

**Pan-European Regional Preparatory Meeting
for the United Nations 2023 Water Conference
Geneva, Palais des Nations, and online, 12 – 13 April 2022**

**Statement by Darja Istenič,
Global Water Partnership Central and Eastern Europe (GWP CEE)
in session 1. Make drinking water and sanitation available, safe and affordable for all**

In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) there are exceptionally many small settlements (where 30% of the region's population lives) and improper treatment of wastewater from these settlements leads to pollution of surface and groundwater. Simple and robust technologies such as nature-based solutions (NBS), which have low operation and maintenance requirements and costs, are considered most appropriate and their implementation needs to be encouraged.

Global Water Partnership conducted a survey in CEE to investigate the situation of wastewater collection and treatment in small settlements and the technologies applied, and to identify the main challenges to improve the situation. The results showed that there are numerous gaps in wastewater management in rural areas. Not only that small settlements are not taken into account by both the EU and the corresponding national legislations, but also that data on the number and performance of small wastewater treatment plants and individual systems are often missing.

However, the results of the study showed that NBS for wastewater treatment are applied in all countries included in the study, providing a good pool for future dissemination and awareness activities. In addition, both the number of wastewater treatment plants in small settlements and the variety of technologies used have increased compared to the results of a similar study in 2012. However, the percentage of the population connected to wastewater treatment plants in small settlements is still low and significant improvements will need to be made in the coming years.