NEWSLETTER

November 2026

Dear readers,
Welcome to this edition of the EU-WISH newsletter, which marks a significant milestone for the project.
While EU-WISH was initially due to end in October this year, it has been granted an additional year. This newsletter and the editions to come will accompany us throughout the extension.
With this issue, the newsletter also takes on a new format. Each edition will spotlight a central theme while continuing to share news from across the project. This will allow us to publish more regularly and to explore key topics in greater depth.
In this edition, we look back at the **2026 International Workshop and Consortium Meeting held in Vienna from 6-8 October 2026**. Partners from across Europe came together to discuss progress in wastewater-based surveillance (WBS) and how to sustain it beyond EU-WISH.
We hope you enjoy the new format and join us for the project's final year.



What happened in Vienna?

THREE DAYS, PLENARY SESSIONS, NOT SUMMARISED IN THIS NEWSLETTER

DAY 1
Tuesday 6 October

- Current actions and future priorities:
  Outcomes of WP5, WP6 and WP7
- Resilient WBS systems: Communication, preparedness, sustainability and capacity building:
  Outcomes of WP2, WP3 and WP4

DAY 2
Wednesday 7 October

- The Future of WBS: Perspectives from international stakeholders (ECDC, WHO, DG HERA, EUDA, JRC)
- Five short presentations on sampling strategies, technical challenges, data integration, AMR and sequencing



DAY 3
Thursday 8 October

- Integrating WBS into public health practice, with the perspective from ECDC
- WES-DETECTIVES
  An EU-WISH serious game
  Exploring public health crisis management, a capacity-building tool you may get to discover one day!
- Closing remarks: setting the scene for the extension period

BREAKOUT SESSIONS, SUMMARISED IN THIS NEWSLETTER

FROM SAMPLING TO RESULTS

- Sampling and biobanking
- Standardising technical procedures
- AMR in focus
- Bad ideas for data analytics

INTEGRATION, TRAINING and SUSTAINABILITY

- Public health preparedness plans
- Training for tomorrow
- Dissecting sustainability
- European sustainability
- Unlocking the EU-WISH journey



Plenary sessions : A report on the Vienna meeting will be available soon.
Serious game : A report on the Vienna meeting will be available soon.
Breakout session are summarised in this newsletter and will be more detailed in the Vienna meeting report.

Vienna in focus: overview of EU-WISH progress



Over the past three years, EU-WISH's work packages (WPs) have developed tools, methods and guidance for WBS. As we enter the final year, we encourage you to "zoom out" and consider how we can move from individual technical outputs towards a coherent, integrated and sustainable WBS approach – one that helps others explore our work, identify what is most relevant to their context and build on it.

The ultimate measure of our success will be not only the quality of the tools and methodologies we have developed, but also their practical application, their integration into existing public health and environmental monitoring systems, and their long-term use beyond the lifetime of the Joint Action.

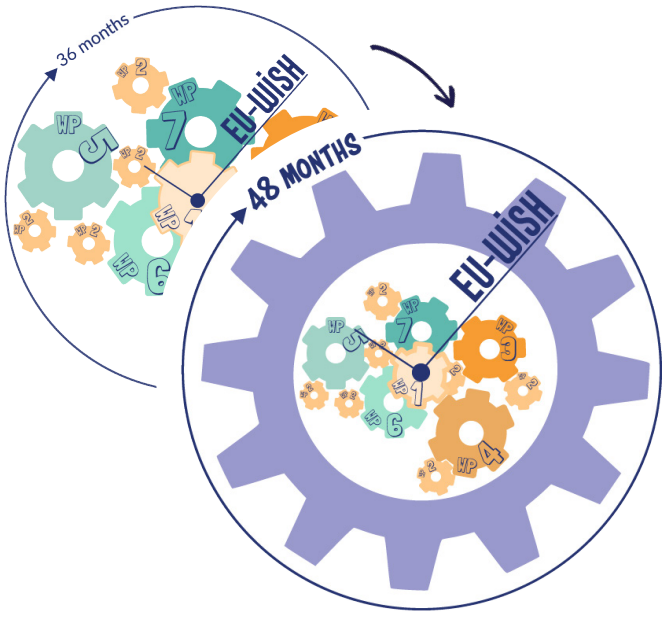


Group Photo of the EU-WISH 2026 International Workshop and Consortium Meeting in Vienna

The Vienna meeting highlighted both the progress made in WBS across Europe and the need to sustain it beyond EU-WISH. It brought together EU-WISH consortium members and representatives from ECDC,WHO, DG HERA, EUDA and JRC. Alongside plenary sessions, participants took part in breakout sessions: small working groups where they exchanged ideas on a specific theme, shared questions and experiences, and worked together.

As several sessions ran in parallel, participants had to choose which sessions to join. This newsletter summarizes these breakout sessions below. A detailed report on the Vienna meeting will also be available soon for those who wish to know more.

Over the coming year, all WPs will continue their activities in parallel, as detailed in the summaries below. Within these efforts, WP4 will help connect this work by turning selected outputs into reusable training resources, strengthening trainer and expert networks, and developing a shared roadmap for sustainable national WBS. This will include exploring long-term arrangements for governance, collaboration and access to project outputs. Partners and other interested organizations are encouraged to contact the WP4 leading team to share needs, contribute expertise and explore opportunities for collaboration.



Vienna Breakout Session Summaries

Each summary covers how participants worked together, key outcomes and what will happen next.

1. From Sampling to results

WP7.1

Designing an Effective Sampling and Biobanking Procedure for WBS

Can one sampling and biobanking protocol serve several targets? A board game helped explore which steps could be shared and which steps needed to remain specific.



How participants were engaged

Instead of a classic discussion, the team turned sampling protocol design into a game. Small groups built a protocol step by step on a large game board, choosing illustrated cards and justifying each choice. They then compared results with the other tables. The hands-on format kept everyone engaged and talking.

Main outcomes

As expected by the team, the exercise showed that one sampling and biobanking protocol can serve different targets, such as pathogens, antimicrobial resistance or chemical components. Harmonising the sampling stage means fewer campaigns, and shared equipment, transport and storage. This can reduce costs and time, while each target adapts only what it needs downstream.

Next steps

The possibility of making the sampling webinar, first piloted with EU-WISH consortium members, available online to others is being explored. The team is also exploring turning the board game into a virtual game on an online platform. Learners could then practise designing a harmonised protocol after the sampling training.

Standardising Technical Procedures: From Theoretical Protocol Comparison to Inter-Laboratory Studies

WP 7

Participants prioritised critical steps to harmonise technical procedures and drafted minimum common requirements, with more convergence than anticipated.



How participants were engaged

Approximately 34 participants were mixed into four cross-disciplinary groups. They used a common workflow flipchart and sticky dot voting to identify critical steps. Each group appointed a spokesperson, who reported back in plenary.

Main outcomes

The main outcomes were a prioritised list of critical steps for harmonisation, especially sampling, storage and transport, concentration, and data normalisation and reporting; a draft "Minimum Common Requirements" for controls, metadata, quality control and reporting; and initial elements for a ring trial or inter-laboratory study concept. The outcomes clearly matched expectations and showed more convergence than anticipated.

Next steps

Over the next year, the Minimum Common Requirements will be finalised and agreed upon. One or more pilot studies and ring trials will be designed and planned, using the prioritised steps and checklist. The agreed requirements will be integrated into WP7 guidance and practical activities.

WP 5 & WP 7

AMR in Focus: Moving from Discussion to Implementation

Joining the EU-JAMRAI 2 pilot in 2027 emerged as the most promising activity for this extension year, and data analysis and reporting as a key need.

WP 5 & WP 7

How participants were engaged

The *AMR in Focus* session was designed to move quickly from short inputs (necessary to give a common starting point to all participants) to participant-led work. The team used *Slido* polls to capture the room's opinion and needs. The core of the session was a group discussion with 32 participants split into 3 groups with the aim of placing potential 2027 EU-WISH AMR activities on an Impact x Feasibility matrix. Then, a single consensus matrix emerged, and each group justified their choices.

Main outcomes



The needs poll showed that harmonising data analysis and reporting was the most frequently selected need. A protocol to follow came second, then checking results against a reference. Training and hands-on practice were selected less often. The consensus matrix placed the possibility to join the EU-JAMRAI 2 pilot in 2027 highest on both impact and feasibility. Method-comparison ring trials, the buddy system and e-learning followed. Participants also confirmed two prerequisites for any activity: available budget and staff time. The outcomes largely matched the teams' expectations, but the data analysis and reporting emerged as an unexpected priority that needs to be addressed.

Next steps

The team proposes to include a data-analysis exercise in the EU-JAMRAI 2 pilot. By the end of 2026, the team will define the EU-WISH role in the EU-JAMRAI 2 pilot and draw up the list of volunteers and participants for the pilot and the e-learning. It will also inventory the usable learning materials and assess how they could be adapted to e-learning modules, with the help of WP4 and ECDC. The pilot is scheduled for spring and summer 2027, with two sampling periods. A cookbook with all protocols will be provided. In agreement with EU-JAMRAI 2, the team will shape the data-analysis exercise so that it goes beyond comparing wastewater data with other AMR data. The team will define what additional information wastewater data provides, and how to translate it into concrete public health action, in collaboration with WP6.

Bad Ideas for Data Analytics from Sampling to Publishing

Sharing "bad ideas" showed that problems in data analytics mostly arise when results are communicated.

WP6.2

How participants were engaged

The session on "bad ideas" split the group into five tables, and each table discussed amongst themselves relevant "bad ideas" from their own experiences. They then chose a rapporteur, who visited the other tables to share the discussed topics and outcomes.



Main outcomes

The main outcome is a list of several topics that led to problems or issues, related to WP6.2: statistical aspects of wastewater surveillance. As an overarching theme, the team extracted that the issues mostly arise when trying to communicate results or findings, highlighting the importance of communication and the work packages dealing with communication-related topics.

Next steps

The team will take the outcomes into account when planning the extension activities for WP6.2.

2. Integration, training and sustainability

WP 3

Integrating WBS into Public Health Preparedness Plans

Tabletop exercises confirmed that WBS needs to be integrated with other surveillance systems and supported by clear communication and coordination.

WP 3

How participants were engaged

Participants engaged in two interactive tabletop exercises addressing Influenza A/H5 and West Nile virus, discussing realistic scenarios and exploring how WBS findings could inform public health preparedness and response.

Main outcomes

The discussions confirmed the importance of integrating WBS with clinical, veterinary and environmental surveillance, alongside clear communication, coordination and decision-making procedures. The outcomes aligned with expectations, while highlighting practical challenges and differences in national preparedness frameworks.

Next steps

Over the next year, WP3 will incorporate the lessons learned into the development of the Model Chapter for integrating WBS into Public Health Preparedness Plans (Deliverable D3.2), taking into account the needs related to surveillance integration, coordination, communication and the use of WBS findings in public health decision-making.

Training for tomorrow: Tools, Categories and Platforms beyond EU-WISH

Participants drafted eight initial training proposals, with strong interest in simulations and trainer support.

How participants were engaged

Participants were divided into four groups for Part 1, and each group focused on one of four tool/skill categories. Using structured prompts, they listed and ranked training needs and mapped tools "beyond EU-WISH." In Part 2, participants formed eight "training product teams" and used guided worksheets with checkboxes to develop proposals. Each team briefly presented its proposal.

Main outcomes

The main outcomes were prioritised training needs across data, analysis, guidance and collaboration. The eight initial training proposals covered target learners, formats and first steps. The session also provided a clear view of gaps, such as trainer time, permissions and hosting. The outcomes matched expectations for seed ideas, while strong interest in simulations and trainer support exceeded expectations.

Next steps

Over the next year, breakout-session proposals will be clustered and prioritised into three to four training modules for the extension. These modules will be developed using EU-WISH resources, including materials, exercises and assessments. Hosting and partnership arrangements, for example with ECDC and national agencies, will be negotiated. Lessons learned will also be applied to improve the design of future breakout session and co-creation sessions.



WP 4 & WP 7

WP 4

Dissecting Sustainability toward Long-Term Impact: Governance, Financial Aspects and Capacities

Country-level feedback on governance, capacity and financing will feed into WP4's work on long-term sustainability.

How participants were engaged

The breakout session started with a round of introductions, during which each participant shared their national concerns and interests regarding WBS. The team then gave a short, focused presentation of the three sustainability report pillars – governance, capacity and financing – and invited participants to test these against their country experiences during the World Café.

WP 4

To encourage open discussion, the team set clear ground rules, which included using concrete country examples and keeping insights unattributed. The World Café was organised in small groups across three themed pillar tables, each with guiding questions and a facilitator capturing notes. The breakout session concluded with a plenary synthesis, during which participants and facilitators validated and refined the key messages.

Main outcomes



The main outcomes of the breakout session fell into four themes. On governance, participants explored WBS in different countries, clarified how it is legitimised and what the key coordination barriers are; identified missing authorities and blind spots and gained an understanding of the utility of the current draft framework at national level. On capacity, they identified main bottlenecks (labs, HR, logistics, data integration) and priority capacity investments.

On financing, they mapped existing funding approaches and main risks to financial sustainability, and they gauged reactions to different financing models. On crosscutting issues, they highlighted common patterns and important differences between countries, plus links between governance, capacity, and financing, and identified key stakeholders and evidence needs for 2027. These outcomes broadly matched expectations, providing practical, country-level feedback on all three pillars and clear input for inclusion into and refining D4.1.

Next steps

Over the next year, the team will integrate the breakout session's insights into D4.1, the EU-WISH Sustainability Report, contribute to a stakeholder map to prepare for the 2027 high-level event if confirmed, produce short summary materials for EU-WISH reporting and plan follow-up online sessions under D4.1 to deepen the work on national sustainability.

European Sustainability: Next Steps after EU-WISH

Partners want a European collaboration after EU-WISH with a clear purpose and tangible added value. The next step is to turn these ideas into a realistic model.



How participants were engaged

Participants were engaged through a short framing presentation followed by small-group discussions in groups of 4–6. The groups were asked to identify the main needs for continued European collaboration after EU-WISH and the outcomes such collaboration should deliver. Their conclusions were then brought into a plenary discussion, where common themes, resource implications and possible collaboration models were discussed.

Main outcomes

The main outcome was a clearer picture of what partners would value in a post-EU-WISH collaboration. Key themes included maintaining the European expert network, continued knowledge exchange and capacity building, improved harmonisation and comparability, stronger preparedness for emerging threats, and continued cross-sectoral collaboration. Participants also stressed that any future collaboration must have a clear purpose and tangible added value. These outcomes broadly matched expectations, while also reinforcing how important it will be to align the level of ambition with the resources countries and institutions are realistically willing to contribute.

WP 1



Next steps

Over the next year, the focus will be on translating these initial ideas into a realistic post-project model. This will include further prioritising the functions partners consider most valuable, clarifying what countries and institutions are able to contribute in terms of staff time or other resources, and testing lightweight forms of collaboration during the remaining EU-WISH period. Possible models, such as a community of practice, an informal network or a hybrid approach combining low-resource networking with future funded activities, will be explored further before a final structure is proposed.

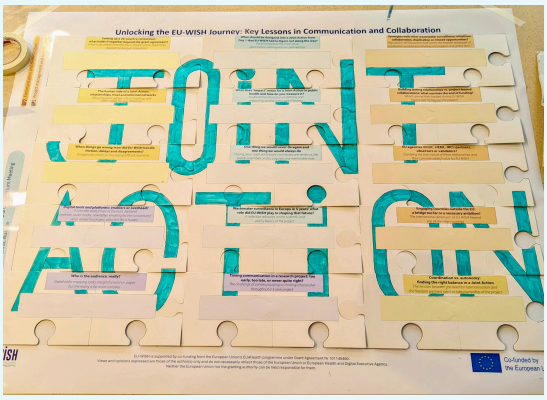
WP 1 & WP 2

Unlocking the EU-WISH Journey: Key Lessons in Communication and Collaboration

A puzzle activity highlighted early stakeholder planning, trust and communication as key lessons from the EU-WISH collaboration.

How participants were engaged

Participants in the breakout session took part in a puzzle activity. They chose question pieces on four themes, discussed them together and wrote their conclusions on the pieces. When assembled, the puzzle brought everyone's ideas together into a shared overview.



Puzzle bringing together participants' ideas

Main outcomes

Key outcomes included early stakeholder planning, balancing coordination with autonomy, building trust, improving communication, and looking beyond deliverables to assess impact. Participants also described the collaboration within the EU-WISH project positively. Together, these outcomes met the team's expectations.

Next steps

Over the next year, the team will clarify stakeholder roles and contact points, improve communication, maintain dialogue with EU and non-EU partners, and track uptake, lasting structures and progress in national systems.



Consortium toolkit

Three new deliverables – D.5.1, D.6.1 and D.7.1 – are now available on SharePoint for consortium use only. Please note that they may not yet be in their final form and are subject to change.

In December, the newsletter will provide an overview of all deliverables completed to date and those still in progress. It will also remind consortium members where to find the completed deliverables.

Already missing Vienna?

The full **Vienna Meeting Report** will be available soon. It will cover the plenary sessions and provide an in-depth description of each breakout session.



WES-DETECTIVES

The facilitation guide for the serious game **WES-Detectives** will also be available soon, helping you run the game with your own groups.

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