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Climate_CRICES

Preparing Burgenland for a drought-resilient future

A storytelling article about the Climate_CRICES Pilot Actions in Burgenland, Austria

The impacts of climate change are no longer a distant threat - they are today's reality in Burgenland. Dry riverbeds, stressed forests, and extreme weather events all demand urgent action. But how can we make sound decisions when crucial information is scattered across different institutions and databases? The Climate_CRICES project addresses this challenge by bridging the gap between science, digital data platforms, and the practical knowledge of local experts.



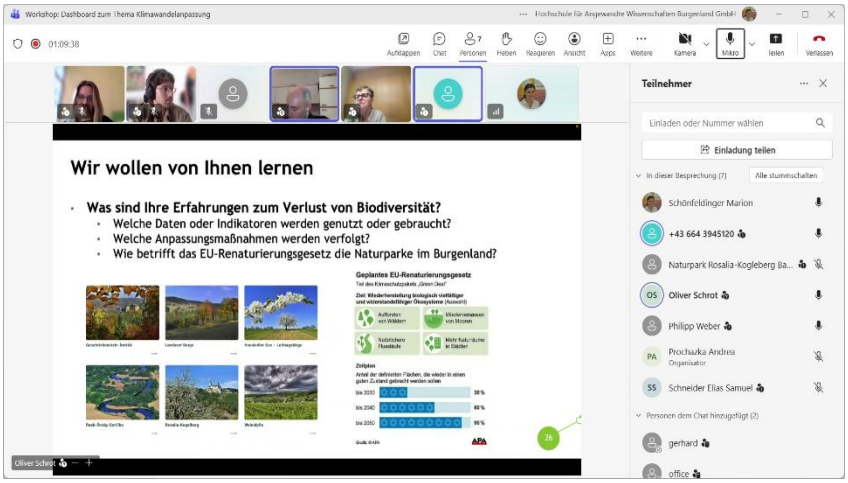
While heat, flooding, and biodiversity loss are among the most significant climate-related challenges affecting forests in Burgenland, this article focuses specifically on the Pilot Action for Drought. Rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns increasingly influence the suitability of tree species and require long-term adaptation strategies for sustainable environmental management. The pilot aimed to address this question by exploring how different datasets and forecasting approaches could be combined to improve decision support for future climate adaptation planning.



The River Leitha showing an exceptionally low water level due to prolonged drought conditions (July 2026).

The pilot focused on applying the climate analogue approach to support future forestry adaptation in Burgenland. Using the Climate CRICES dashboard together with the Copernicus climate analogue methodology, climatic regions with conditions comparable to the expected future climate of Burgenland were identified. The analysis considered several dashboard indicators, including temperature, precipitation and drought-related information. Existing guidance documents and best-practice examples, including the

Austrian Klimafitter Wald platform, were reviewed to support the preparation of a technical addendums.



Online workshop

The pilot was carried out by Forschung Burgenland in cooperation with the Department for Nature Conservation Services and the regional working group on agriculture and forestry under the lead of Dr. Markus Puschenreiter. It brought together representatives of Forschung Burgenland, nature park managers, biodiversity experts from across Burgenland and WWF Biodiversity Experts. Participants contributed extensive practical experience from nature conservation, biodiversity monitoring and environmental education. Their local knowledge complements the scientific and technical work carried out within the Climate Crises project.

One important insight during the pilot was that adapting forests to climate change requires looking beyond historical experience. Comparing Burgenland with regions that already experience similar climatic conditions offered a practical starting point for

discussing future challenges. The pilot also demonstrated how digital tools can support expert dialogue by presenting climate information in a structured and accessible way.

The pilot established a methodology for analysing future climate conditions using climate analogues and demonstrated how dashboard information can support long-term forestry planning. It also laid the foundation for identifying suitable drought-resistant tree species in a structured and evidence-based way rather than relying solely on historical experience. The pilot also established a clear direction for the Flooding Pilot Action. Instead of concentrating on the visualisation of current conditions, the focus shifted towards forecasting future developments and supporting early decision-making. The discussions also identified the datasets that could potentially be integrated into the dashboard and defined the next coordination steps required before technical implementation

What's next?

The next step is to finalise the technical addendum and continue evaluating suitable tree species using the developed methodology together with existing forestry guidance. The results will support future discussions on climate adaptation in Burgenland and contribute to regional planning activities.

