BRINGING WATER BACK TO DAIA

Community- and farmer-led water retention in Transylvania

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A valley that once held water







250

inhabitants

For generations, springs, streams and wet meadows supported households, communal pastures and small farms.

The village is more than 700 years old. Most families still depend closely on agriculture.

When the water disappeared



Farmers looking for leakage in the pipe network

1980s

Large drainage works changed the valley's hydrology to support mechanised production.

7-8 years ago

Main creek became seasonal, water scarcity becoming an every day struggle

10–15 km

Farmers sometimes need to transport water from this far to keep livestock alive.

During most of the year, half of the households do not have piped water altogether.

Unpredictable rainfall compounded an already vulnerable water system.
Water authorities are responsible for flood protection, i.e. MANDATE: draining water as fast as possible.
Nobody is responsible for ensuring water balance in the landscape.

A problem larger than any one farm



≈ 3,000 ha watershed

Water crosses boundaries

A measure on one parcel changes runoff, erosion and water availability elsewhere in the valley.

Inertia in the system, no one actor can make a change alone.

The response therefore had to connect:

Farmers and commons managers
Local government
Water and environmental authorities
Advisers, researchers and the LAG

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The turning point came in Slovakia, March 2025



COMMUNITIES FOR CLIMATE

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1 000 EUR

~8 000 EUR

“Does this work?”

became

“Where can we start?”

Farmers and officials saw simple wooden and stone structures working in a comparable landscape. The idea became concrete, affordable and credible.

The village moved from planning to work

10 000 EUR

EU Staff Fund for a Fair and Sustainable Future

King Baudouin Foundation
Working together for a better society







≈130 people joined six days of community work in July and August 2025

10 weirs, log- and stone dams built

Local wood

Stone

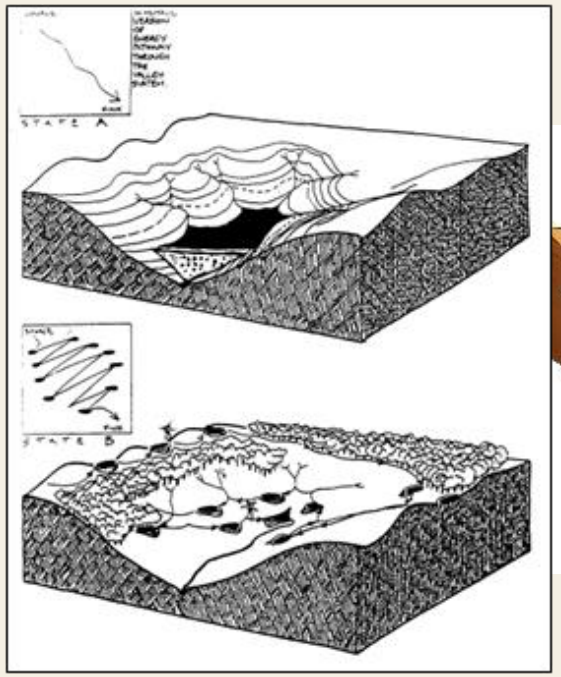
How a small weir changes the flow

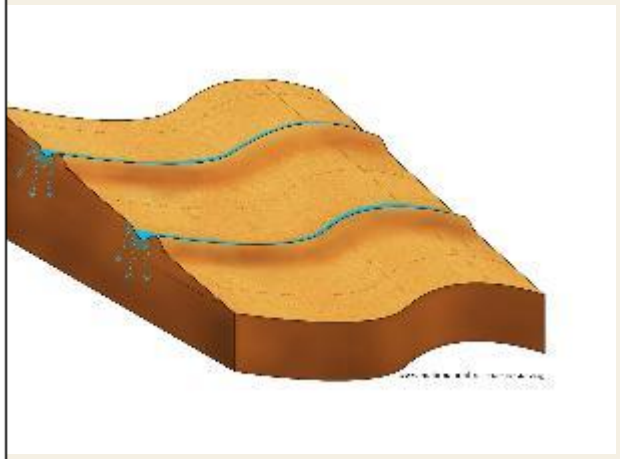


1. **Slows peak runoff**
2. Traps sediment and limits erosion
3. Spreads water through the streambed
4. Allows more time for infiltration
5. Supports groundwater recharge over time

These are small interventions, but their effect depends on many structures working together across the catchment.

The whole landscape must hold water







Streams and ditches

Small log and stone structures slow runoff and reduce erosion.

Slopes and field edges

Swales, ponds, contour tree lines and repaired tracks keep rainfall in the landscape.

Soils and pastures

Rotational grazing and reduced tillage aim to improve soil structure, infiltration and carbon storage.

The measures complement farming by protecting the natural processes on which production depends.

Partnership with the Olt basin water authority



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- Collaboration protocol developed
- 5 demonstration log dams built by the authority in April 2026
- Continuation is planned for 2027-2028

Early signs of water returning



7 June 2026



7 June 2026



7 Jun 2026

Visible water retention is encouraging. Hydrological and soil monitoring must establish the longer-term effects.

The idea travelled to neighbouring villages





15
Daia

11
Ighiu

10
Petecu

36 structures across three villages

The watershed is the next chapter





REAGRY Living Lab, 2026–2029

A hydrological plan will guide water-retention measures across the Daia catchment.

Farmers will co-design and test rotational grazing and reduced or no-tillage cultivation, supported by training, field advice and study visits.

The trials will assess soil condition, water-holding capacity, carbon sequestration and farm economics. Results will inform practical transition pathways for farmers and policy recommendations.

Farmer-led co-creation

Watershed-scale learning

Conditions for landscape water retention

Trusted facilitation

Someone must connect farmers, authorities and technical expertise over time.

Accessible seed funding

Small grants let communities test visible measures before committing to larger plans.

Workable permissions

Clear procedures are essential for nature-based measures in registered watercourses.

Continuity and evidence

Maintenance and monitoring must continue after the first construction phase.
Potentially new income streams.

Daia shows that practical water retention can restore both landscape function and the capacity to act together.

