referred to as “*Other*” in [Figure 9](#)):

- Funding constraints, insufficient alignment between the programme and the national strategy.
- Lack of human resources fully dedicated & dedicated to support the project/programme implementation.
- No barriers.

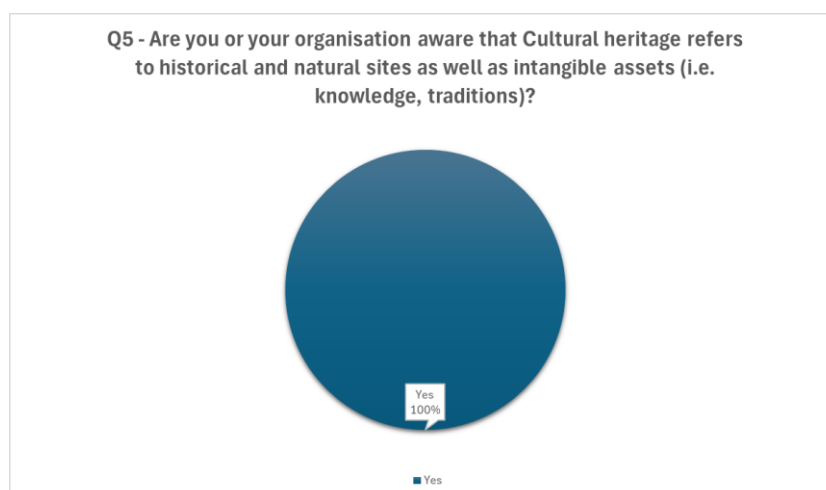


Figure 8: Percentage of SD-WISHEES respondents aware that “*Cultural heritage*” refers to both historical and natural sites and intangible assets (i.e., knowledge, traditions).

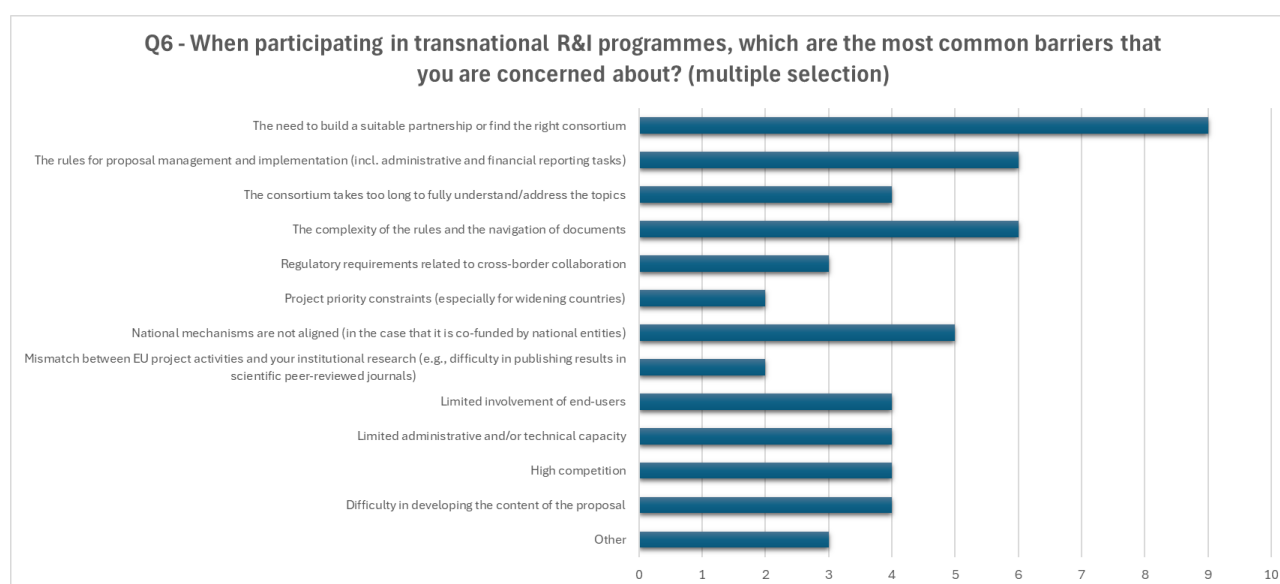


Figure 9: Most common barriers encountered by SD-WISHEES partners when participating in transnational R&I programmes.

Question Q7) deals instead on barriers encountered when participating in a project or an initiative addressing the WCCH Nexus ([Figure 10](#)). In this case, the most common hurdle refers to the fact that the topics of the WCCH Nexus are addressed separately in projects and initiatives, followed by the issue that the WCCH Nexus is not yet well understood, or few collaborations deal with the WCCH Nexus.

Another interesting finding is that the lack of knowledge on the impact of hydroclimatic extremes on intangible cultural heritage assets is a hurdle for SD-WISHEES partners.

The answer with only one preference was that “*Researchers are not fully aware of existing R&I programmes on the WCCH Nexus*” (reported as “*Other*” in [Figure 10](#)), that is, this does not constitute a barrier as there is general awareness within the partnership of R&I programmes on the WCCH Nexus

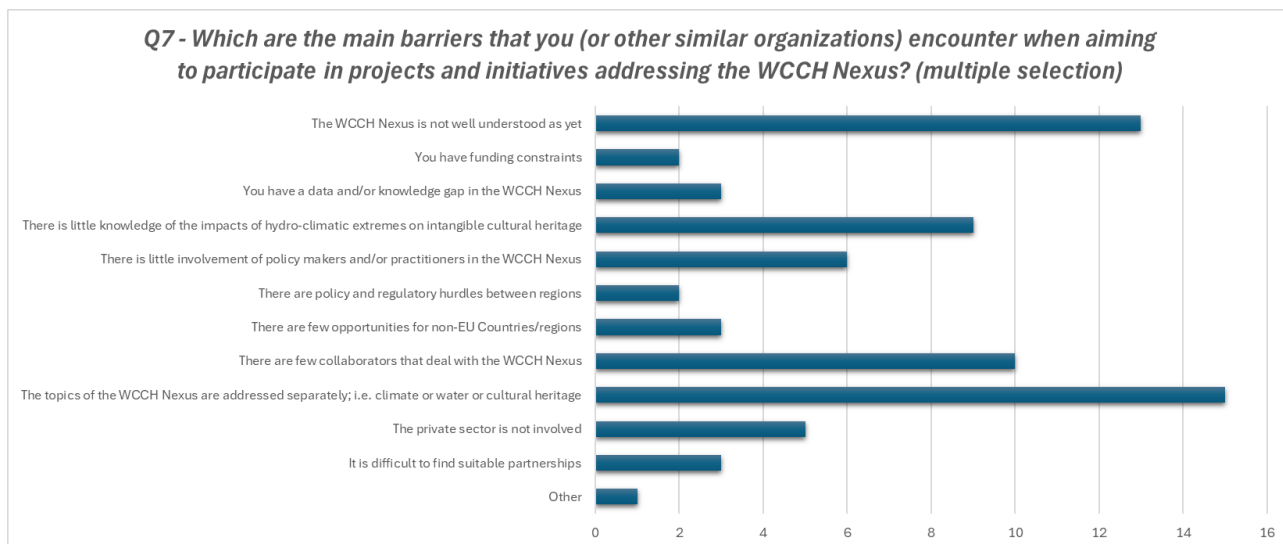


Figure 10: Most common barriers encountered by SD-WISHEES partners when participating in a project or initiative addressing the WCCH Nexus.

Questions Q8) and Q9) are open-ended questions, designed to stimulate deeper reflection and discussion and to collect more in-depth information on the strategies adopted by SD-WISHEES partners to overcome the most common barriers and on the differences found between different regions of the EU associated countries, i.e. the Balkans, Western Europe, North Africa, in terms of participation in transnational projects/initiatives, level of commitment and/or way of approaching the WCCH Nexus.

Concerning question Q8), most of the SD-WISHEES partners highlighted the importance of building a strong and sustainable partnership (*“as soon as the call is issued”*), including networking through attending conferences and workshops on topics related to the WCCH Nexus. They also pointed out the need to raise awareness among potential partners and stakeholders (*“also belonging to different geographical areas”*), to ensure the participation of potentially interested partners, and to involve researchers and partners capable of interdisciplinary R&I, also to overcome possible limitations of competence/expertise within each partner in the field of WCCH Nexus. With similar objectives, one suggested strategy was the development of *“Capacity building,”* which would translate into the organization of training sessions on the rules of participation and management of R&I programs, as well as the investment of considerable resources in communicating R&I programs through, for example, dedicated webinars and information days.

It was also suggested that to bring together funding agencies from different countries/regions, it is necessary to work at the political level to ensure that all players participate in such initiatives based on the *“equal footing”* principle, i.e., all of them have the same degree of ownership of the programme and same benefits.

Moving to question Q9), SD-WISHEES partners mentioned several differences related to the geographical location of the countries that could represent hurdles to participation in transnational programmes. Such differences are reported as follow, according to the place of origin of the SD-WISHEES partners.

Europe:

- Budget (access to funding).
- Differences in technical capacities and infrastructures (quantity of qualified human capital and dedicated infrastructures, not the quality), policy integration and relevance of certain themes such as cultural heritage.
- Different perception in the WCCH Nexus. Western Europe is associated primarily with tangible cultural heritage, while widening countries are associated with the loss of intangible cultural heritage (migration, loss of local food production, etc.).

- Capacity restraints and different work regulation/reporting/approaches.
- Different priorities given to Cultural heritage versus Climate change and Water.
- Differences in expected outcomes.
- Western Europe is most advanced regarding the policies implemented, projects and funding allocated to the cultural heritage protection.
- The main differences are related to the R&I agendas/priorities, funding rules/procedures and funding availability (funders), as well as different research capacities, communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems (funding beneficiaries).
- Probably there is little (or none) awareness of the importance and interconnection of the topics of the WCCH Nexus with the rest of the global challenges that the world is currently facing.
- Different policies/policy views in the framework of the WCCH Nexus.
- Differences in addressing the rules of the transnational programme and in complying with the rules.
- Differences in the thematics addressed by the projects.
- Experience seems to show that Balkan countries are not very present in transnational programmes vs. Western European/North African countries. This fact may be explained by their lack of a full understanding of participation rules and insufficient human and financial resources.

EU-associated countries:

- The EU-associated countries address the Nexus in a different way, for instance, in terms of national policy, national priorities for R&I. Also, different regions have quite different research capacity.
- Language is a major hurdle, together with capacity to join consortiums.

Questions Q10) and Q11) were designed to test knowledge of some transnational initiatives and programmes within the WCCH Nexus, and the corresponding Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas (SRIAs). The Water4All Partnership was the most popular among SD-WISHEES partners (almost all respondents indicated it), followed by the PRIMA Programme, and finally the Water JPI, JPI Climate, and JPI CH ([Figure 11](#)). Additionally, two respondents indicated the BIOVIDERSA partnership. On the other hand, the Water JPI's SRIA is the best known by the SD-WISHEES partners ([Figure 12](#)).

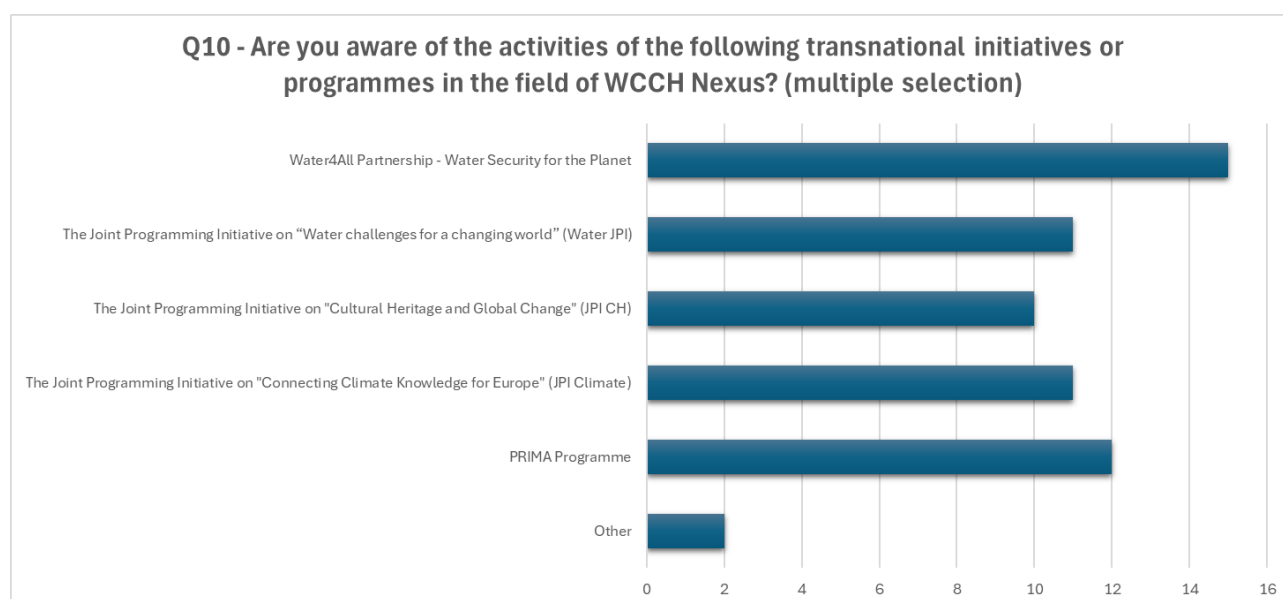


Figure 11: Testing knowledge of some transnational initiatives and programmes within the WCCH Nexus.



Figure 12: Testing knowledge of the SRIAs associated with the transnational initiatives and programmes reported in Figure 11.

The last two questions in the survey were also open-ended. Question Q12) aimed to determine if there were any additional relevant issues to report/address to support transnational R&I cooperation for the WCCH Nexus; whilst question Q13) aimed at collecting those practices that have worked best in transnational R&I programmed in the domain of the WCHH Nexus.

Concerning Q12), the SD-WISHEES partners pointed out the following non-marginal issues to be considered:

- Transnational corporations are not always desired because of historical/political reasons.
- The development of proposals must be supported primarily from the administrative and financial perspective. For instance, widening countries or partners who have never participated in EU projects may be intimidated by the proposed submission procedures.
- The necessity of involving African countries.
- Raising awareness of the WCCH Nexus and its importance to the national policy agenda, also through communication campaigns. Many countries, particularly those widening countries and those outside the EU, do not fully understand the interrelationships within the WCCH Nexus and the benefits of a complex and targeted approach to national policies. Greater awareness is needed among national authorities (policymakers and national RFOs), academia, and the national research community.
- The more the WCCH nexus is explored in the scientific world, the easier it will be to demonstrate to various stakeholders the importance of addressing it in the field through specific initiatives and policies.
- Raising awareness of the value of supporting and participating.
- Accounting on the WCCH specificities within different regions and countries. Strategic agendas of programmes addressing the WCCH Nexus should therefore gather a list of key WCCH challenges in different areas. If the strategic agendas remain too general, countries/regions might not see the added value of collaborating in R&I programmes. It is essential to respond to the needs of participants.

Finally, the SD-WISHEES partners suggested in question Q13) the following best practices based on their own experiences:

- Raising awareness through communication & dissemination, as well as through knowledge transfer.
- User-centric environment or community-based approaches to align R&I to target audience/country needs and capacities.
- Involving Academy, provided they renounce their role as “consultants”, and widening countries and organisations.

- Providing routine updates, and defining short term goals/milestones/deliverables to trigger work
- Capitalizing experience and contacts from similar project (e.g., from Horizon programme).
- Any R&I initiative can profit from the involvement of the quadruple/quintuple helix (*the quadruple and quintuple innovation helix framework describes interactions within a knowledge economy, involving universities, industry, government – the triple helix model of innovation – complemented by the public – in a quadruple helix – and the environment – in a quintuple helix*).
- Participation to transnational programmes/initiatives should not be restricted to the launch of joint calls for proposals. Collaboration can also be reinforced through other actions, such as the TAP (Thematic Annual Programming) action, knowledge hubs, training.
- The success of collaboration activities is fully dependent on a permanent communication between funding agencies. Non-widening countries must support widening countries from the early stages of collaborative activities, both in their launch and management.
- Future programmes on the WCCH Nexus should take a more demonstration-oriented approach to test the suitability of innovative solutions and enable the development of a R&I ecosystem in participating countries.

5. Feedback from stakeholders

This section summarizes the outcomes derived from the analysis of the responses provided by stakeholders involved in the WP5 survey process, which took place through the support of the entire SD-WISHEES partnership (see [Chapter 3](#) for details). These must be considered as the main findings of this report, representing the stakeholders' perspective on the barriers to transnational R&I cooperation on the WCCH Nexus.

5.1 Analysis of the outcomes

As previously reported, the WP5 consultation process involved approximately 360 stakeholders, of which 66 provided valid responses to the survey, divided as follows: 8 UN-Water partners, 11 participants in the AFRICA24 Workshop and 48 stakeholders both present in the WP2 mapping and experts directly involved by the SD-WISHEES partners or through projects funded by PRIMA. Although the number of stakeholders who actually responded to the survey may seem small, compared to those potentially involved in the consultation, and it is not possible to define these results as statistically robust, the information collected is relevant for the research coordination actions that are pursued by SD-WISHEES.

The answers provided to the survey allow us to characterise the engaged stakeholders in terms of gender ([Figure 13](#)), age ([Figure 14](#)), level of education ([Figure 15](#)), and nationality (not shown). With this initial information, it is possible to detect the differences between this sample and the one made up of the SD-WISHEES partners who responded to the survey. In this case, the situation in terms of gender is diametrically opposed to that outlined by SD-WISHEES partners, with men being a slight majority among the stakeholders interviewed (56%). The respondents mainly belong to the older 51–65 years age group (45%), then the 36–50 years age group (36%) and the 21–35 years age group (14%). 58% of the stakeholders interviewed has a PhD, followed by stakeholders with a master's degree (26%). Concerning the nationality, 15% of stakeholders are from Africa, 11% from Asia, 6% from United Kingdom, 1 respondent is Canadian, 5% from European countries located in the Balkans, and the remaining 62% are from other European countries.

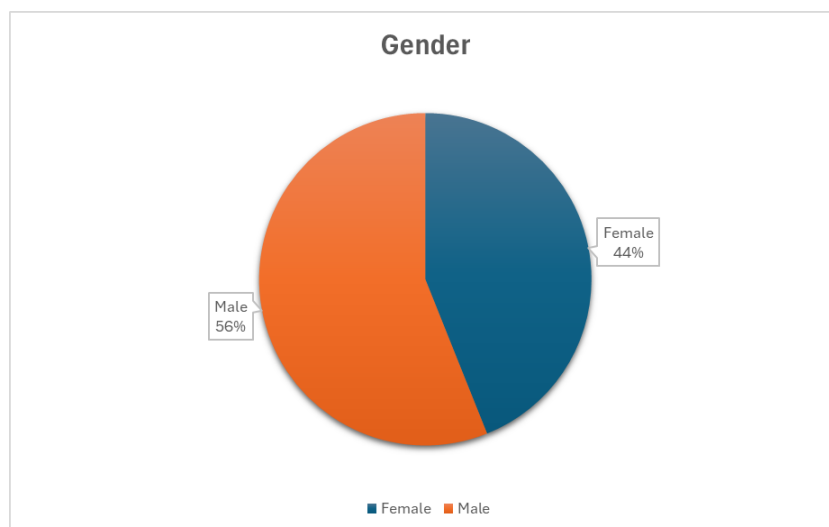


Figure 13: Gender of the stakeholders that responded to the WP5 survey.

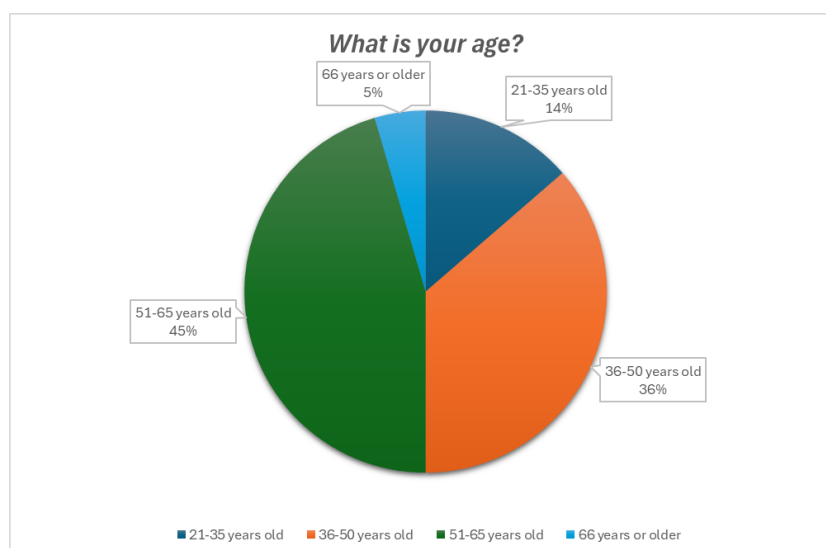


Figure 14: Age of the stakeholders that responded to the WP5 survey.

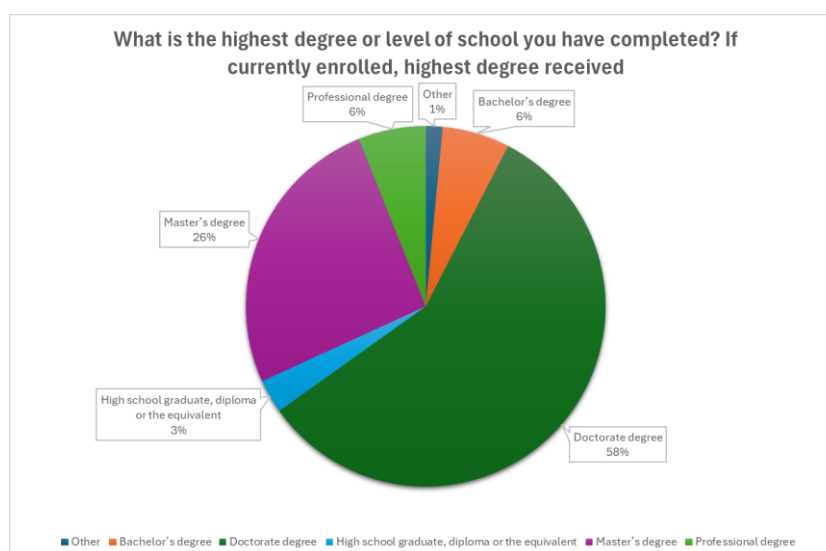


Figure 15: Level of education of stakeholders that responded to the WP5 survey.

Moving to questions Q1) which category best describes the stakeholder's entity (Figure 16), Q2) does the stakeholder's entity funds transnational R&I programmes or initiatives (Figure 17), Q3) topics funded within the WHCC Nexus at both national and transnational level (Figure 18), and Q4) does the stakeholder's entity is also funded (or it has looked for funds) over the same topics (Figure 19), we got the following outcomes.

Concerning Q1, most stakeholders belong to the "Academia & research organization" group (31 of them), followed by the "Government sector/policy makers/local authorities" group (12) and the "NGOs and Civil Society" group (10). This latter outcome was obtained by engaging in the survey the UN-Water partners.

From Q2, we get that 61% of the stakeholders interviewed do not finance transnational R&I programmes or initiatives (Figure 17). Since most of the responding stakeholders are part of the "Academia & research organizations" group, it is not surprising that it appears from question Q3) that most of them do not provide funding for WCCCH topics. (Figure 18). Those who provide financing do so mainly for issues such as "Water", "Climate-water-energy nexus" and "Cultural heritage", and "Hydro-meteorological extremes" (Figure 18). Also

in this case, the WCCH Nexus is not among the most funded topics. “*Water*”, “*Cultural heritage*” and “*Climate-water-energy nexus*” are also the topics for which these organizations most frequently request funding (Figure 19). Among all these, “*Water*” is the topic with the highest funding requests, as also observed from SD-WISHEES outcomes (Figure 7).

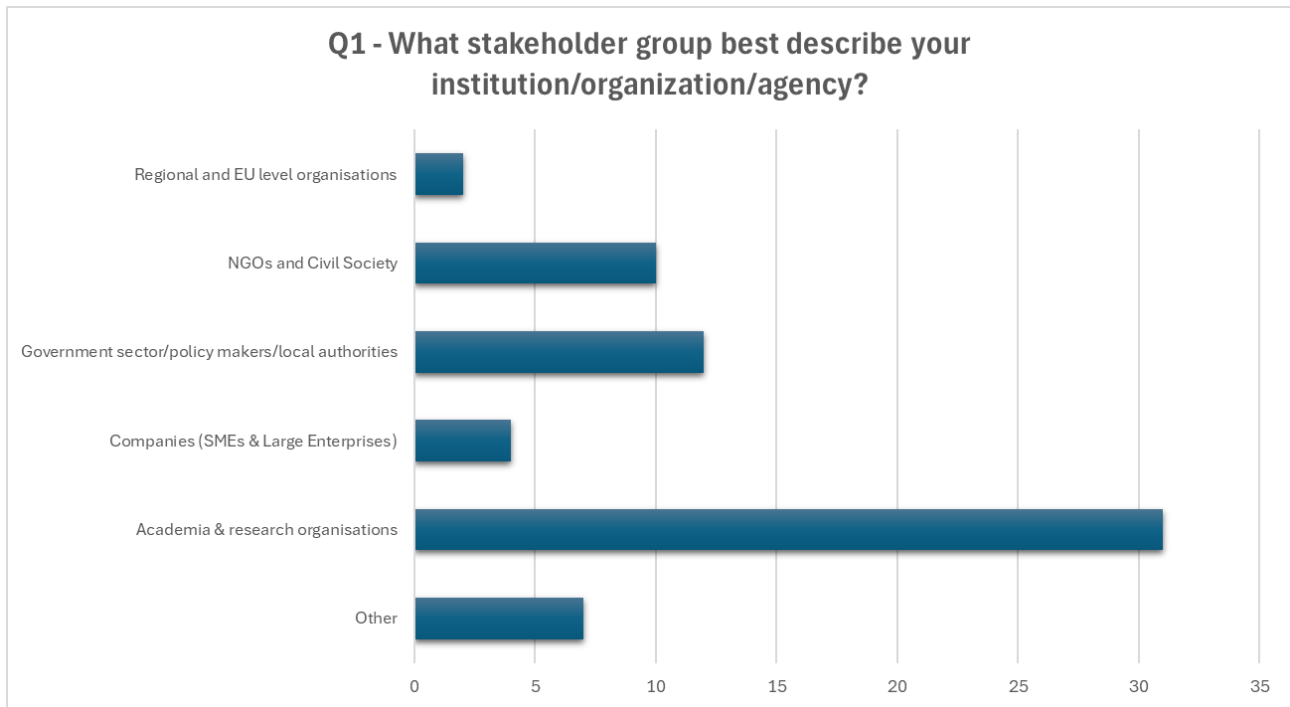


Figure 16: Category of the institution/organization/agency represented by the stakeholders.

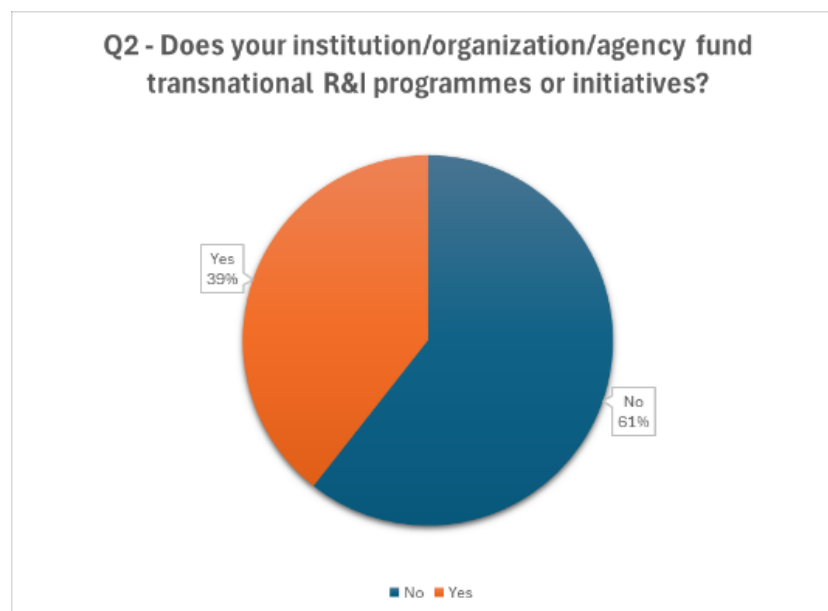


Figure 17: Percentage of institution/organization/agency of the stakeholders funding transnational R&I programmes or initiatives.

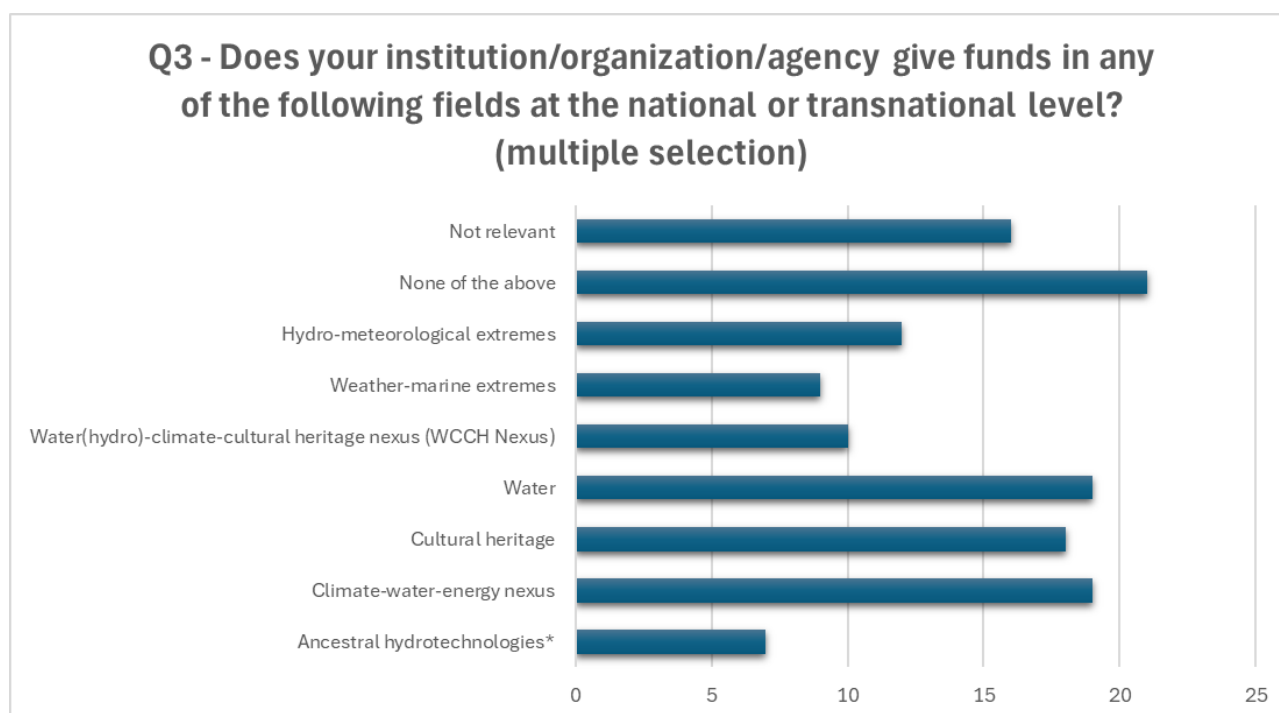


Figure 18: Topics funded by stakeholders' entities in the WHCC Nexus framework, at both national and transnational level.

Question Q5) aims to test the knowledge of the topic "*Cultural heritage*", that is, whether the stakeholders know that this term refers to both historical and natural sites (tangible) and intangible assets (i.e., knowledge, traditions). As for SD-WISHEES partners ([Figure 8](#)), the outcome was obvious, since the majority of stakeholders were aware that the term included both tangible and intangible assets ([Figure 20](#)). A minority (6%) was not aware of the inclusion of both tangible and intangible assets.

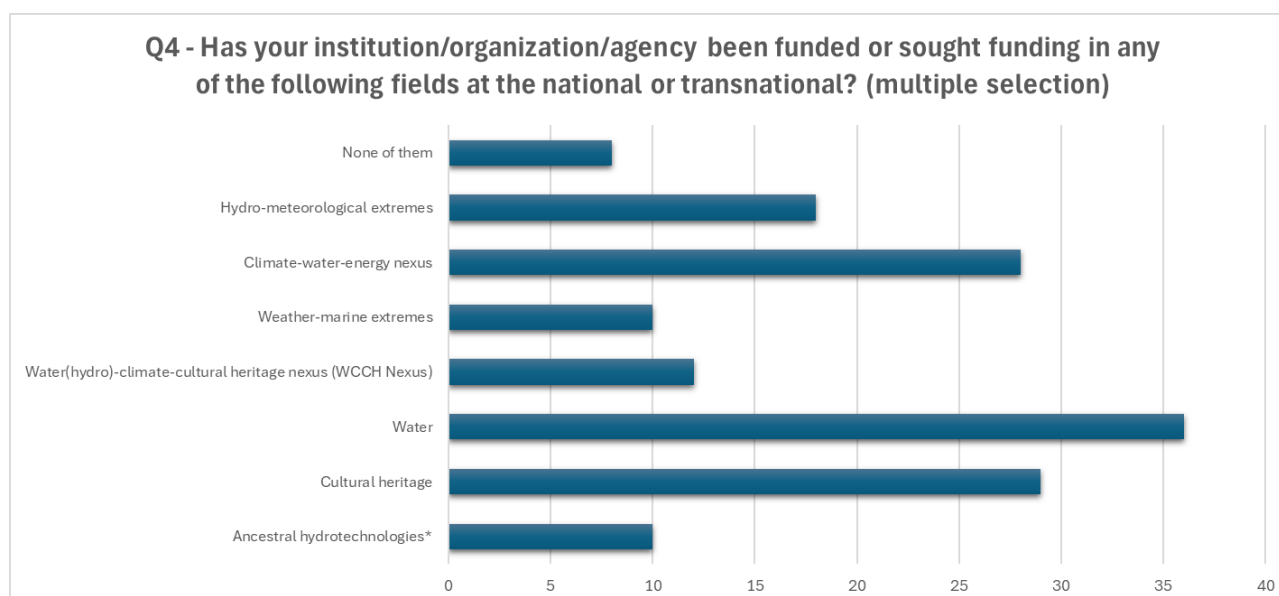


Figure 19: Topics for which the stakeholders have requested or require funding.

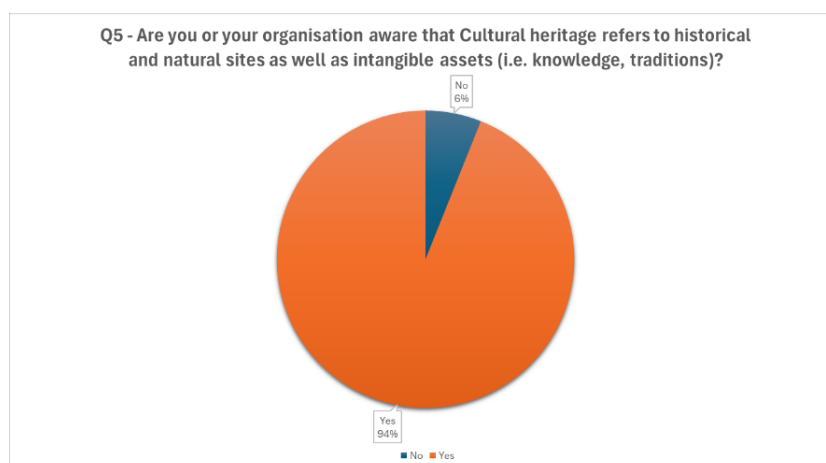


Figure 20: Percentage of stakeholders aware that “Cultural heritage” refers to both historical and natural sites and intangible assets (i.e., knowledge, traditions).

Question Q6) addresses the barriers that concern stakeholders when participating in transnational programmes ([Errore. L'origine riferimento non è stata trovata.](#)). As already seen for SD-WISHEES partners, the most common barrier for stakeholders also concerns “*The need to build a sustainable partnership or to find the right consortium*”. This barrier was selected by 40 stakeholders, representing approximately 61% of those who responded to the survey, both from “widening” and “non-widening” countries. Indeed, this count includes 1 stakeholder from Canada (out of 1 interviewee), 1 from United Kingdom (out of 4), 5 from Asia (out of 7), 6 from Africa (out of 10), 3 from European countries located in the Balkans (out of 3) and 24 from other European countries (out of 41).

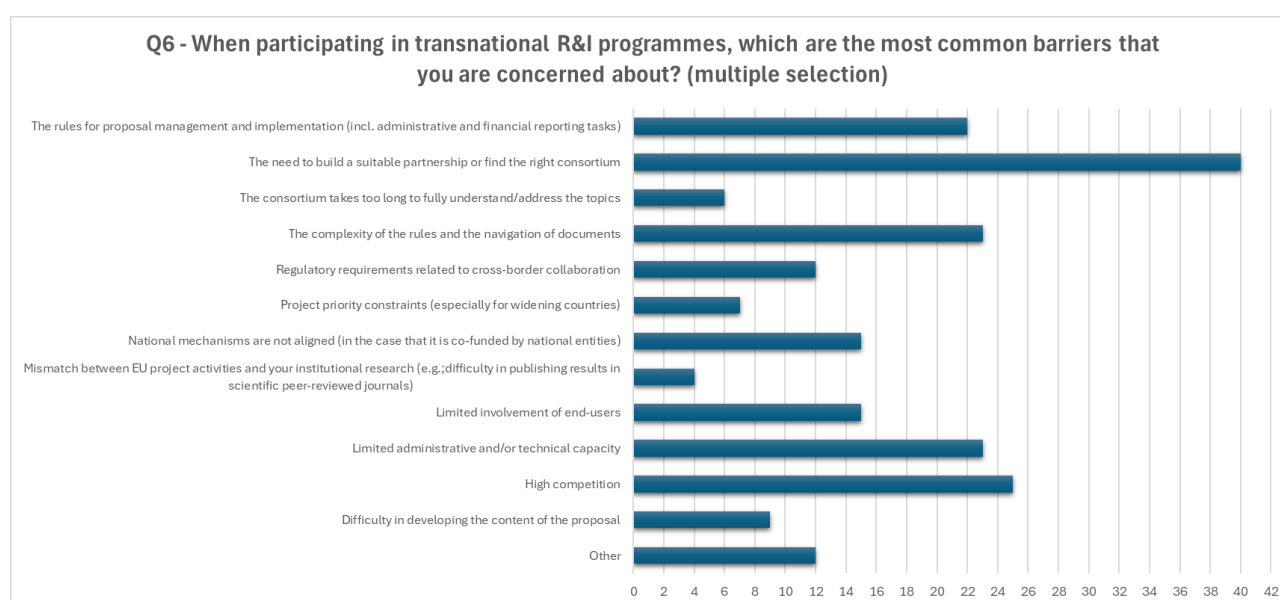


Figure 21: Most common barriers encountered by stakeholders when participating in transnational R&I programmes.

The other barriers that were most selected by stakeholders are those linked to the high level of competition that characterises this type of initiatives (25 out of 66 of those who responded, corresponding to approximately 38%

of the interviewees), to the limitation of administrative and/or technical capacity (23 stakeholders, 35% of the respondents) and, in general, to the complexity of the “rules” for participation (23) and for management and implementation of projects (22).

In [Errore. L'origine riferimento non è stata trovata.](#), the “Other” category refers to the following answers reported from individual stakeholder, which are (slightly) different from the options provided by the survey:

- As an RFO, we are constantly trying to improve our procedures and documents to help applicants in applying to our calls.
- Being a partner has been getting harder.
- Data availability.
- Lack of support at the local government level.
- Limited financial capacity for research tasks.
- Local limitation on importing and/or using some advanced technologies.
- Time constraints and time consuming for internal administrative procedures.
- We are an RFO, our problems are linked to fund national partners in the international projects. It is difficult to align priorities of the call with the national budgets of the RFOs.
- Limited capacity of staff members to fully commit to the proposal preparation process.
- Our members may well be involved, but through their own organisations.
- Not yet participated.

Question Q7) deals instead on barriers encountered when participating in a project or initiative addressing the WCCH Nexus ([Figure 22](#)). In this case, the most common barrier refers to the fact that the WCCH Nexus is not yet well understood (30 of 66 survey respondents) or the topics of the WCCH Nexus are addressed separately in projects and initiatives (28 out of 66 respondents). The funding constraints issue was selected by 20 stakeholders, of which 13 belong to European countries (out of 49), 4 to African countries (out of 10) and 3 to Asian countries (out of 7). Another interesting element, which was also addressed by SD-WISHEES partners ([Figure 10](#)), is the lack of knowledge on the impact of extreme hydroclimatic events on the intangible assets of cultural heritage.

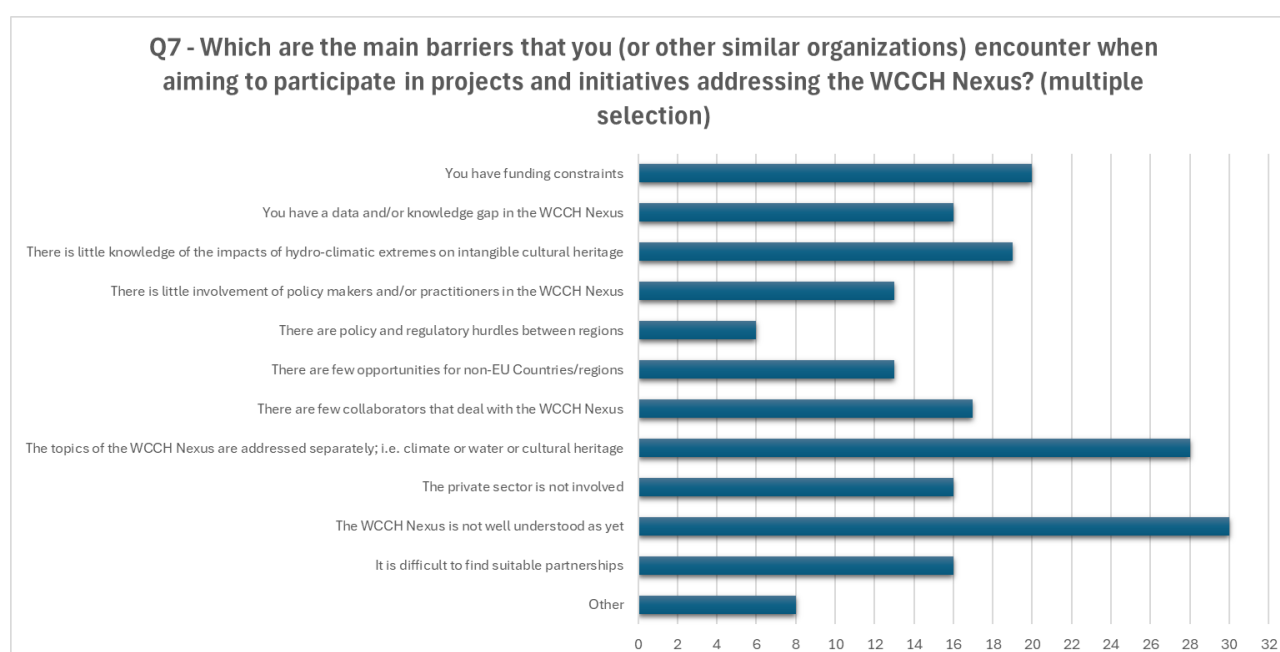


Figure 22: Most common barriers encountered by stakeholders when participating in participating in a project or initiative addressing the WCCH Nexus.

Questions Q8) and Q9) were formulated as open-ended questions. Q8 was designed to stimulate deeper reflection on the strategies adopted to overcome the most common barriers, whereas Q9 was designed to collect information on differences among regions of the EU associated countries, in terms of participation in transnational projects/initiatives, level of commitment and/or way of approaching the WCCN Nexus.

Concerning the replies to question Q8), stakeholders engaged in the survey highlighted the following strategies to overcome the most common barriers:

- Working on partnership / leadership & networking.
- Connecting the transnational activities to the national ones.
- Having international support & funding.
- Establishing English language training programs for researchers and administrative staff.

In particular, the creation of ad-hoc and robust partnerships, networking, and the reinforcement of messages on the relevance of WHHC Nexus for society were addressed by UN-Water partners and participants of the AFRICA24 Workshop. Building a strong and sustainable partnership and networking were also appointed as valid strategies by SD-WISHEES partners (see [Section 4.1](#)). In a few cases, stakeholders provided also articulated responses. This is the case of a Yemeni stakeholder (see [Figure 23](#)), which also divided strategies as follows:

- Strategies to overcome barriers.
- Strategies to overcome capacity barriers.
- Strategies to overcome barriers to desire.
- Strategies to overcome regulatory barriers.
- Strategies to overcome technical barriers.

There are several strategies that can be followed to overcome barriers to participation in transnational research and innovation programs or initiatives. Here are some of these strategies:

Strategies to Overcome Barriers

1. Develop Networks and Collaboration: Build collaborative networks with research and innovation institutions in different countries to exchange knowledge and expertise.
2. Provide Funding: Provide the necessary funding to support participation in transnational research and innovation programs.
3. Develop Capacity: Develop the necessary capabilities and competencies to participate in transnational research and innovation programs.
4. Facilitate Communications: Facilitate communication and interaction between institutions and researchers from different countries.
5. Develop Policy: Develop policies and legislation that support participation in transnational research and innovation programs.
6. Provide Logistics Support: Provide the necessary logistical support to support participation in transnational research and innovation programs.
7. Develop Educational Programs: Develop educational programs aimed at developing the competencies and capabilities necessary to participate in transnational research and innovation programs.

Strategies to Overcome Capacity Barriers

1. Develop Infrastructure: Develop the necessary infrastructure to support research and innovation.
2. Providing Funding: Providing the necessary funding to support research and innovation.
3. Developing Competencies: Developing the competencies and capabilities needed to support research and innovation.

Strategies to Overcome Barriers to Desire

1. Developing Culture: Developing a culture that encourages research and innovation.
2. Providing Support: Providing the necessary support to support research and innovation.
3. Developing Promotional Programs: Developing promotional programs aimed at encouraging research and innovation.

Strategies to Overcome Regulatory Barriers

1. Developing Policy: Developing policies and legislation that support research and innovation.
2. Providing Support: Providing the necessary support to support research and innovation.
3. Developing Promotional Programs: Developing promotional programs aimed at encouraging research and innovation.

Strategies to Overcome Technical Barriers

1. Developing Infrastructure: Developing the necessary infrastructure to support research and innovation.
2. Providing Funding: Providing the necessary funding to support research and innovation.
3. Developing Competencies: Developing the competencies and capabilities needed to support research and innovation.

Figure 23: Response to Q8) provided by a Yemeni stakeholder.

Moving to Q9), stakeholders mentioned a few differences related to the countries' geographical location:

- There are different requirements and levels of commitment.
- Difference in climate/cultural/politics/economic situations.
- VISA difficulties for non-EU, structural racism, nationalists' policies, neocolonialism.

In addition, AFRICA24 participants pointed out that EU countries and associated countries are very committed or have dedicated framework and programmes to support transnational initiatives, compared to other regions.

On the other hand, some non-EU countries suffer of lack or limited data availability. For the UN-WATER partners, all these countries share similar values as far as WCCH Nexus and face similar problems – inadequate infrastructure but also negligence, taboos, insufficient local funding, striving for “western” standards and disrespect to indigenous traditions that in many cases fall under the paragraph “nature-based solutions”.

As previously reported, questions Q10) and Q11) were designed to assess awareness of some transnational initiatives and programs within the WCCH Nexus ([Figure 24](#)) and their related SRIAs (see [Figure 25](#)). Water4All and PRIMA are the most well-known among stakeholders. By contrast, the JPIs are the least well-known. It is therefore not surprising that the contents of the Water4All SRIA are also the most well-known among stakeholders.

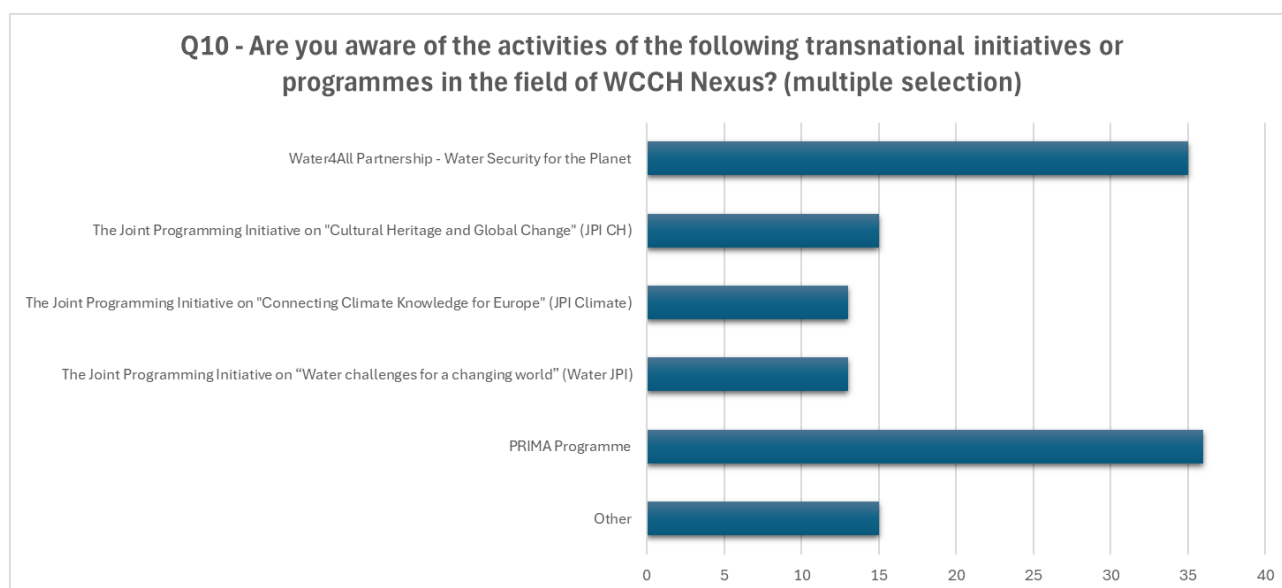


Figure 24: Testing knowledge of some transnational initiatives and programmes within the WCCH Nexus.

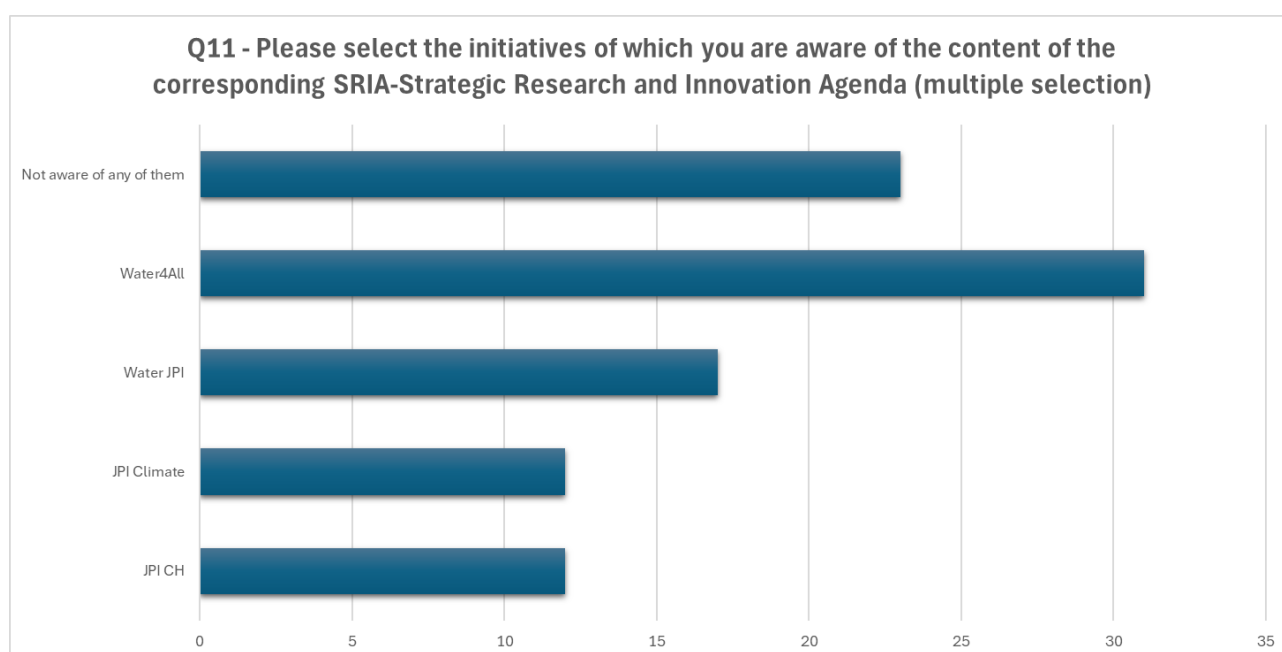


Figure 25: Testing knowledge of the SRIAs associated with the transnational initiatives and programmes reported in Figure 24.

The final two survey questions were open-ended. Question Q12) aimed to determine whether there were additional relevant issues stakeholders would like to report within SD-WISHEES and consider useful to address in support of transnational R&I cooperation for the WCCH Nexus; while question Q13) aimed to gather information on the practices that have worked best in transnational R&I programmes within the WCCH Nexus.

According to stakeholder responses to Q12), to strengthen transnational R&I cooperation in the WCCH Nexus, key priorities should include sustainable funding (including better advertisement on funding opportunity), policy harmonization, and incentives for collaboration to reduce barriers. Capacity building, flexibility and adaptability of the programmes, and knowledge transfer are essential for boosting participation, particularly in less developed regions. Greater stakeholder engagement (e.g., including UNESCO) and public awareness about the WCCH Nexus, for example by framing it in the global water agenda, would increase the project's relevance and support. Furthermore, due to climate change impacts in the Mediterranean basin, focus should be put on the benefit of cultural heritage for setting up adaptation strategies. Additionally, investment in digital and physical infrastructure and inclusive, socio-economic considerations are crucial for equitable and effective cooperation. Addressing these issues will ensure long-term, impactful collaboration across regions.

Another point raised by a Canadian stakeholder was the need to also consider the impacts that water-related events have on cultural tourism, local intangible cultural heritage, and gastronomy.

All these relevant issues are detailed below, grouped according to the location of the stakeholders.

BALKANS:

- For civil society organisations, in the countries mentioned in Q9), there are scarce funding opportunities. They appear to be too tiny to be successful under EU funding mechanism and intelligible under developing funding mechanisms. This is especially valid for those organizations from new EU Member States.
- Although projects were implemented under the WCCH Nexus, funding came from sector-specific funds (e.g., water, sanitation, climate change, women, youth). There is a need to have funding platforms directly addressing WCCH-related issues and solutions.
- There is a need to have informative and guidance events from the managing authorities (both in the submission and the implementation phase of the projects), and to have flexibility and financial simplification (e.g., lump sum approach).
- There is a need to increase dissemination in these programmes.

EUROPE (other countries not located in the Balkans):

- Availability of sustainable funding and funding cycles in countries, and better advertisement on funding opportunities.
- There is a need to promote the WCCH Nexus (there is not enough information about it) and to include it more prominently in global water agendas (e.g., Water4all).
- Addressing also the underwater cultural heritage.
- Facilitating partnership agreements and inclusiveness.
- Creating common platform for sharing information, projects and good practices.
- Establishing periodical publications or bulletins (or newsletters) to keep informed all the parts.
- UNESCO should be more involved as partner.
- Programmes flexibility and adaptability. For instance, EU requirements and competition level is rather high for the EU associated countries. Hence, it is hard to compete in the categories such as “prior research”, “publications”, “infrastructure”, “support from home institutions” and/or “cofounding”.
- Developing clear protocols that provide comprehensive guidelines on best practices to protect research data and intellectual property.
- Given stress levels due to climate change impacts in the Mediterranean basin, focus should be put on the benefit of cultural heritage for setting up adaptation strategies.

AFRICA:

- Sharing widely on partnership.
- Working with policy makers and local communities and highlighting the benefits of transnational cooperation to attract politicians and other stakeholders.
- Increasing information distribution.
- Involving retired experts by sourcing them from various countries in Africa, because they are outside of institutions, but their knowledge and experience are not tapped out in the existing system that needs such persons to be affiliated to institutions. In Africa, retirement age is a barrier, for most of them are not tired.
- Programmes flexibility and adaptability: implementation should be tailored to suit each of the areas participating in the projects/programme.
- There is a need to promote ad-hoc formation.

ASIA:

- Enhancing networking and communication and collaboration between researchers, industry, investors, and governments, also to enable interaction with collaborators that are not part of traditional research networks.
- Enhancing international cooperation between countries, organizations, companies, and universities. This imposes to address challenges linked to international collaboration, such as dealing with different languages and cultures, dealing with financial and funding constraints, dealing with various policies and legislation, dealing with various data and information, and dealing with cooperation and communication.
- Setting research priorities and research topics of common challenges for number of countries and inviting researchers to cooperate and work on.
- Developing infrastructures, such as laboratories, equipment, and communications, and logistical support, such as shipping, warehousing, and communications.
- Providing the necessary funding to support R&I, such as grants, loans, and investments.
- Develop the necessary skills and capabilities through, for example, training and professional development.
- Developing policies and legislation, such as intellectual property policies and open data.
- Developing educational programs aimed at developing the competencies and capabilities necessary to support research and innovation.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability, such as publishing results and reporting.
- Supporting international collaboration by providing the necessary grants and funding and educational programs aimed at developing the necessary competencies and capabilities.

CANADA:

- Cultural tourism is a significant issue, given the demands that water use/demand places on cultural heritage destinations. Rising waters also impacting coastal destinations through destructive storm activity and flooding. In addition, water's impact on local intangible cultural heritage and gastronomy that can draw visitors to a destination.

Based on previous experiences, most of the examples of good practices indicated in response to Q13) are related to partnerships (and their internal coordination, including in terms of communication, cross-sectoral cooperation) and the involvement of stakeholders and end-users (multiple stakeholders, local actors, bottom-up approach, involvement of organisations and people with similar priorities, co-designing policies, etc.). Successful international/transnational cooperations are those that can manage differences in terms of language, culture, financial constraints, and in policies and legislation within the partnership and the end-users.

It was also stressed that projects for the WCCH Nexus need to emphasize the interdependence between water, climate change, and cultural heritage, to achieve broader impacts, as is done in projects dealing with the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem (WEFE) Nexus.

The practices that worked best in transnational R&I programmes within the WCCH Nexus are reported below, grouped according to the location of the stakeholders.

BALKANS:

- Physical meetings and team building activities.
- Networking and synergies with other projects.
- Non-technical deliverables that can be useful to stakeholders.
- Multi-stakeholder consortia.
- Good communication among partners.

EUROPE (other countries not located in the Balkans):

- In the application process there should already be a very intense and in-depth stocktake of consortium skills and knowledge. This creates a very clear foundation for a cross-sectoral collaboration pathway for this cross-sectoral topic.
- Major involvement of the end-users, training and showing the benefits of the programme before starting. Work bottom-up and not top-down.
- Cooperation between organisations and people with similar priorities.
- Synergies between research groups and institutions.
- Engaging multiple stakeholders.
- Setting up an excellent consortium study and a dual coordination, one administrative and one scientific.
- Allowing researchers to build up/extend networks.
- Sharing good practices among the different partners and considering previous cooperations.
- Working on specific cases at local level and using the traditional knowledge of local populations.
- Co-designing policies with stakeholders is highly effective, as it ensures diverse perspectives are considered, leading to more effective and equitable solutions. This collaborative approach fosters inclusivity and enhances the quality of outcomes.
- Cultural exchange and knowledge transfer.
- For most of the co-funded programmes, the leverage effect of the sum of the national budgets and the EU budget.
- We are aware that PRIMA has integrated the WEFE Nexus approach, which emphasizes the interdependence of water, energy, food security, and ecosystems (such as water, soil, and land). This approach has proven to be highly effective, as it ensures that projects achieve broader impacts rather than focusing on a single topic. By considering multiple effects—such as the impact of project results on energy, water, etc.—this method allows for a more efficient use of funds and enhances the scalability of outcomes. We believe this might be translated to the WCCH Nexus as well.

AFRICA:

- The ancient Egyptian culture in valuing water and rationalizing its use; the current multiple use of water in Egypt with full support from bottom (the farmers) up to top (the government).
- Best practices have been shown to significantly enhance the success of transnational R&I programs in the WCCH Nexus. The key is to implement them flexibly, adapting to specific project contexts (or to specific regional contexts) while maintaining their core principles.
- Collaboration, interaction and international openness among participants and stakeholders.
- The current easiness obtaining more information.
- Mentoring of young scholars.

ASIA:

- Encouraging smaller networks within the consortium to strengthen links between individual partners.

- Focusing on global issues affecting public health, the environment, and the economy is essential to the success of programs/initiatives.
- Dealing with different languages and cultures in international collaboration.
- Dealing with financial constraints in implementing programs/initiatives.
- Dealing with different policies and legislation in international cooperation.
- Addressing inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration.
- Focusing on the social impact, through collaboration with society.
- Focusing on the practical applications.

CANADA:

- Taking part in larger initiatives with established audiences that either have a connection to water or cultural heritage issues but have not been exposed to their connected approach.

6. Focus on participants of the AFRICA24 Workshop

This chapter reports the statistics of the responses provided by the participants in the Workshop “*Climate-induced threats to cultural heritage: bridging knowledge and action via collaboration and sharing knowledge*”, which was organized by SD-WISHEES organized in Mombasa (Kenya) on 28 November 2024, as a part of the [AFRICA24 Conference](#). This was a stakeholder consultation workshop that brought together a diverse group of specialists for the WCCH Nexus from across the African continent and experts involved in R&I cooperation activity in Africa. During the workshop, an ad-hoc survey session was held to collect information from these stakeholders about their experiences in transnational programs and projects.

Given the small number of participants who completed the survey, it was not possible to analyse the responses separately from those of the other stakeholders involved in the consultation process. It was therefore decided to report only the statistics, without any evaluation of them. In any case, the reported statistics could be useful to merely characterize the workshop participants for future consultation initiatives. Statistics related to the characterization of the AFRICA24 Workshop participants are reported in [Figure 26–Figure 28](#), whereas those related to questions Q1), Q2), Q3), Q4), Q5), Q6), Q7), Q10) and Q11) are shown in [Figure 29–Figure 37](#).

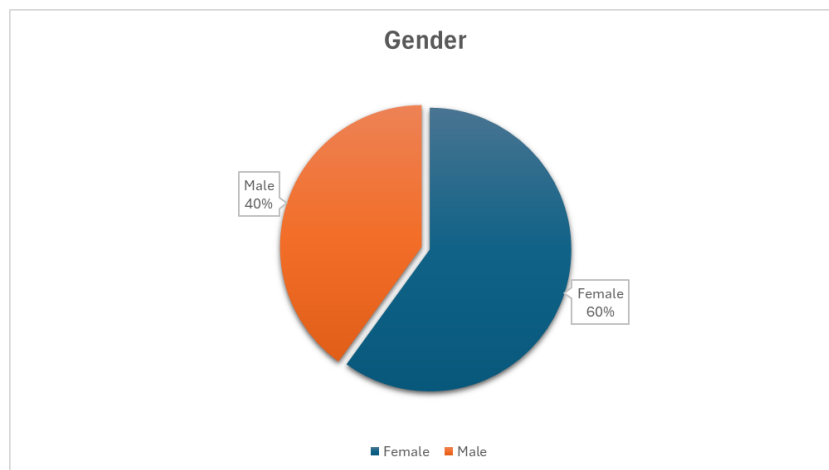


Figure 26: Gender of the participants of the AFRICA24 Workshop that responded to the WP5 survey.

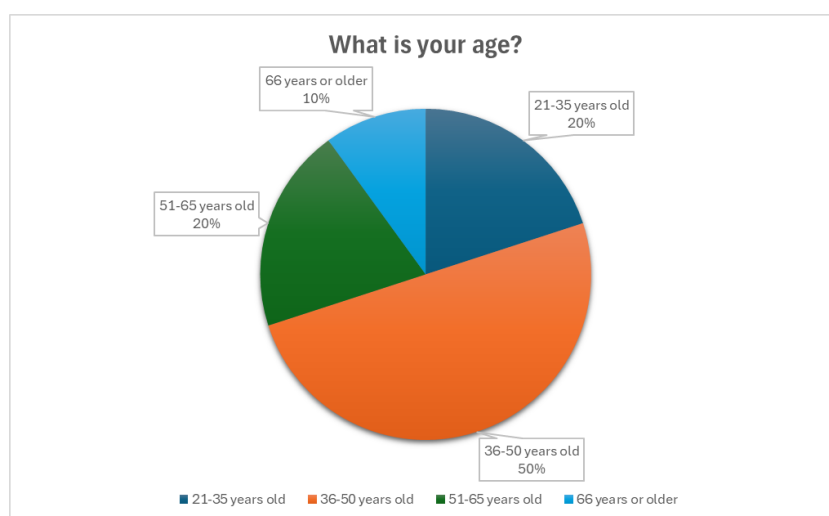


Figure 27: Age of the participants of the AFRICA24 Workshop that responded to the WP5 survey.

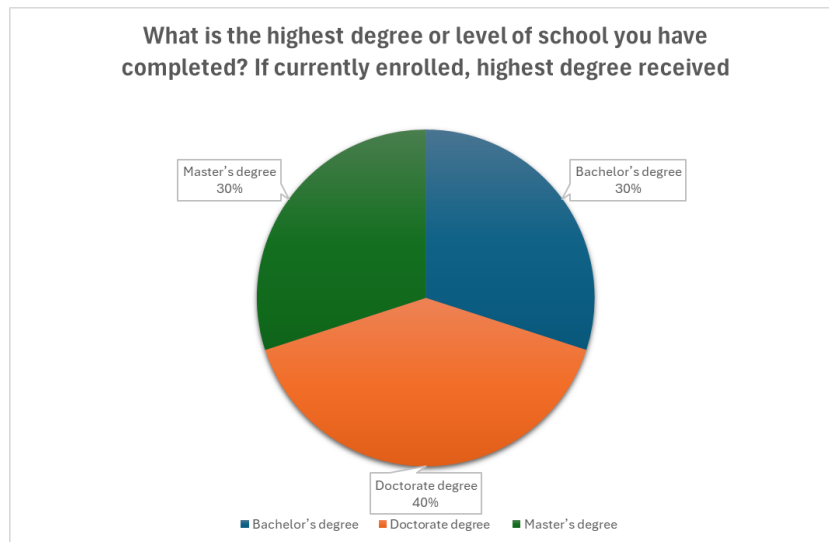


Figure 28: Level of education of the participants of the AFRICA24 Workshop that responded to the WP5 survey.



Figure 29: Category of the institution/organization/agency represented by the participants of the AFRICA24 Workshop.

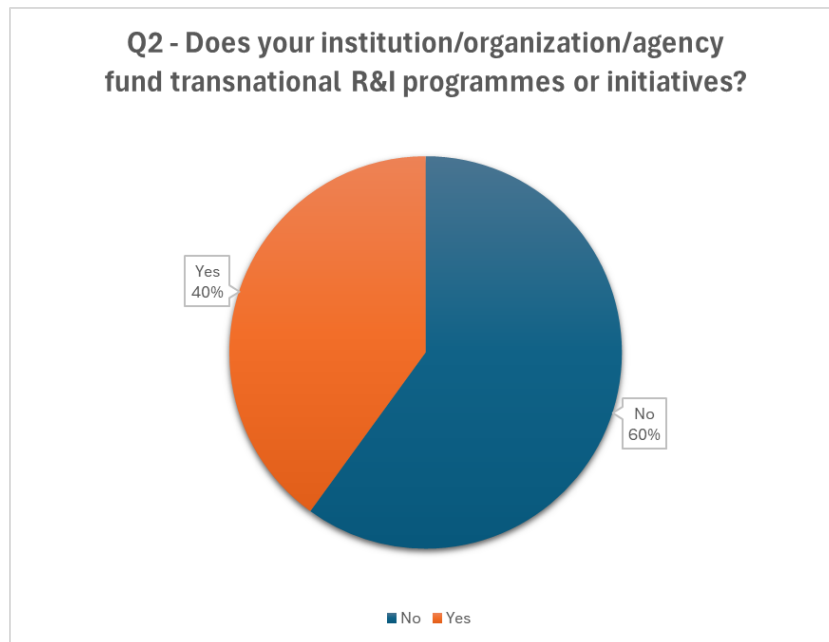


Figure 30: Percentage of institution/organization/agency of the participants of the AFRICA24 Workshop funding transnational R&I programmes or initiatives.

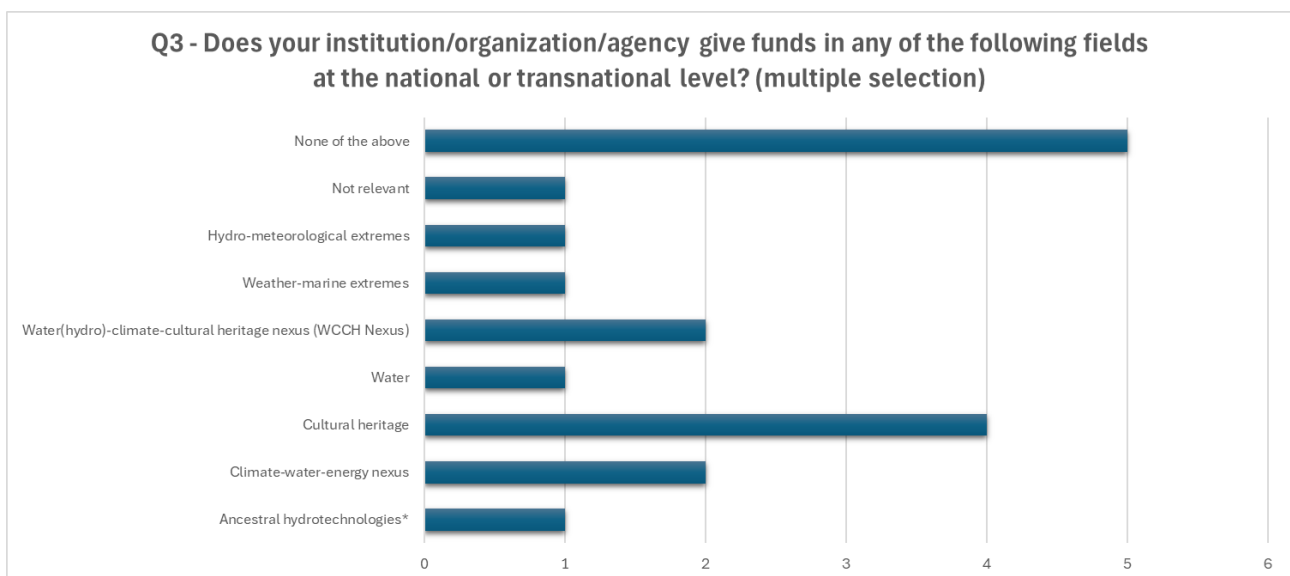


Figure 31: Topics funded by the entities of the participants of the AFRICA24 Workshop in the WHCC Nexus framework, at both national and transnational level.

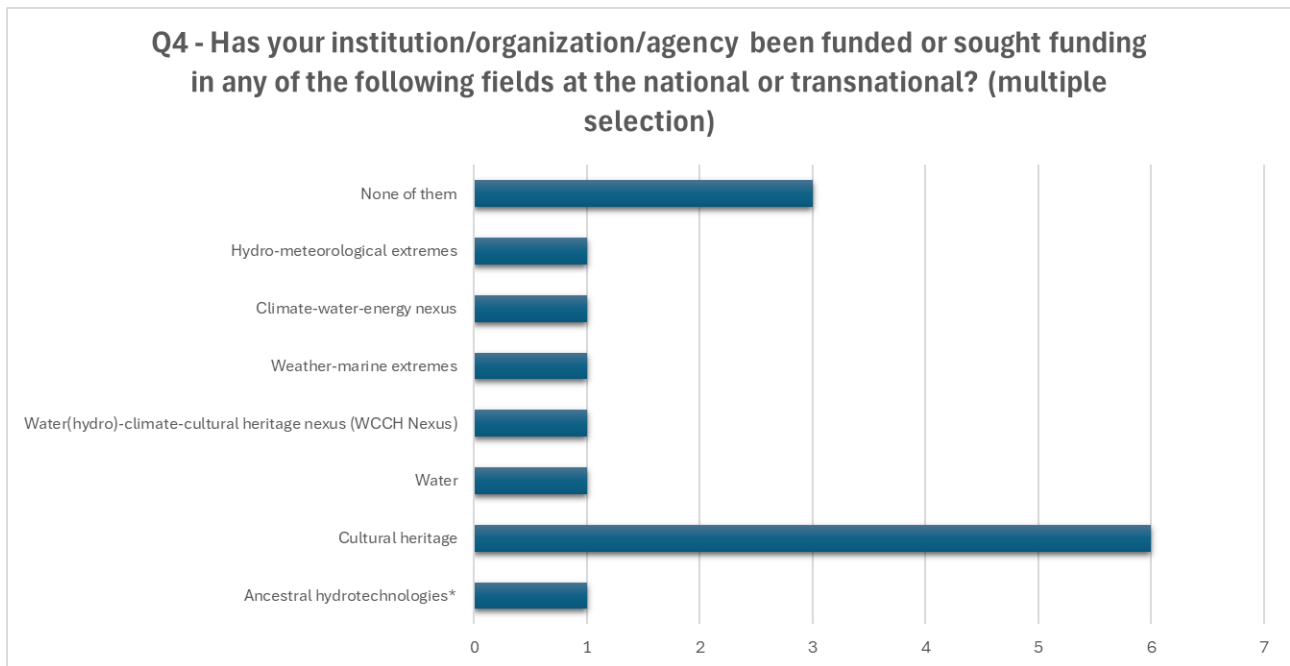


Figure 32: Topics for which the participant of the AFRICA24 Workshop have requested or require funding.

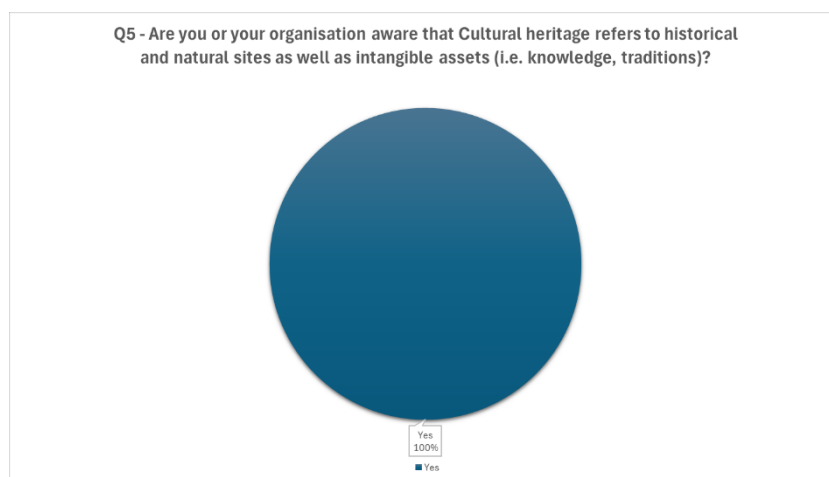


Figure 33: Percentage of the participant of the AFRICA24 Workshop aware that “Cultural heritage” refers to both historical and natural sites and intangible assets (i.e., knowledge, traditions).

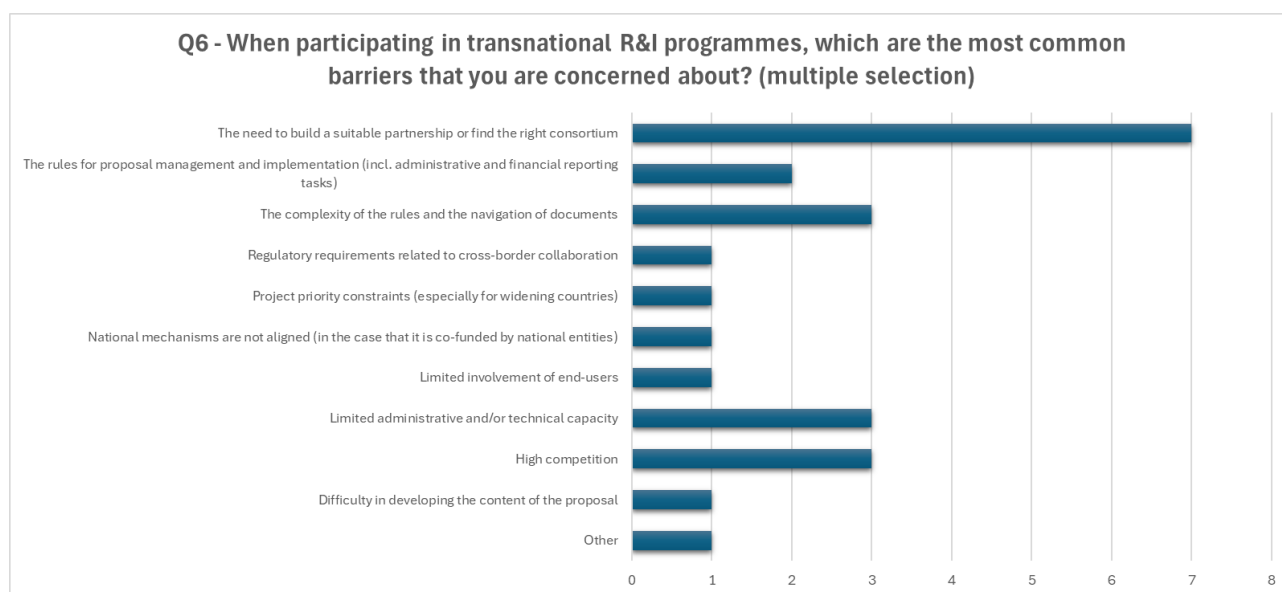


Figure 34: Most common barriers encountered by the participants of the AFRICA24 Workshop when participating in transnational R&I programmes.

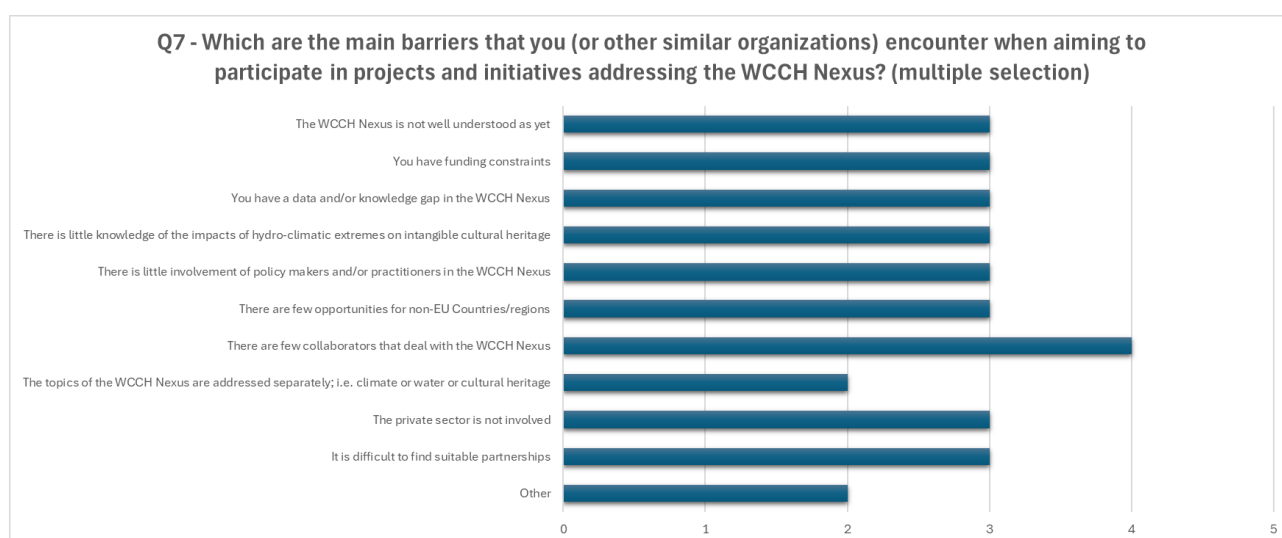


Figure 35: Most common barriers encountered by the participants of the AFRICA24 Workshop when participating in a project or initiative addressing the WCCH Nexus.

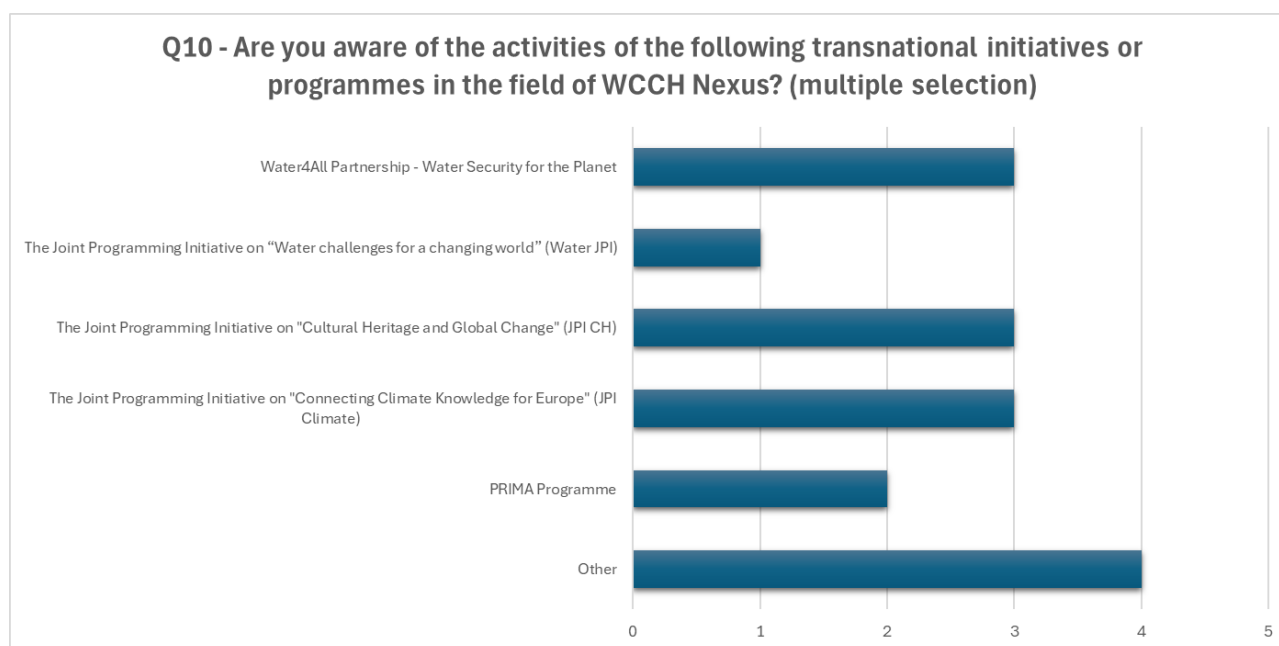


Figure 36: Testing knowledge of some transnational initiatives and programmes within the WCCH Nexus.

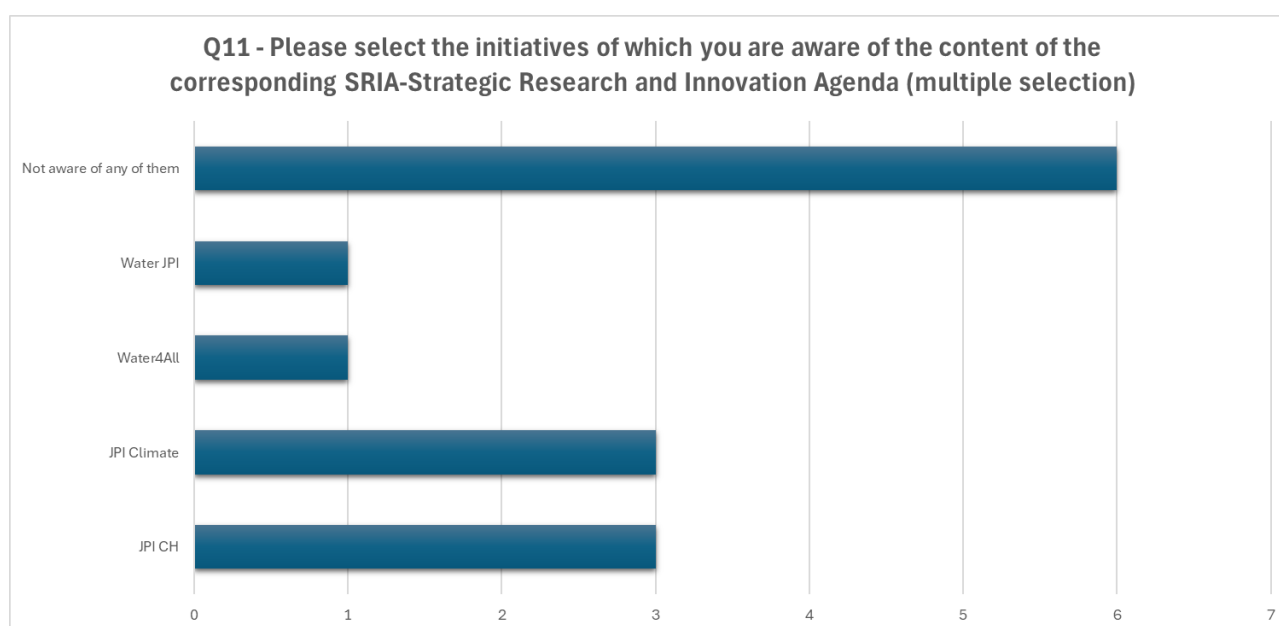


Figure 37: Testing knowledge of the SRIAs associated with the transnational initiatives and programmes reported in Figure 36.

7. Conclusions

According to the stakeholders' responses to the survey, the most common barrier addressed when participating in transnational R&I programmes concerns the need to build a sustainable partnership or to find the right consortium. This barrier was selected by more than half of the stakeholders who responded to the survey, both from "widening" and "non-widening" countries. The high level of competition that characterizes this type of initiative, along with the complexity of the rules for participation, management, and implementation of the projects, and the potential limitations on the administrative and technical capacity of the partners/partnership, are among the main hurdles faced by stakeholders. Another barrier mentioned by stakeholders relates to the fact that the WCCH Nexus is not yet well understood or that WCCH Nexus topics are being addressed separately in projects and initiatives.

Hence, to strengthen transnational R&I cooperation in the WCCH Nexus and reduce the identified barriers, **key priorities should include sustainable funding and better advertisement on funding opportunity, policy harmonization, and incentives for collaboration and inclusiveness among stakeholders with complementary expertise on WCCH Nexus topics.** The involvement of local communities, policy makers, and politicians was also highlighted as important in supporting transnational R&I cooperation.

Capacity building, flexibility and adaptability of the programmes, and knowledge transfer are also essential for boosting participation, particularly in less developed regions. It is **necessary to raise public awareness on the WCCH Nexus, while also strengthening its place in the global water agenda and emphasizing the interdependence between water, climate change, and cultural heritage**, to achieve broader impacts, as is done in projects dealing with the WEFE Nexus.

Furthermore, the Mediterranean Basin is considered a climate change *hotspot*. This means it is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Hence, **focus should be put on the benefit of cultural heritage for setting up adaptation strategies, both for tangible and intangible assets.** This will help raise awareness among all stakeholders, from government to citizen, about the impacts of hydroclimatic extremes on all types of cultural heritage, and the need to adopt sustainable and targeted (also locally) adaptation solutions and strategies.

Additionally, **investment in digital and physical infrastructure and inclusive, socio-economic considerations are crucial for equitable and effective cooperation.**

Based on previous experiences, most of the examples of good practices suggested and/or identified by stakeholders are related to partnerships (and their internal coordination, including in terms of communication, cross-sectoral cooperation) and the involvement of stakeholders and end-users (multiple stakeholders, local actors, bottom-up approach, involvement of organisations and people with similar priorities, co-designing policies, etc.). Successful international/transnational cooperations are those that can manage differences in terms of language, culture, financial constraints, and in policies and legislation within the partnership and the end-users.

Annex A. The WP5 survey



SURVEY ON ASSESSMENT OF HURDLES FOR PARTICIPATION IN TRANSNATIONAL R&I PROGRAMMES IN THE WATER(HYDRO)-CLIMATE- CULTURAL HERITAGE NEXUS

SD-WISHEES in a nutshell

The [SD-WISHEES](#) project aims to enable strategic coordination and cross-sector collaboration between national (R&I) funding members, researchers, innovators and a wide variety of stakeholders to address together the protection of cultural heritage in Europe and beyond in response to more and more frequent and severe hydroclimatic extreme events such as droughts and floods. The vision of SD-WISHEES is to enhance collaboration and reach for research and innovation to tackle impacts of hydroclimatic extremes on cultural heritage.

Our mission is to develop innovative tools and strategies to enable collaboration between diverse stakeholders in Europe and beyond to inclusively address sustainable management of cultural heritage threatened by hydroclimatic extreme events, referred as “water(hydro)-climate-cultural heritage nexus” (the **WCCH Nexus**).

SD-WISHEES receives funding from the European Union’s Horizon Europe Framework Programme (HORIZON), HORIZON Coordination and Support Actions, call HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01, under Grant Agreement No. 101095322.

Purpose of the survey

We would like to understand the hurdles and barriers that prevent some stakeholders from participating in transnational cooperation for R&I programmes in the WCCH Nexus. In the next stage, we plan to engage further with stakeholders to identify the best practices & challenges in R&I cooperation on SD-WISHEES topics, in Europe and beyond.

This assessment of barriers, enablers, and good practices aims at:

- Enhancing cooperation over the WCCH Nexus;
- Contributing to the widening and alignment strategy (in EU and beyond);
- Enhancing the impacts of the R&I investments;
- Supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations in 2015.

The survey should take 5-7 minutes, and there are only 13 questions.

*** Mandatory question**

1. **Name ***

2. **Gender ***

3. **What is your age? ***

Choose one option

- ☐ Under 21 years old
- ☐ 21-35 years old
- ☐ 36-50 years old
- ☐ 51-65 years old
- ☐ 66 years or older

4. **What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received ***

Choose one option

- ☐ Doctorate degree
- ☐ Professional degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Trade/technical/vocational training
- ☐ Some college credit, no degree
- ☐ High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent
- ☐ Some high school, no diploma
- ☐ Other: _____

5. **Nationality ***

6. **Email ***

7. **Institution/organization/agency name ***

8. **Role in the institution/organization/agency ***

9. **Please list the Countries and/or the Continents where your institution/organization/agency is mainly active ***

10. **Q1 - What stakeholder group best describe your institution/organization/agency?** *

Choose one option

- ☐ Government sector/policy makers/local authorities
- ☐ Regional and EU level organisations
- ☐ Academia & research organisations
- ☐ NGOs and Civil Society
- ☐ Companies (SMEs & Large Enterprises)
- ☐ Media and general public
- ☐ Other: _____

11. **Q2 - Does your institution/organization/agency fund transnational R&I programmes or initiatives?** *

Choose one option

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12. **Q3 - Does your institution/organization/agency give funds in any of the following fields at the national or transnational level? (multiple selection)** *

Select all applicable options

- ☐ Hydro-meteorological extremes
- ☐ Weather-marine extremes
- ☐ Water
- ☐ Cultural heritage
- ☐ Ancestral hydrotechnologies*
- ☐ Climate-water-energy nexus
- ☐ Water(hydro)-climate-cultural heritage nexus (WCCH Nexus)
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Not relevant

***Ancestral hydrotechnologies**

Ancestral hydrotechnologies refers to traditional and ancient water-related technologies that have been developed and passed down through generations with a specific cultural and geographic context.

Many ancestral hydrotechnologies have the full potential to be recovered and/or scaled up to contribute to the transformative change needed for responding to the global challenges in the wide framework of sustainable development.

13. **Q4 - Has your institution/organization/agency been funded or sought funding in any of the following fields at the national or transnational? (multiple selection)** *

Select all applicable options

- ☐ Hydro-meteorological extremes
- ☐ Weather-marine extremes
- ☐ Water
- ☐ Cultural heritage
- ☐ Ancestral hydrotechnologies*
- ☐ Climate-water-energy nexus
- ☐ Water(hydro)-climate-cultural heritage nexus (WCCH Nexus)
- ☐ None of them
- ☐ Not relevant

14. **Q5 - Are you or your organisation aware that Cultural heritage refers to historical and natural sites as well as intangible assets (i.e. knowledge, traditions)?**

Choose one option

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

15. **Q6 - When participating in transnational R&I programmes, which are the most common barriers that you are concerned about? (multiple selection)**

Select all applicable options

- ☐ The need to build a suitable partnership or find the right consortium
- ☐ Difficulty in developing the content of the proposal
- ☐ The complexity of the rules and the navigation of documents
- ☐ The rules for proposal management and implementation (incl. administrative and financial reporting tasks)
- ☐ Regulatory requirements related to cross-border collaboration
- ☐ Mismatch between EU project activities and your institutional research (e.g., difficulty in publishing results in scientific peer-reviewed journals)
- ☐ High competition
- ☐ Limited administrative and/or technical capacity
- ☐ The consortium takes too long to fully understand/address the topics
- ☐ National mechanisms are not aligned (in the case that it is co-funded by national entities)
- ☐ Project priority constraints (especially for widening countries)
- ☐ Limited involvement of end-users
- ☐ Other: _____

16. **Q7 - Which are the main barriers that you (or other similar organizations) encounter when aiming to participate in projects and initiatives addressing the WCCH Nexus? (multiple selection)**

Select all applicable options

- ☐ The WCCH Nexus is not well understood as yet
- ☐ The topics of the WCCH Nexus are addressed separately, i.e. climate or water or cultural heritage
- ☐ There are few collaborators that deal with the WCCH Nexus
- ☐ There is little knowledge of the impacts of hydro-climatic extremes on intangible cultural heritage
- ☐ There are few opportunities for non-EU Countries/regions
- ☐ It is difficult to find suitable partnerships
- ☐ There is little involvement of policy makers and/or practitioners in the WCCH Nexus
- ☐ The private sector is not involved
- ☐ You have funding constraints
- ☐ You have a data and/or knowledge gap in the WCCH Nexus
- ☐ There are policy and regulatory hurdles between regions
- ☐ Other: _____

17. **Q8 - What strategies do you come up with to overcome the most common barriers, both in terms of ability and willingness to participate in transnational R&I programmes or initiatives?** *

18. **Q9 - What differences do you see between different regions in the EU-associated countries i.e., the Balkans, Western Europe, North Africa etc. in terms of participation in transnational projects/initiatives, level of commitment, and/or way of facing the WCCH Nexus?** *

19. **Q10 - Are you aware of the activities of the following transnational initiatives or programmes in the field of WCCH Nexus? (multiple selection)** *

Select all applicable options :

- ☐ The Joint Programming Initiative on "Water challenges for a changing world" (Water JPI)
- ☐ The Joint Programming Initiative on "Connecting Climate Knowledge for Europe" (JPI Climate)
- ☐ The Joint Programming Initiative on "Cultural Heritage and Global Change" (JPI CH)
- ☐ Water4All Partnership - Water Security for the Planet
- ☐ PRIMA Programme
- ☐ Other: _____

20. **Q11 - Please select the initiatives of which you are aware of the content of ^{*} the corresponding SRIA-Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (multiple selection)**

Select all applicable options

- ☐ Water JPI
☐ JPI Climate
☐ JPI CH
☐ Water4All
☐ Not aware of any of them

21. **Q12 - Are there any additional issues that you think should be addressed ^{*} to support transnational R&I cooperation for programmes in the WCCH Nexus?**

22. **Q13 - If you participate or have participated in transnational R&I ^{*} programmes/initiatives on the topic of the WCCH Nexus, what do you think works or has worked best? (Please indicate "best practices")**

Annex B. Survey responses

All survey responses were collected and analysed as aggregated information for the purposes of this report. Survey responses were made available to SD-WISHEES partners via the Teams folder dedicated to Task 5.1 of WP5 for statistical purposes only. Access to the Task 5.1 folder is limited to the SD-WISHEES Consortium to prevent the disclosure of personal information about survey participants. Furthermore, none of the survey respondents knows who the other respondents were. This ensures compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the EU law focused on protecting the personal data and privacy of individuals within the EU.



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