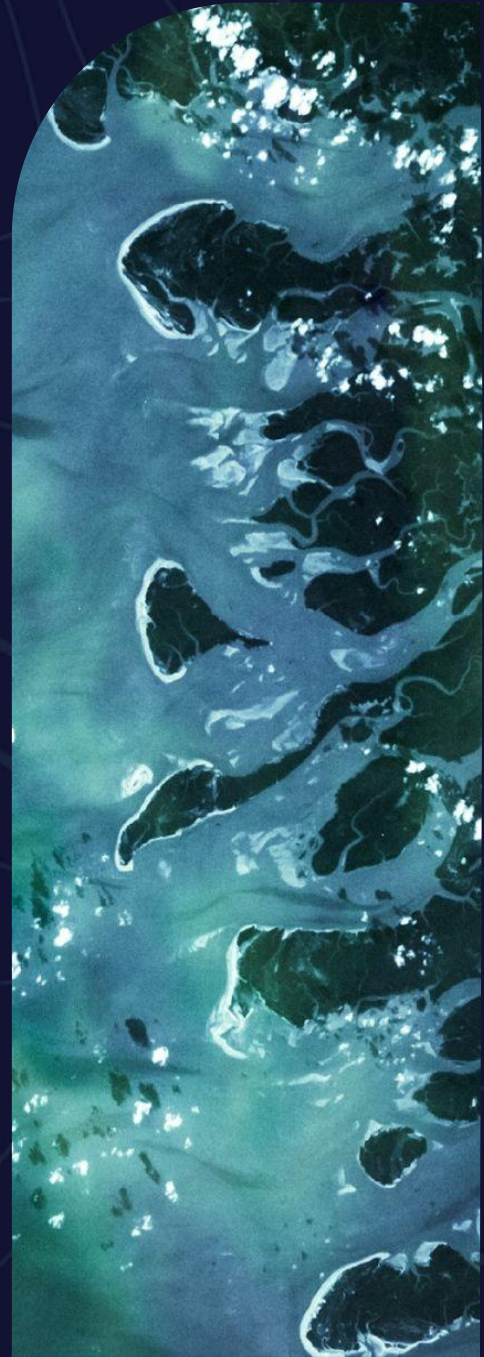


Follow Ups Joined Water Conference Osnabrück

JCAR ATRACE, 6 October 2026



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1 Introduction

On 18 June 2026, representatives from government authorities, research institutes, water management organisations and regional partners from the Netherlands and Lower Saxony came together at the University of Osnabrück for the first Joint Lower Saxony–Netherlands Water Conference. The conference was jointly organised by the Lower Saxon Ministry for Environment, Energy and Climate Protection and the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, with support from the Grenzüberschreitende Plattform für Regionale Wasserwirtschaft (GPRW) and the JCAR ATRACE programme. More than 120 participants exchanged knowledge and experiences on current and future challenges in water management, including flood risk management, drought preparedness, climate adaptation and cross-border cooperation.

A central part of the Water Conference in Osnabrück were the six thematic breakout sessions which took place in the afternoon. Led by a combination of Dutch and German experts, the sessions provided participants with the opportunity to discuss common challenges and identify concrete opportunities for future cross-border cooperation. The outcomes of these discussions and the identified follow up activities are presented in this document.

2 Workshop Sessions

2.1 Set up

Table 2-1 gives an overview of the topics addressed in each of the break-out sessions. Participants were distributed among the breakout-rooms based on their preferences given when signing up for the conference. Each breakout session was attended by a mix of German and Dutch participants. Each session was led by a combination of German and Dutch experts.

Table 2-1: Workshop topics and moderators

Topic	Moderators
Flood Risk Management: Forecasting and Early Warning Systems	Sebastian Flasche (NLWKN) Jan Verkade (Deltares)
Water Strategies: Water Scarcity and Prioritisation of Water Uses	Katrin Kayser (MU) Judith ter Maat (Deltares)
Preparedness for Extreme Events: Stress Testing, Monitoring and Decision Support	Tobias Drückler (NLWKN) Rein Jonkhans (Prov. Overijssel) Martijn Booij (Uni Twente)
Climate Adaptation: Sponge Landscapes, Water Retention and Groundwater Management	Dorothee Altenstein (MU) Dimmie Hendriks (Deltares) Christian Albert (Leibniz Uni Hannover) Carine Wesselius (DGWB)
Governance: Coordination, Responsibilities and Regulatory Frameworks	Laura Herzog (Uni Osnabrück) Joanne Vinke – de Kruijf (Uni Twente)
Knowledge Communication and Public Awareness	Dorothea Altenhofen (NLWKN) Lisette van der Giessen (WS Vechtstromen) Kymo Slager (Deltares)

To ensure a practical and action-oriented outcome, all sessions followed a common two-step approach.

First, participants exchanged experiences and provided an overview of the current situation, policies, practices, and ongoing initiatives within their respective countries and organizations. This enabled participants to better understand similarities and differences in approaches, learn from existing projects and good practices, and identify key knowledge gaps and challenges.

Second, participants worked together to identify one or two concrete follow-up activities that could help address the identified knowledge needs and strengthen cross-border cooperation. The discussions focused on practical next steps that could realistically be initiated in the coming years. Examples included research activities, workshops, training courses, knowledge exchange meetings, demonstration projects, exercises, field visits, and staff exchanges.

A key objective was to move beyond general discussions and formulate concrete proposals by linking specific knowledge needs ("what") to actionable follow-up activities ("how"). Participants were encouraged to identify relevant organisations, experts and networks that could contribute to the proposed activities and to explore opportunities to build upon existing initiatives and partnerships rather than creating entirely new structures

The resulting follow-up actions provide a practical roadmap for strengthening cross-border cooperation between the Netherlands and Lower Saxony and contribute to the broader ambition of developing a shared knowledge base on flood risk management, drought preparedness, climate adaptation and resilient water management. The follow up actions have been discussed and shared with both ministries (Dutch Ministry for Infrastructure and Water Management and Lower Saxony Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Climate Protection). The ministries will meet twice a year to monitor and discuss the progress of these actions.

2.2 Key outcomes and follow up actions

In this paragraph the key discussions and outcomes of each workshop session are summarized together with the follow up actions identified. These actions are being addressed within the JCAR ATRACE programme in close collaboration with national and regional authorities. Most activities are planned to be completed by 2028, while some actions are expected to be completed earlier.

2.2.1 Flood Risk Management: Forecasting and Early Warning Systems

In this workshop the participants identified three main topics with knowledge needs, whereby the first two topics share the same urgency:

- Shift in emphasis towards drought and low flow forecasting
- Forecast-informed decision making
- Data sharing and visualization

The identified research and development needs per topic are described in Table 2-2:

Table 2-2: Overview of identified knowledge gaps in the session Flood Risk Management: Forecasting and Early Warning Systems

Topic	Identified Knowledge Gap
Shift in emphasis towards drought and low flow forecasting	Forecasting of low flow
	Challenge to predict droughts: What is needed to predict a drought of several weeks
	Large uncertainty in precipitation forecasting (where, when and how much)
	Operationalization of existing drought forecasting knowledge
	Forecasting droughts for drinkwater supply
Forecast-informed decision making	How can warnings actually lead to actions?

	Translating forecasts into operational actions and controls
	Enhancing cross-border cooperation in warning communication and emergency response
	Ensuring low-water warnings are implemented Triggering measures during drought warnings (water-use restrictions, groundwater abstraction limits, irrigation bans)
Data sharing and visualization	Data availability (including for AI applications), common data standards and shared platforms
	Additional measurements needed to improve forecast data

The following action items have been identified regarding forecasting and early warning:

- A rapid assessment study is planned for 2027 to review state-of-the-art drought (early) warning systems in Western Europe.¹ Relevant stakeholders will be notified before the start of the study.
- Participants will be invited to upcoming JCAR ATRACE Forecasting trainings. These trainings will take place on a yearly basis starting in 2026.
- Furthermore, participants are invited to join the Benelux+ Water Day on December 1st in Maastricht about advances and challenges in (cross-border) flood warning communication and emergency response chain.

¹ A similar study for Flood Forecasting and early warning systems has already been completed within the JCAR ATRACE programme: <https://doi.org/10.5194/nhess-26-1457-2026>

2.2.2 Water strategies: Water Scarcity and Prioritisation of Water Uses

The session addressed the growing challenge of water scarcity and the need for transparent water allocation strategies.

From the session two main topics emerged:

- Establishing an information system to monitor water availability, supply, and use
- Sharing knowledge on current practices and ongoing strategy development related to water allocation

The identified research and development needs per topic are described in Table 2-3:

Table 2-3: Overview of identified knowledge gaps in the session water strategies: water scarcity and Prioritisation of Water Uses

Topic	Identified Knowledge Gap
Establishing an information system to monitor water availability, supply, and use	Tracking of water use daily → develop a traffic light system → link to response measures
	Up to date information needed for adaptive management
	Pilot project: local cross-border monitoring system
	Develop common understanding of drought definitions and prioritization rules
	How can behavioural change be encouraged using available information and strategies?
Sharing knowledge on current practices and ongoing strategy development related to water allocation	Learning from the Netherlands regarding prioritization of water use during shortages
	Joint workshops and knowledge exchange on low-water management
	Share regional strategies and experiences

The following action items have been identified about water strategies:

- Set up professional exchange formats, workshops, or joint discussion sessions on selected key topics in 2027 and 2028.
- An onsite session of the International Commission for the Hydrology of the Rhine Basin (CHR) on water allocation is planned in 2026-2027. Topic and programme will be discussed with the ministries. Invitations will follow.

2.2.3 Preparedness for Extreme Events: Stress Testing, Monitoring and Decision Support

The session on Preparing for Extremes focused on how regions can become more resilient to increasingly frequent and severe climate-related events.

From the session two main topics emerged:

- Development of an integrated flood – drought approach
- Working together on joint measures

Additionally, also topics related to cross-border governance, water allocation and risk dialogues were discussed.

The identified research and development needs per topic are described in Table 2-4:

Table 2-4: Overview of identified knowledge gaps in the session preparedness for extreme events

Topic	Identified Knowledge Gap
Development of an integrated flood – drought approach	Investigate how water retention can simultaneously reduce flood impacts and increase water availability during drought
	Risk analyses based on common datasets
	Cross-border hydraulic models including 2D flood modelling
	Analysis of various drought scenarios.
	Assess impacts of drought on low flows and groundwater level
Working together on joint measures	Carry out cross-border measure studies.

	Retain water to reduce both drought and flood impacts
	Cooperation between forecasting centres and modelling institutes in Germany and the Netherlands
	Develop practical measures for the entire cross-border region.
Cross-border governance, water allocation and risk dialogue	Organise workshops with water authorities and disaster management organisations on acceptable levels of risk
	Conduct cross-border risk dialogues
	Develop cross-border crisis plans
	Improve regional cooperation on drought

The following action items have been identified on preparedness for climate extremes:

- Expand the transboundary stresstest in the Vecht catchment to an integrated flood – drought stress test. A joint study from JCAR ATRACE and the GPRW is planned for 2026 – 2027.
- Work as JCAR ATRACE and GPRW together on joined measures in the Vecht catchment in 2027 and 2028.

2.2.4 Climate Adaptation: Sponge Landscapes, Water Retention and Groundwater Management

In the workshop on Climate Adaptation, Sponge Cities and Landscapes, Water Retention and Groundwater Management, participants discussed opportunities and barriers for implementing natural water retention measures.

Key topics included:

- Implementation: How to move from ideas to implementation
- Need for better exchange of knowledge and best practices

The identified research and development needs per topic are described in Table 2-5:

Table 2-5: Overview of identified knowledge gaps in the session climate adaptations

Topic	Identified Knowledge Gaps
Implementation: How to move from ideas to implementation	Are quantified targets for Spongefunctioning useful?
	Voluntary implementation versus regulation?
	Different interests between society and individual landowners must be recognised; Incentives for agricultural measures that improve the water balance, comparable to eco-schemes.
	Acquisition of land is often a bottleneck
	Communication is key for implementation of measures
Need for better exchange of knowledge and best practices	How to engage citizens and create understanding for measures.
	Pilot projects can strengthen knowledge exchange; Successful pilots often occur where ownership, social cohesion and local commitment are strong.
	How to best prioritize measures and investments

The following action item has been identified on climate adaptations:

- Explore opportunities to connect existing and planned sponge landscape projects across the JCAR ATRACE border regions, with the aim of strengthening cross-border climate adaptation and knowledge exchange. This activity is planned for 2027.

2.2.5 Governance: Coordination, Responsibilities and Regulatory Frameworks:

The Governance: Coordination, Responsibilities and Regulation session explored institutional challenges related to cross-border water management.

Participants identified as the main topics:

- Need for long-term learning communities and stronger collaboration between practitioners and decisionmakers
- Strengthening cross-border governance structures and cooperation

The identified research and development needs per topic are described in Table 2-6:

Table 2-6: Overview of identified knowledge gaps in the session governance

Topic	Identified Knowledge Gaps
Need for long-term learning communities and stronger collaboration between practitioners and decisionmakers	Expand the community to NRW and Flanders
	Insights on drought management (based on lessons learned from drought intense regions)
	Trade-offs and losses that will happen (and need to be tolerated by the actors)
	Identify barriers for implementation
	Understand each other's perspectives, for instance through serious games (like role playing games)
Strengthening cross-border governance structures and cooperation	Roles and responsibilities within management structures; discussing and assigning roles and responsibilities where they are missing

	Learning from organizational structures in neighbouring countries
	Investigating how transboundary governance can be organized

The following action item has been identified on governance:

- A rapid assessment study will be conducted in 2027 on 'Making regional cross-border collaboration work: a comparative study of the institutional set-up of area coalitions'. The study will identify success factors and lessons learned to strengthen cross-border climate adaptation cooperation within JCAR ATRACE.

2.2.6 Knowledge Communication and Public Awareness

Finally, the Knowledge Communication and Public Awareness workshop emphasized the importance of effective communication between governments, stakeholders and citizens, while identifying opportunities to strengthen cross-border cooperation through improved mutual understanding, knowledge exchange and collaborative action.

Participants identified as the main topics:

- Cross-Border Governance
- Knowledge Exchange and Relationship Building

The identified research and development needs per topic are described in Table 2-7:

Table 2-7: Overview of identified knowledge gaps in the session governance

Topic	Identified Knowledge Gaps
Cross-Border Governance	Improve mutual understanding of organizational cultures, roles, responsibilities, and working practices across borders
	Increase transparency regarding decision-making authority and mandates of representatives

	involved in cross-border meetings and negotiations
	Better understand what enables stakeholders and organizations to move from discussion and planning to concrete action
Knowledge Exchange and Relationship Building	Strengthen knowledge exchange and experience sharing across all administrative and governance levels
	Promote staff exchanges, internships, and temporary placements between Dutch and German partner organizations
	Explore the development of shared cross-border data platforms and databases to support joint analyses and mapping activities.

The following action item has been identified on knowledge communication and public awareness:

- Develop a joint cross-border database to support the production of harmonised cross-border maps and analyses, improving data sharing and comparability between partner regions.
- Establish a staff exchange and internship programme between partner organisations to promote knowledge transfer, strengthen professional networks, and enhance cross-border cooperation.

Both actions will take place in 2027 and 2028.

3 Presentations

The presentations can be downloaded as an annex.