

Community of Learning and Practice on Drought Management

Central and Eastern Europe Community

Summary of the Regional Webinar

“Bridging the Gap: Evolving Finance for Integrated Drought Management”

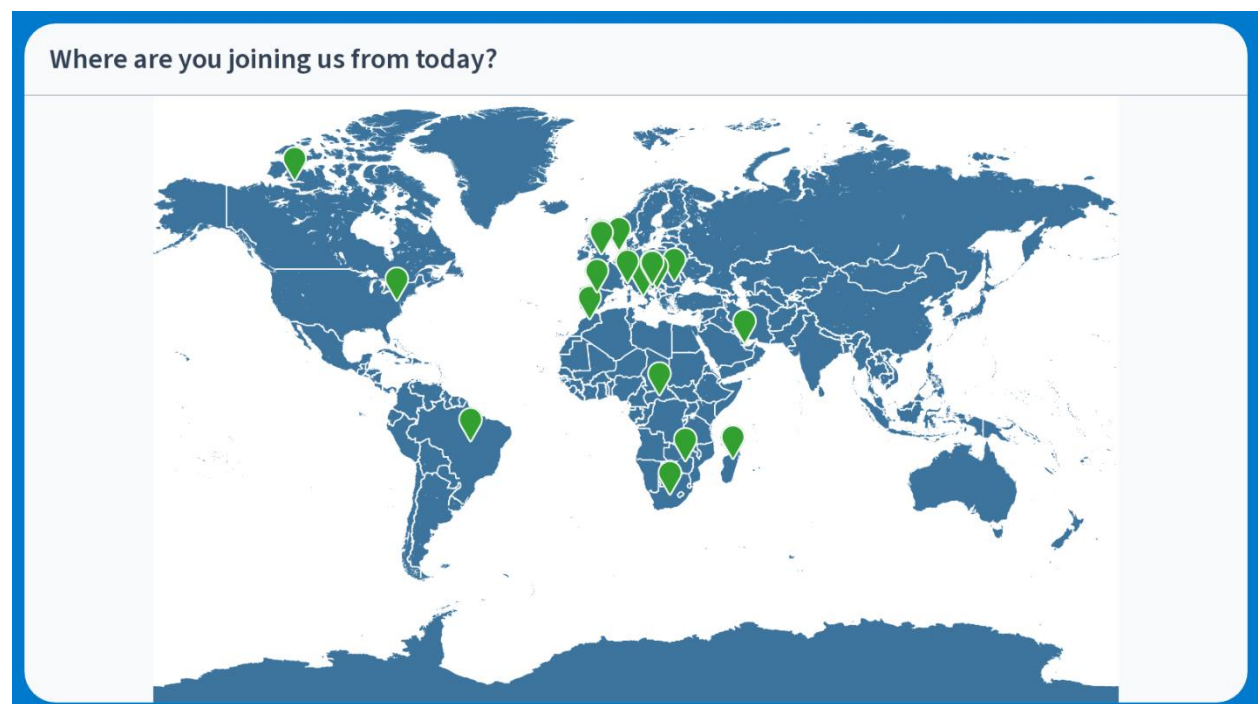
Organized by the Central and Eastern Europe Community of Learning and Practice (CLP) on Drought, in cooperation with the Global Water Partnership, UNCCD, FAO, World Bank, and national experts from the region

Date: **8 October 2025** | Format: Online

As part of the ongoing activities of the Central and Eastern Europe CLP on Drought, a regional webinar titled “Bridging the Gap: Evolving Finance for Integrated Drought Management” was successfully held on 8 October 2025.

Participation and Key Insights

The webinar attracted 109 attendees (from 298 registrants) from over 25 countries, with a balanced gender profile (58 women, 50 men, 1 other/prefer not to say) and strong representation from Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans, Central Asia, and global partners.

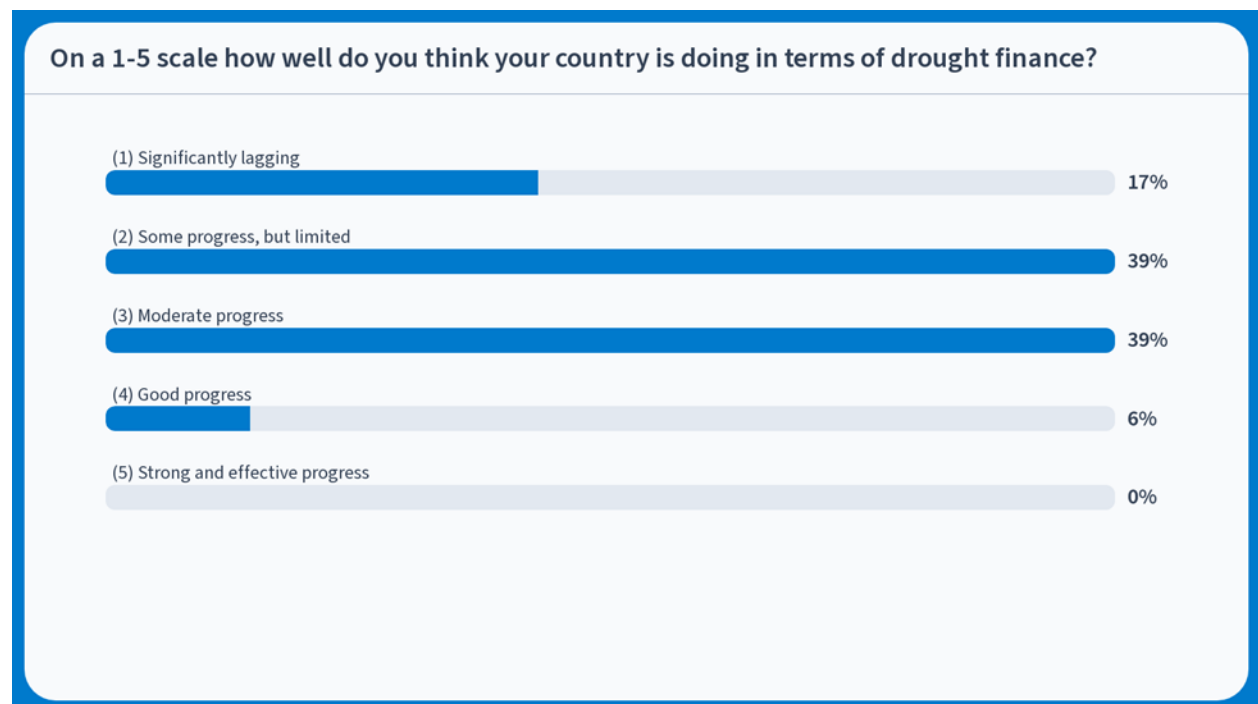


The session aimed to:

- Explore financing opportunities for drought-related planning and action;
- Showcase newly developed global tools and frameworks;
- Foster regional dialogue on practical needs and institutional bottlenecks for integrated drought management.

A live poll conducted during the session showed that 78% of participants believe their country has made **only limited or moderate progress** in drought finance. No one reported strong or fully effective financing mechanisms. This result underscores the urgent need for enhanced financial planning, institutional capacity, and integrated drought response in the region.

Participants also stressed the value of regional cooperation, peer exchange, and awareness of available international finance instruments.



Session I: Global Tools and Frameworks

Moderator for this part of webinar was Ms. Biljana Kilibarda, Co-Chair of the CLP for Central and Eastern Europe and UNCCD National Focal Point (Montenegro).

This session focused on global instruments that support countries in assessing and financing drought resilience.

Ms. Habiba Khiari (UNCCD) introduced the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership (RGDRP), launched at COP16, which aims to link countries to available finance mechanisms and strengthen coordination for drought finance.

Drought is increasingly recognized as a systemic development challenge affecting water, energy, ecosystems, and social stability, but it remains one of the most underfunded climate risks compared to floods, renewable energy, or carbon markets. To address this, Saudi Arabia and UNCCD launched the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership (RGDRP), with Saudi Arabia pledging \$150 million for the secretariat for at least 10 years (Once established, the Secretariat will be hosted by UNCCD.), the Islamic Development Bank and OPEC Fund committing \$1 billion each, and the Arab Coordination Group announcing up to \$10 billion for projects to 2030. The partnership aims to make drought resilience investable by linking countries to existing finance mechanisms, developing investment-ready proposals blending public and private finance, and promoting integrated drought management through early warning, ecosystem restoration, sustainable land and water management, and livelihood support.

Operationally, RGDRP focuses on three pillars: a **Readiness Facility** to support national strategies and project pipelines, an **Investment Facility** to leverage donor and private sector funds, and a **Knowledge Bank** to share best practices, providing a practical pathway from strategy to tangible, investable projects with global collaboration.

Ms. Eva Pek (FAO) presented the Drought Finance Tracker: a global tool that monitors and analyzes financial flows toward drought-related projects.

<https://www.fao.org/in-action/drought-portal/drought-finance-tracker/en>

She emphasized the importance of identifying funding gaps and improving the targeting of resources.

Tracking drought finance remains challenging because many resilience and adaptation projects do not explicitly reference drought, even when they contribute to drought risk reduction. The **Drought Finance Tracker**, which uses OECD data, has revealed that substantial but fragmented investments are being made across multiple sectors — including water management, agriculture, environment, energy, and multisector resilience projects.

The analysis shows that overall funding for drought resilience is higher than previously estimated, but better integration, coordination, and alignment with national drought plans are essential to maximize impact. To address this, an online Drought Finance Platform is set to launch next January, designed to strengthen “policy-to-budget” linkages and improve transparency in drought-related spending.

The platform will provide a geographical visualization of drought-related projects, enabling users to link them with existing national and regional drought policies and plans. It will also indicate how much of the required actions are already financed through international flows and what remains to be implemented on the ground.



Drought Finance Tracker 2.0 – Timeline of drought – related finance 2000 to 2021 – Europe and Central Asia

Dr. Nathan L. Engle of the World Bank presented the Drought Risk and Resilience Assessment Framework (DRRAF), designed to translate drought plans into actionable, investment-ready projects. Demonstrating its application in Eswatini, Dr. Engle emphasized the importance of aligning drought risk planning with financial investments to ensure long-term resilience that extends beyond short-term crisis response.

He highlighted that drought risk finance instruments play a critical role in preventing emergencies from escalating into crises that undermine development gains. Predictable, pre-agreed funding mechanisms can significantly enhance the efficiency of response efforts during drought onset, while high-quality data, robust diagnostics, and strong institutional networks are essential for informed decision-making. Acting early, he noted, is both cheaper and more effective than reactive measures.

The Drought Risk and Resilience Assessment (DRRA) approach provides a structured methodology to translate national drought plans into concrete investments—spanning policy reforms, infrastructure, capacity development, and early warning systems—to ensure integrated, cost-effective actions that strengthen resilience.

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099523412092414439/pdf/IDU-58af3327-8416-4683-b553-d53df9d1968d.pdf>

All speakers emphasized the need to bridge the gap between planning and implementation, strengthen national coordination, and promote dedicated financing strategies.

Session II: National Experiences from the Region

This session was organized as a panel discussion, moderated by Sabrija Čadro, Co-Chair of the Community of Learning and Practice (CLP) for Central and Eastern Europe and UNCCD Science and Technology Correspondent for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The panel brought together national experts from Moldova, Georgia, Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro to share concrete examples, highlight challenges, and discuss gaps in drought finance and policy implementation. Here is a short summary of the key points raised by each expert:

Moldova - Ms. Aliona Isac, Head of the Hydrological Monitoring Department, State Hydrometeorological Service.

Moldova developed its first **National Drought Management Plan (2019)** under the UNCCD Drought Initiative, establishing a framework for monitoring, preparedness, and response. However, due to rapid climatic shifts, the country is now preparing a new **DLDD National Program (2026–2030)** with two distinct components, one addressing drought and the other desertification and land degradation.

Since 2020, Moldova has organized multiple stakeholder consultations to integrate sectoral priorities. The country collaborates with WMO, the Adaptation Fund, and the Global Water Partnership to design a regional disaster risk reduction and early warning project, aiming to improve early drought detection and transboundary cooperation.

Georgia – Ms. Nana Bolashvili, Professor and Director of the Institute of Geography at Tbilisi State University and national STC for UNCCD.

Georgia currently addresses drought through existing frameworks such as the **National Action Programme to Combat Desertification (NAP)** and the **Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Agriculture**. Prof. Bolashvili emphasized several active initiatives: the **Georgia Resilient Agriculture, Irrigation and Land Project** (funded by the World Bank), and the **Climate Adaptation Capacities Program** supported by the Swiss and Swedish Governments, which developed a drought hazard map and an operational early warning system.

She noted persistent challenges, fragmented institutional responsibilities, insufficient financial resources, and limited public awareness and called for creating dedicated drought financing mechanisms and stronger inter-ministerial coordination.

Serbia - Ms. Ana Vuković, Professor, climatologist and national Science and technology correspondent for the UNCCD.

Serbia integrates drought risk within its **National Climate Change Adaptation Program** (2023–2030) and its accompanying **Action Plan** (2024–2026). The plan prioritizes capacity building for the Hydrometeorological Service, early warning system upgrades, and cross-sector collaboration.

Prof. Vuković highlighted the growing aridity trend linked to temperature increases, stressing that drought should be addressed jointly with water management and flood control as part of a “too much, too little water” nexus.

Although no specific national budget lines exist for drought, the country receives limited support through EU-funded adaptation studies and pilot projects. She underlined that the Western Balkans remain underrepresented in EU research and UNCCD PRAIS indicators, emphasizing the need for greater regional visibility.

Romania - Mr. Liviu Ciuvat, the Romanian Institute for Research and Development in Forestry national STC for UNCCD

Romania does not allocate direct funding for drought mitigation but channels resources through EU structural and agricultural funds, including irrigation modernization, farmer compensation (approx. €200/ha), and restoration and carbon sequestration projects.

The **National Strategy to Combat Desertification** includes a drought mitigation component, though it remains under governmental review due to bureaucratic delays. Romania is currently establishing a **National Center of Excellence on Drought Mitigation** to coordinate research, improve data systems, and facilitate access to EU funds. Mr. Ciuvat highlighted the need for stronger political commitment and awareness among decision-makers to ensure financing continuity.

Montenegro – Ms. Biljana Kilibarda, UNCCD National Focal Point

Montenegro’s **National Drought Plan** (2020) was developed within the UNCCD Drought Initiative and recently reviewed with FAO and UNCCD support. Montenegro also prepared a **Vulnerability and Impact Assessment Report** and a **Study on Financial Instruments and Modalities to Improve Drought Resilience in Montenegro**, identifying available and missing mechanisms for drought resilience.

The main barrier remains financial capacity, even though various instruments like subsidies, agricultural loans, and insurance help mitigate drought impacts. However, current support is insufficient, highlighting the need for a comprehensive drought finance strategy integrating public funds, private investment, and international support. Montenegro participates in the Interreg Danube project “**Integrated Monitoring System for Agroclimatic Risks**”, which will establish a

transnational data platform for climate, water, and agriculture management. It will also establish a standardized monitoring system for crops such as wheat and maize, support yield projections, and foster knowledge transfer

<https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/TRANSFER-Danube>

Based on what we heard from both sessions, the following key messages and conclusions can be drawn:

- **Funding remains a major challenge**, both for drought-specific initiatives and for including drought issues in wider development programs.
- **Many national drought plans don't have clear steps for putting ideas into action**, especially when it comes to assigning budgets and making sure institutions have enough capacity.
- **Tools like the Drought Finance Tracker and the Drought Risk and Resilience Framework (DRRF)** are useful and well-timed, but they need to be better adapted to local contexts and followed up with practical use.
- **The CLP platform plays an important role** in helping professionals share experiences, raise awareness, and build skills around drought issues.
- **There's a strong need for better coordination between sectors** and more effective use of global funding opportunities like the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Adaptation Fund, and support from international financial institutions (IFIs).

Droughts, land degradation, and floods do not stop at administrative borders. To effectively address these growing challenges, it is essential that we continue working together across regions and sectors, sharing experiences, supporting one another, and building collective resilience.

The full webinar recording is available here:

https://youtu.be/AMnC_WvZxFQ

Biljana Kilibarda & Sabrija Čadro