MID-TERM Evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Project "Integrating multiple benefits of wetlands and floodplains into improved trans-boundary management for the Tisza River Basin" PIMS no. 3339

Government of Ukraine, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Romania and Republic of Serbia

United Nations Development Programme

Additional partners:
UNEP
International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)
European Commission

Report

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

APR	GEF Annual Performance Review
BRC	Bratislava Regional Centre of UNDP
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DRP	UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project
EU	European Union
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GWP	Global Water Partnership
HU	Hungary
ICPDR	International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
IMCC	Inter-ministerial Co-ordination Committees
IRBM / IRBMP	Integrated River Basin Management (Plan)
IW	International Waters
IW:LEARN	GEF's International Waters Learning Exchange Resources Network
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP	Medium Sized Project
MTE	Mid-term Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation (usually environmental sector)
PIR	GEF Project Implementation Report
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PM	Project Manager
PSC	Project Steering Committee
Rep.	Representative
RO	Romania
RS	Republic of Serbia
SK	Slovak Republic
TG	Tisza Group (of the ICPDR)
UA	Ukraine
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WFD	Water Framework Directive (EU)
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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Declaimer

This report is the work of an independent consultant and does not necessarily represent the views, or policy, or intentions of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Executive Summary

1.1 Brief description of project

The Tisza River as the largest tributary of the Danube River and its basin has been subjected to many anthropogenic influences over the last 150 years (flood protection works, bad agricultural practises, insufficient treatment of waste waters from communes, industry and mining). This has resulted in a major loss of riparian floodplains and to increased floods problems downstream; secondly to nutrient pollution, and thirdly to toxic substance pollution. In addition, climatic variations already produce over the last 10 years record floods and extended drought periods.

Tisza River Basin countries agreed a concerted action to address these problems via a more ecosystem-based approach and integrated river basin management. Priority issues are pollution reduction, wetlands and floodplain restoration and flood management.

The UNDP/GEF Tisza MSP is intended as a response and tool to these river basin management needs by implementing **two key components** resulting in the following expected outcomes:

1. The **adoption of policies and legislation** (zoning, land use, etc.) within the countries of the Tisza River Basin that promote the optimal use of wetlands / floodplains and other habitat for flood mitigation, nutrient retention, biodiversity enhancement and social amenity value consistent with the EU WFD and IWRM; and
2. **Local level demonstrations** of effective floodplain management strategies including the adaptation to increased flood events as a consequence of fluctuating flow regime, nutrient retention, habitat restoration, and flood management. The outcomes and project outputs (i.a. actual hectares of wetlands reconnected/ restored/conserved) are intended to encourage the replication of these GEF-funded pilots as new approaches on the use of wetlands with their multiple environmental benefits throughout the region and with potential for global dissemination.

The project is being implemented by UNDP (Bratislava Regional Centre) and executed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS, Copenhagen) and the Secretariat of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR, Vienna).

The project is organised under the umbrella of the ICPDR, being responsible for the Danube River Basin management and having established the “Tisza Group” to manage the Tisza River Basin. This includes representatives from all five Tisza basin countries (Ukraine, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and Serbia), the European Commission, NGOs and the ICPDR Secretariat. The TG provides a forum and a formal mechanism for exchange of information and coordination of Tisza basin-related water management and acts also as the management advisory panel for the Tisza GEF MSP.

More specifically, this MSP is implemented by Project Implementation Unit (PIU) based in the ICPDR Secretariat in Vienna, through a small team supported by consultants or contractual work. Overall progress and interim results are being regularly communicated and assessed at TG and PSC meetings.

The resulting Integrated River Basin Management Plan, including the lessons learned from the pilot demonstrations on wetland and floodplain restoration and management, is expected to become legally binding in three of the countries (SK, HU, RO) and have the highest political commitment in Ukraine and Serbia.

1.2 Context and purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) is to examine the performance of all activities undertaken in the Tisza MSP project since the beginning of its implementation.
The MTE is intended to identify weaknesses and strengths of the project design and execution, and to come up with recommendations for any necessary changes in the overall design and orientation of the project and on the work plan for the remaining project period, after evaluating the adequacy, efficiency, and effectiveness of implementation, as well as assessing the project outputs and outcomes to date. It also assesses early signs of project success or failure and prompts adjustments.

The evaluation follows GEF approaches for assessing IW projects, including a *Rating of Progress* for the GEF criteria to be assessed.
This evaluation focuses on the overall progress and, specifically on Component 1, after Component 2 had been evaluated by another consultant (Vasiljevic Branislava 2009): Her results are only summarised in this document.

According to the given ToR, this evaluation was conducted in form of a desk review of project documents produced so far, various interviews with relevant stakeholders, the participation at the ICPDR Tisza Group meeting and the Tisza MSP regional stakeholder workshop (both in November 2009) in Kosice/Slovakia, and the presentation of the draft MTE report at the UNDP/GEF Tisza MSP Project Steering Committee (9th December 2009, Vienna

1.3 Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

The quoted **MTE report about Component 2** (*Vasiljevic Branislava 2009*) stresses that the UNDP pilot and demonstration component 2 aims at developing and implementing three trans-boundary community-led projects promoting sustainable development through integrated land and water management practices in all Tisza countries: Selected from 18 received proposals, the 3 projects were started in April 2009 and run over 18 months with each a budget of US$ 100-150,000.
After a rather short period of only six months of execution, the progress of the demonstration projects was rated as ***satisfactory***. All three are rated as "***highly relevant***" for integrated Tisza River trans-boundary resource management and their concepts and/or designs were found as good, but for some projects sites the objectives seem too optimistic given the proposed timeframe and other issues. Also the national ownership seems uncertain so far, notably by the absence of a solid policy and legal base for sustainable development within the Tisza watershed.
The project performance and efficiency were both rated as ***satisfactory***. The projects are ambitious in "unexplored territories" but propose simple and cost-effective technical solutions for flood management. They do well by addressing transboundary issues via transboundary meetings and activities.
The evaluator is skeptical if there will be sufficient time to effectively strengthen stakeholder capacities and the policy framework. This may undermine long-term project sustainability. She also recommends improving the risk management to secure project success.
For the further execution, the evaluator recommends improving the linkage and cooperation between authorities, stakeholders and decision makers at all levels. UNDP should specifically guide the ILD project (Hungary) in project management.
The projects were rated to have good replication potential within the Tisza Basin and in other watersheds.

Tisza MSP Project formulation

The combination of (theoretical) policy improvement with (practical) local demonstration activities seems to be a very useful implementation strategy. The innovative step to complement WFD water management with IWRM in the complex Tisza setting benefits from guidance by the EC DG Environment which fosters a good balance of issues, needed progress and political support (at national and EU level).
Also, it is a very pragmatic and efficient decision to locate the PIU at the ICPDR which is a knowledgeable, well-established cooperation platform on transboundary and integrated water management in the wider region. The chosen implementation approach was therefore rated **satisfactory**.

The assessment of the Project logic and strategy, also on the base of Indicators, has not found any relevant weakness and was rated **satisfactory**. There is, however, a finding that while under Objective 1 / Component 1 land use is listed as one of the issues to be integrated in future water resources / river basin management, the subordinated activities in this MSP part do not expressively refer to land use aspects (e.g. adapting space planning, agricultural and infrastructure development).
Due to the complex geography of the Tisza basin and its basin management problems, this GEF project starts from a strong country ownership. This is therefore rated **highly satisfactory**.
During execution, numerous (types of) stakeholders shall become encouraged in both project components to collaborate among and with each other from local to national and basin-wide level. Stakeholder participation is rated **satisfactory**

Replication is one of the key aspects of this project. The MSP is developing a *Replication Strategy* which consists of a promoted replication of its activities (via an awareness and results dissemination program) and of the replication of its demonstration projects throughout the Tisza and wider Danube basin. The replication approach is rated **satisfactory**.
MSP cost-effectiveness is rated **highly satisfactory** because of the strong financial commitment of all partners.

The project is further characterised **satisfactory** with its numerous internal linkages (between both components and all partners) and external linkages within the sector.

The management arrangements of this MSP was rated **highly satisfactory** because it makes use of the existing ICPDR structures which offer significant cost benefits to the overall project, specifically in the management / co-ordination. It includes a small PIU team and the PSC involving all partners.

Tisza MSP Project implementation

The project implementation approach is rated **satisfactory**. It is based on a work plan that relates the planned activities with a time plan. There is effective communication among the “dispersed” key persons (PIU team, project partners and all beneficiaries) via meetings and electronic means. Good progress was achieved so far but signs of capacity limits and commitment fatigue are a result of the overall work load of the key persons, notably from governments. A strengthened commitment is needed to achieve a good quality of the future integrated Tisza Plan.
The partnerships arrangements for project implementation, involving national and international government experts and observers in the Tisza Group and the PSC and facilitated by the PIU, are rated **highly satisfactory**. The same applies for the

financial planning which benefits from substantial in-kind contributions.

Monitoring and evaluation of the entire MSP Project is being regularly executed by the Project Steering Committee on the base of related PIU activities. Main reports about progress are being regularly produced and needed adaptations and revisions of the time-table, work plan and of one M&E progress indicator are undertaken. The current status of M&E is therefore rated **satisfactory.**

MSP execution and implementation much benefits from the existing ICPDR structures. This ensures synergies between these bodies and enables considerable in-kind contributions resp. operational costs savings. The personnel of the PIU plays a significant technical role in the implementation of the MSP, and ensures the co-ordination between the development of the IRBM Plan, the local demonstration projects and other relevant activities outside the MSP. The execution and implementation modalities are rated **satisfactory**. The same rating was given for the UNDP BRC Office which is supporting good progress in the execution of the Objective 2 / Component 2 activities (demonstration projects and stakeholder involvement).
The coordination and operational activities by the PIU are rated **highly satisfactory.**

Current results

At this mid-term stage of the MSP project, various planned progress was made towards attaining all objectives, including an advanced 4th draft of the IRBMP (Overall Objective), drafts Tisza basin strategies on nutrient pollution as well as floods and droughts (Objective 1) and 3 local projects with various stakeholder involvement successfully started (Objective 2). Pending question is how much the upcoming agreed policy, in particular the new Tisza IRBMP, will bring about an effective change/improvement of current management practices, also in the light of experiences made in the demonstration projects. The attainment of objectives is rated **satisfactory**.
The project sustainability benefits from the fact that this work is embedded within the ICPDR structures and specifically its Tisza Group. The ICPDR is financially sustainable, though not necessarily the TG (its current MoU is largely achieved and has to be soon updated). The project also benefits from the past GEF Danube - Black Sea Partnership (DRP) experience and from increased multi-stakeholder and community level support. Future sustainability shall be ensured with the adoption of the integrated Tisza basin plan and national integrated plans and with the government commitment to effectively implement them: Securing this is a key task for the final phase. The sustainability is rated *at this stage* as **satisfactory**.

In terms of replicability, that is provisionally rated **satisfactory**, both the demonstration projects and ITRBM Plan are expected to provide valuable lessons for applicability elsewhere in the Tisza / Danube Basins and beyond. The project's *Replication Strategy* will be fully developed over the next months. It will focus on stakeholder engagement in both components at local practical and national policy levels.
The GEF project is also contributing in a **satisfactory** way to upgrading skills of the national staff through the integrated resource analysis and the management planning process at national and Tisza Group levels. The rather small group of currently engaged staff will have to secure the wider dissemination and replication of their skills upgrading for other national staff.

The conclusion of the mid-term evaluation is a **satisfactory** rating of the Tisza MSP project.

In terms of future **recommendations**, the consultant listed several points:

- The **communication** between Components 1 and 2 and the mutual awareness of their involved key stakeholders should be strengthened.
- The project **website** should be improved.
- The **national commitment to adopt and implement the future ITRBMP** must be secured. This should result in an effective change/improvement of the current practices basin management, such as adapted land uses in floodplains and quantitative objectives for mitigation measures.
- This entails to **strengthen the integration of other water-related sectors** (beside water quality management) in the upcoming ITRBMP development. The planned Integration Workshop (early May 2010) comes rather late for ITRBMP drafting (ending in June 2010) and should therefore be complemented by previously (e.g. via a "strategic integration meeting" in February 2010) involving competent experts from the "new" management sectors (floods, droughts, wetlands and land use – notably agriculture) in the workshop preparation and in the ITRBMP drafting.
- On the content side of current policy work, it is recommended to better address **land use aspects** in the national analyses and the future IRBMP. Key issues to be addressed in the future action part should be intensive agriculture, forest management, flood management strategies - preventive land uses, ecosystem services and regional (spatial) development. Some useful results and lessons expected from the 3 demonstration projects may come too late for the plan drafting.
- Another missing analysis element of the ITRBMP is morphological alterations.
- Finally, the sustainability of the new integrated Tisza basin management secured by a new high-level multi-national commitment in form of a **new or updated Memorandum of Understanding** on occasion of the endorsement of the ITRBMP.

1. Introduction

1.1 Brief description of the GEF project

The Tisza River as the largest tributary of the Danube River and its basin has been subjected to many anthropogenic influences over the last 150 years that has resulted in a significantly degraded system. These impacts include, firstly, engineering works on the river and its tributaries for flood protection leading to the major loss of riparian wetlands and floodplains (being natural flood retention spaces), and to increased problems of floods downstream; secondly this refers to bad agricultural practises including the use of fertilisers (leading to nutrient pollution), and thirdly toxic substance pollution due to no or insufficient treatment of waste waters from communal, industrial and long-time mining activities. In addition, climatic variations (probably signs of climate change) that already produce over the last 10 years record flooding incidents, increase pressures on the available water resources, including extended drought periods.

These problems cannot be reduced or even solved by only local action but they require a concerted action by all the Tisza River Basin countries to developing and implementing a more ecosystem-based approach and integrated river basin management. Priority issues to be addressed are pollution reduction, wetlands and floodplain restoration and flood management.

The UNDP/GEF Tisza MSP is intended as a response and tool to these river basin management needs by implementing **two key components** resulting in the following expected outcomes:

1. The **adoption of policies and legislation** (zoning, land use, etc.) within the countries of the Tisza River Basin that promote the optimal use of wetlands / floodplains and other habitat for flood mitigation, nutrient retention, biodiversity enhancement and social amenity value consistent with the EU WFD and IWRM; and
2. **Local level demonstrations** of effective floodplain management strategies including the adaptation to increased flood events as a consequence of fluctuating flow regime, nutrient retention, habitat restoration, and flood management. The outcomes and project outputs (i.a. actual hectares of wetlands reconnected/ restored/conserved) are intended to encourage the replication of these GEF-funded pilots as new approaches on the use of wetlands with their multiple environmental benefits throughout the region and with potential for global dissemination.

The project is being implemented by UNDP through its Bratislava Regional Centre (BRC) and executed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) based in Copenhagen and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) Secretariat[1], based in Vienna.

The project is organised under the umbrella of the ICPDR, as this organisation is responsible for the management of the whole Danube River Basin and has established the “Tisza Group” to manage the Tisza River Basin. The Tisza Group (TG) was formed on the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the Tisza basin countries in December 2004. Members include representatives from the five Tisza basin countries (Ukraine, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and Serbia), the European Commission, NGOs and the ICPDR Secretariat. The TG

[1] The ICPDR has been selected for this role in accordance with UNDP-GEF rules and procedures

provides a forum and a formal mechanism for exchange of information and coordination of Tisza basin-related water management activities and acts also as the management advisory panel for the Tisza GEF MSP. The members of the Tisza Group are therefore part of the GEF Project Steering Committee (PSC), which also includes representatives of the Carpathian Convention (Interim Secretariat provided by UNEP in Vienna), and representatives from other organisations (including the GEF Implementing Agencies). In addition the ICPDR as a co-financer of this project is providing office and administrative support for the project. These activities ensure cost benefits and good coordination of the Tisza MSP with other on-going activities elsewhere in the Tisza River and Danube River Basins.

More specifically, this MSP is implemented by Project Implementation Unit (PIU) based in the ICPDR Secretariat in Vienna, through a small team headed by a part-time Chief Technical Advisor/Project Manager. Most technical activities are delegated to consultants or contractual work. Overall progress and interim results are being regularly communicated and assessed among TG and PSC members, notably on occasion of its meetings.

The resulting Integrated Tisza River Basin Management Plan (ITRBMP), including the lessons learned from the pilot demonstrations on wetland and floodplain restoration and management, is expected (see UNDP/GEF Project Document) to become legally binding in three of the countries (SK, HU, RO) and have the highest political commitment in Ukraine and Serbia. All countries of the Tisza River Basin have committed themselves, at Ministerial level, to development and implementation of the plan, as restated at the *Environment for Europe* Ministerial Meeting in Belgrade, 11th October 2007.

1.2 Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) is to examine the performance of the Tisza MSP project since the beginning of its implementation. The MTE includes both

- the evaluation of the progress in project implementation, measured against planned outputs set forth in the Project Document in accordance with rational budget allocation and
- the assessment of features related to the process involved in achieving those outputs, as well as
- the initial and potential impacts of the project, and
- the underlying causes and issues contribution to targets not adequately achieved.

The MTE is intended to identify weaknesses and strengths of the project design and execution, and to come up (chapter 4) with recommendations for any necessary changes in the overall design and orientation of the project and on the work plan for the remaining project period, after evaluating (chapter 3) the adequacy, efficiency, and effectiveness of its implementation, as well as assessing the project outputs and outcomes to date. It also shall assess early signs of the project success or failure and prompt necessary adjustments.

In chapter 5, the MTE mission also briefly identifies first lessons learned and best practices from the Project which could be applied to future and other on-going projects.

The evaluation follows approaches adopted by GEF for the assessment of IW projects. This includes that for the GEF criteria to be assessed (see chapter 3) in writing, also a **Rating of Progress** should be provided. This is using the following terms:

Highly Satisfactory: The outcome is likely to be achieved or exceeded, efficiently with no significant shortcomings.

Satisfactory: The outcome is likely to be achieved, efficiently with only minor shortcomings.

Marginally Satisfactory: The outcome has moderate shortcomings that limit its achievement.

Unsatisfactory: The outcome has major shortcomings that jeopardize its achievement.

1.3 Scope of the Mid-Term Evaluation

The scope of the mid-term evaluation covers all activities undertaken in the framework of the project. This refers to

- planned outputs of the project compared to actual outputs and the actual results as a contribution to attaining the project objectives.
- problems and necessary corrections and adjustments.
- the efficiency of project management, including the delivery of outputs and activities in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness and cost efficiency.
- likely outcomes and impact of the project in relation to the specified goals and objectives of the project.

According to the given ToR, this evaluation comprises the following elements.

(i) Assess whether the project design is clear, logical and commensurate with the time and resources available;

(ii) A summary evaluation of the project and all of its major components undertaken to date and a determination of progress towards achievement of its overall objectives;

(iii) An evaluation of project performance in relation to the indicators, assumptions and risks specified in the logical framework matrix and the Project Document;

(iv) An assessment of the scope, quality and significance of the project outputs produced to date in relation to expected results;

(v) An assessment of the functionality of the institutional structure established and the role of the Project Steering Committee (PSC);

(vi) Identification and, to the extent possible, quantification of any additional outputs and outcomes beyond those specified in the Project Document;

(vii) Identification of any programmatic and financial variance and/or adjustments made during the first 1.5 years of the project and an assessment of their conformity with decisions of the PSC and their appropriateness in terms of the overall objectives of the project;

(viii) An evaluation of project coordination, management and administration provided by the PIU. This includes specific reference to:

- Organizational/institutional arrangements for collaboration among the various agencies and institutions involved in project arrangements and execution;

- The effectiveness of the monitoring mechanisms currently employed by the PMU in monitoring on a day to day basis, progress in project execution;
- Administrative, operational and/or technical problems and constraints that influenced the effective implementation of the project and present recommendations for any necessary operational changes; and
- Financial management of the project, including the balance between expenditures on administrative and overhead charges in relation to those on the achievement of substantive outputs.

(ix) A prognosis of the degree to which the overall objectives and expected outcomes of the project are likely to be met;

(x) An assessment of the M&E approach adopted by the project;

(xi) Progress towards sustainability and replication of project activities;

(xii) Lessons learned during project implementation;

(xiii) Recommendations regarding any necessary corrections and adjustments to the overall project work plan and timetable for the purposes of enhancing the achievement of project objectives and outcomes.

This evaluation focuses on the overall progress and, specifically on Component 1: This is because Component 2 has recently been evaluated by another consultant (Vasiljevic Branislava 2009) and her results are being used and only summarised in this document (see chapter 3.1 and Annex 5).

1.4 Key issues addressed in this evaluation

This MTE is carried out in accordance with the GEF requirements and therefore covers all aspects of the Tisza MSP project. It includes an assessment of project formulation and current (i.e. mid-term) implementation of:

- the project outcomes generated so far,
- the processes used to generate them,
- the project impacts using indicators included in the logical framework, and
- the lessons learned.

1.5 Methodology of the evaluation

The Mid-term Evaluation was conducted in a participatory manner in order to provide a basis for potential improvement in the implementation and other decisions.

According to the given ToR, this evaluation used the following steps:

(i) Desk review of project document, outputs, monitoring reports (such as Project Inception Report, Minutes of Steering Committee meetings including other relevant meetings, Project Implementation Report (PIR/APR), quarterly progress reports, and other internal documents including consultant and financial reports);

(ii) Review of specific products produced so far, including datasets, management and action plans, publications and other material and reports;

(iii) Interviews with the CTA/Project Manager, Technical Assistant/Project Coordinator and the Administrative Assistant in the Project Management Unit;

(iv) Participation at the ICPDR Tisza Group meeting (November 12) and the Tisza MSP regional stakeholder workshop (November 13, 2009) in Kosice/Slovakia where an independent review of the MSP Component 2 demonstration projects was presented (supported through UNDP co-financing). There, various stakeholders could be interviewed and the results of the demonstration projects review were commented.

(v) Interviews with other relevant stakeholders involved, including the co-financers UNDP, European Commission DG Environment, ICPDR and UNEP (Carpathian Convention Office, Vienna).

(vi) Presentation of the draft MTE report at the UNDP/GEF Tisza MSP Project Steering Committee (9th December 2009, Vienna).

(vii) Completion of the MTE report and its submission to UNDP-BRC and UNOPS.

1.6 Structure of the evaluation

The structure of the evaluation follows the GEF Sample Outline for minimum GEF requirements, as provided to the evaluator from UNDP Bratislava. It reviews the Tisza MSP in its development context and in its design, as presented in the UNDP/GEF Project Document (chapter 2), then assesses the started implementation and current results on the base of produced reports and stakeholder interviews (chapter 3), and concludes with recommendations and lessons learned for the future project stages (chapters 4 and 5).

2. The project and its development context

2.1 Project start and its duration

Based on the received information, the GEF project “Establishment of Mechanisms for Integrated Land and water Management in the Tisza River Basin” (PIMS 3339) was started in June 2008 and will last three years, i.e. until May 2011.

2.2 Problems that the project seeks to address

The GEF funding addresses the important issues of integration of water quality and quantity together with land and water management. This is an innovative step addressing typical Tisza river transboundary and basin problems as well as further improvement in EU water management where water quality (WFD) and water quantity issues (Flood Directive, no directive regarding drought and climate change impacts) are yet not fully covered nor integrated.
Further, on a more practical level, the GEF funding supports pilot projects in the Tisza region that were looked for and selected at demonstrating the important multiple benefits that can be accrued from wetlands and floodplain restoration which are currently not supported by in-country activities.

2.3 Immediate and development objectives of the project

The **objectives** of this MSP are two fold:

1. To **integrate** water quality, water quantity, land use, and biodiversity objectives within **integrated water resources/river basin management (IWRM/IRBM)** under the legal umbrella of the EU and ICPDR; and
2. To **begin implementation of IWRM principles** through the testing of new approaches on wetland and floodplain management **through community-based demonstration**. These community-level pilot activities will link to the development and implementation of an agreed river basin management plan following the principles of IWRM and tested at the regional/local level under the governance arrangements established for management of the Tisza River Basin.

The integration of water quality and quantity management is considered to be a significantly **innovative approach in the basin** and the results of this will be utilised elsewhere in the Danube River Basin through catalytic policies and actions of the ICPDR.

2.4 Main stakeholders and their roles

Beneficiary Countries: The countries of the Tisza River Basin (UA, RO, SK, HU, RS) are direct contributors to this MSP through their involvement in the Tisza Group and their wider activities in the Danube River Basin. The countries confirmed their commitment to the development and implementation of a Tisza IRBMP (e.g. via their active participation in the TG) and recognise the necessary (incremental) support provided by this MSP for testing integration concepts for utilising wetlands. Their national experts are directly involved in assisting and managing the work of the Tisza MSP, notably in the preparation of national and regional strategies on nutrient pollution reduction and on flood and drought mitigation as well as in the drafting of the Tisza IRBMP.

UNDP: Apart from its role as implementing agency, UNDP is supporting the preparation and efficient execution of Component 2, the demonstration projects of the Tisza MSP (originally there was intention to also providing cash contribution through an additional demonstration project in the basin but this was abandoned during the Inception Phase) and the execution of the stakeholder workshops.

ICPDR: This is a co-executing agency with UNOPS and the body responsible for the operation of the Tisza Group activities. The ICPDR is providing significant in-kind support to the Tisza MSP, e.g. by hosting the PIU and contributing significant time of its technical staff, notably for the execution of Component 1, and it chairs the PSC.

UNEP: Through the activities of the Carpathian Convention, UNEP provides in-kind support to the Tisza MSP through participation of experts in joint activities on integrated water resource management within the Tisza River Basin, notably in the preparation and execution of the Tisza MSP Integration Workshop in May 2010.

European Commission: The EC (Directorate General for Environment) is the co-chair of the Tisza Group and facilitates the sound development of the Tisza RBMP (Danube sub-basin according to WFD). It has provided a cash contribution and continuous guidance specifically to support the activities leading in the past to the Tisza Basin Analysis Report (2007) and within the Tisza MSP to the Integrated River Basin Management Plan for the Tisza River Basin.

2.5 Main activities

The project consists of 2 components with each a number of activities:

Component 1: *Integration of water quality, water quantity, land use, and biodiversity objectives within integrated water resources/river basin management under the legal umbrella of the EU and ICPDR*

Activity 1(i)	*Development of strategies for reducing pollution in the Tisza River Basin*
Activity 1(ii)	*Development of a flood and drought mitigation strategy*
Activity 1(iii)	*Combination of Tisza River Basin Strategies into an Integrated River Basin Management Plan*
Activity 1(iv)	*Dissemination and replication strategy for Component 1*

Component 2: *Implementation of IWRM principles through the testing of new approaches on wetland and floodplain management through community-based demonstration*

Activity 2(i)	*Identification of potential demonstration projects*
Activity 2(ii)	*Agreement via stakeholder workshop on priority projects to be implemented*
Activity 2(iii)	*Implementation of demonstration projects*
Activity 2(iv)	*Feedback and presentation of results – final stakeholder workshop*
Activity 2(v)	*Development of a replication strategy for Component 2*

2.6 Results expected

The expected **outcomes** from this MSP include

1. the **adoption of policies and legislation** (zoning, land use, etc.) within the countries of the Tisza River Basin that promote the optimal use of wetlands / floodplains and other habitat for flood mitigation, nutrient retention, biodiversity enhancement and social amenity value consistent with the EU WFD and IWRM; and
2. **demonstrations of effective floodplain management strategies** including the adaptation to increased flood events as a consequence of fluctuating flow regime for nutrient retention, habitat restoration, and flood management implemented at local level.
   These outcomes and project outputs of actual hectares of wetlands reconnected/restored/conserved will **encourage the replication** of these GEF-funded pilots as new approaches on the use of wetlands with their multiple environmental benefits throughout the region and with potential for global dissemination.

The **resulting integrated river basin management plan** (including the lessons learnt from the pilot demonstrations on wetland and floodplain restoration and management) is planned to become legally binding in three of the countries and have the highest political commitment in Ukraine and Serbia. All countries of the Tisza River Basin have committed themselves, at Ministerial level, to development and implementation of the plan. This commitment has been restated at the *Environment for Europe* Ministerial Meeting in Belgrade, 11th October 2007, where Ministers from

all countries indicated their appreciation of the support already initiated by the EU and the expected support from the GEF through this initiative.

These actions, supported by GEF, are expected to assist the Tisza Group to further develop its new integrated mission at an operational level under the legal and institutional umbrella of the ICPDR,.

3. Findings and Conclusions

The following findings and recommendations mainly focus on Component 2 of the Tisza MSP, because Component 2 was already evaluated separately by another consultant:

3.1 Results of the evaluation of the demonstration projects

Shortly before this Mid-term evaluation, UNDP contract another independent consultant (*Vasiljevic Branislava 2009*) to examine the three demonstration projects (via desk study and field interviews). The summarized results are:

The UNDP pilot and demonstration component 2 aims at developing and implementing three trans-boundary community-led projects that promote sustainable development through integrated land and water management (ILWM) practices in all Tisza countries: Selected from 18 received proposals, the 3 projects were started in April 2009 and run over 18 months with the total grant available of US$ 350,000, i.e. each with a budget of US$ 100-150,000.
Project results and lessons will be communicated at local, national and Tisza region (Tisza Group) levels for awareness raising and future replication.

After a rather short period of only six months of execution, the progress of the demonstration projects was rated as ***satisfactory***. All three are rated as "***highly relevant***" for integrated Tisza River trans-boundary resource management and their concepts and/or designs were found as good, but for some projects sites the objectives seem too optimistic given the proposed timeframe and other issues. Also the national ownership of the projects seems uncertain so far, notably by the absence of a solid policy and legal base for sustainable development within the Tisza watershed.
Flood protection and water pollution (e.g. from communal waste) of specific Tisza floodplains are key project issues that are addressed in concrete field actions but (yet) not nutrient reduction. Local key stakeholders are being involved and engaged in the projects
The project performance and efficiency were both rated as ***satisfactory***. The projects are ambitious in "unexplored territories" but propose simple and cost-effective technical solutions for flood management. They do well by addressing transboundary issues via transboundary meetings and activities.
The evaluator is skeptical if there will be sufficient time to effectively strengthen stakeholder capacities and the policy framework. This may undermine long-term project sustainability. She also recommends improving the risk management to secure project success.
For the further execution of the demo projects, the evaluator recommends to improve the linkage and cooperation between authorities, stakeholders and decision makers at local, regional and national levels via better information dissemination and frequent

communication in both directions. The monitoring of project outputs and results should be carried out by the independent consultant but not by a partner.
UNDP project management, including coordination/supervision and monitoring/reporting, was found as going well and meeting UNDP and GEF procedures.
Projects contents and concrete results (e.g. in terms of flood retention) should be better communicated via media and assessed together with the concerned ministries in terms of their relevance at basin level. UNDP should secure the inclusion of capacity building elements in the projects and specifically guide the ILD project (Hungary) in project management.
Altogether, the projects have good replication potential within the Tisza River Basin and in other watersheds.

Further details (*Executive Summary of the Final Report*) are given in Annex 5.

3.2 Tisza MSP Project formulation

3.2.1 Implementation approach

The implementation of this project is no easy task because the project area (i.e. the Tisza basin) is very large, the project subjects are rather complex (e.g. knowledge gaps, different national and local viewpoints) and all stakeholders to be involved are located in different regions. While Component 2 activities, i.e. the 3 selected demonstrations projects, are oriented to rather small areas, few stakeholders and local issues, Component 1 is more difficult to approach but benefits from the experience and guidances of previous (Tisza Analysis Report 2007 of the TG) and parallel work on river basin cooperation (ICPDR RBM Expert Group).
The combination of (theoretical) policy improvement with (practical) local demonstration activities seems to be a very useful implementation strategy.
The innovative step to complement WFD water management with IWRM in this complex setting benefits from guidance by the EC DG Environment which fosters a good balance of issues, needed progress and political support (at national and EU level).
Also, it is a very pragmatic and efficient decision to locate the PIU at the ICPDR which is a knowledgeable, well-established cooperation platform on transboundary and integrated water management in the wider region. The PIU team chosen provides the right competence and experience needed for a successful implementation (see ch. 3.1.10).
UNDP BRC, the European Commission as well as UNEP are the other key players which are firmly rooted with their activities and strategic interest in the wider Tisza region to sustain successful implementation of this innovative policy.

The same applies to many persons representing in the Tisza Group and PSC the competent national institutions and international observers (REC, WWF) who are already experienced with international water management.

- The evaluation concludes that the chosen implementation approach seems to be fine and is therefore rated **satisfactory**.

3.2.2 Analysis of LFA

The assessment of the Project logic and strategy, also on the base of Indicators, has

not found any relevant weakness.
There is a finding that under Objective 1 / Component 1 land use is listed as one of the issues to be integrated in future water resources / river basin management. The subordinated activities in this MSP part are, however, focusing on nutrient pollution and flood and drought management but not expressively on land use aspects (e.g. adapting space planning, agricultural and infrastructure development).
But because land use is one of the issues addressed in the Objective 2/ Component 2 demonstration projects and these will be reported under Objective 1 Activity I (iii) before the IRBMP will be completed and approved, there is still a possibility to prevent this problem. See chapter 4.3!

- The Tisza MSP's Logframe is rated **satisfactory**.

3.2.3 Lessons from other relevant projects incorporated into MSP implementation

There are a number of lessons produced under the GEF Danube-Black Sea Strategic Partnership that are being gained and incorporated from the UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project and from the WB/GEF wetland components (projects on the Bulgarian Danube and in the Hungarian Gemenc floodplain).
Other "neighboring" GEF projects in Slovakia and Hungary have a different thematic area (biodiversity): The Slovak project deals with integrated ecosystem management and has targets in biodiversity, water management and socio-economic development, while the project in Hungary had a biodiversity focus connected with water management issues and local economic development. This experience may also be useful when addressing the lessons learnt from the demo projects.
The evaluator considers it still too early to already rate this aspect.

3.2.4 Country ownership/Driveness

The project subjects, water quality and quantity management in the poles between the (theoretical) national government policy and (practical) local field levels, are very important issues across the entire Tisza region. Water pollution, flood incidents and climate change-related droughts are currently top environmental economic and social issues. Due to the complex geography of the Tisza basin, most parties are situated in both an upstream and downstream situation, i.e. origins and subjects of inappropriate water management. Consequently, there is a strong interest in finding mutually agreed and sustainable water resource management solutions that function both at local, bilateral and basin levels.
The GEF Tisza MSP is formulated in a way that secures via Components 1 and 2 the inclusion of relevant information (starting from the WFD Tisza Basin Analysis 2007, complemented by water quantity aspects) and of local targeted activities into the formulation of future-oriented and balanced solutions, i.e. the adoption of an integrated water resource plan.
The production and detail formulation of the ITRBMP fully depends on the availability and provision of national information which is the core subject of ongoing TG discussions and agreements, i.e. it is the MSP country project offices (see also Annex E of the UNDP Project Document for this Tisza MSP) that are responsible for and secure full national ownership. So, there is no doubt that this GEF project starts from a strong country ownership.

- The country ownership is rated **highly satisfactory**.

3.2.5 Stakeholder participation

The Tisza MSP intends to make use of the ICPDR strategy for public participation throughout the Danube River Basin. Previous stakeholder analyses determined the roles and potential or degree of involvement of concerned public and private sector agencies in each country, and where necessary these analyses will be expanded when ITRBMP plan will be issued for public consultation in summer 2010.

As a central interest of the project, strong emphasis on stakeholder involvement is being placed

- in *Component 2* by executing 3 demonstration projects by local stakeholders as well as 2 regional meetings (November 2009 and November 2010) and several local workshops
- in *Component 1* by informing stakeholders in the final project stage (publication of the draft Tisza IRBMP in July 2010 for stakeholder commenting) and motivating further input of stakeholder groups in the implementation of the IRBM plan.

During execution, numerous (types of) stakeholders shall become encouraged to collaborate among and with each other throughout the project. Regional, national and in some cases, local stakeholder advisory groups shall be charged with providing critical input into the project direction based on their insights, experiences and interests.
Stakeholders shall also be actively engaged in Component 1 at national level of the project (the development of an integrated management plan). How important and relevant this engagement will really be has to be seen mainly from the summer of 2010 on.

- Stakeholder participation at the project formulation level is rated **satisfactory**.

3.2.6 Replication approach

The identified need to expand from the WFD-required water management level to a comprehensive and integrated basin management is valid in all river basins in Europe. The same applies to Component 2 activities which can demonstrate how to address typical wetland management issues that bring benefit firstly at local scale but in terms of water policy explanation also at national, transboundary and regional scales.
This makes is very likely that the experience being built up in the Tisza MSP project (how to integrate various water and land uses with basin-wide water management needs) and the concrete outcomes produced may soon be replicated in other parts of the Danube basin and, possibly, elsewhere in the world. This includes good assessment of lessons learned and the communication of project results both to the local public and the water management-interested stakeholders elsewhere.

The MSP is developing a **Replication Strategy** which consists of two elements:

1. The MSP will *promote replication of its activities*. This will be achieved largely through an *intensive monitoring, learning, outreach and evaluation process*. In parallel, the project will promote replication of its successes, and particularly its more innovative initiatives, during its own lifetime. A key element of its replication strategy that will serve both these objectives will be an awareness and results dissemination program. This will employ multiple mechanisms and involve numerous partners. Through these multiple mechanisms and partnerships, information on successful investment and policy reform promotion

strategies, innovative financing modalities and new partnerships will be widely disseminated. This will promote replication of this MSP in other Danube sub-basins, and other basins globally. The project is expected to be important in testing GEF's support of sub-basin management initiatives using existing basin-wide management structures.

2. *Replication of Demonstration Projects throughout the Tisza and wider Danube basin*. The demonstration projects implemented during this MSP will each have its own replication strategy built in the project design. The replication strategy will define the replication context for each demonstration, i.e.: the number, location, areas/sites in the region where the specific technology/practice could apply; assess the value of demo projects replication, and evaluate the overall expected impact of the full replication.

Replication activities are specifically foreseen under Activities 1(iv) and 2(v).

- The replication approach is rated **satisfactory**.

3.2.7 Cost-effectiveness

Cost effectiveness is achieved in this project in several ways:

- The interest and commitment of the Tisza Governments but also ICPDR, UNDP; UNEP and the European Commission in progressing in integrated basin management, is leading to substantial in-kind and cash contributions which presumably are larger than the related amounts indicated in this MSP project budget.
- The location of the PIU at ICPDR is also evaluated as a cost-effective decision, as it reduces communication and coordination costs.
- The timing of the project, overlapping with the WFD RBM planning, makes it possible that very similar EU-required activities can be used for application of the IWRM under the MSP. Also, the close involvement of the European Commission DG Environment secures cost-efficient work among all EU partners.
- Finally, it is expected that the IWRM work initiated by this project will trigger more cost-effective basin and resources management in the future. It may be necessary to find further funding to secure continuation of this cooperation.

- The cost-effectiveness is rated **highly satisfactory**.

3.2.8 UNDP comparative advantage

The UNDP comparative advantage is given by the fact that it disposes of long years of experience from previous UNDP/GEF engagement in the Danube region since the early 1990s, notably the UNDP/GEF Pollution Reduction Programme (1998-2002) and UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project (2003-2007). Both supported and facilitated the important early years of implementing the Danube Protection Convention (in force since 1998) and the diverse challenging work of the ICPDR (with its Expert Groups) and the development of the Danube-basin wide coordination of transboundary water management. Based on UNDP/GEF's Danube TDA (Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis including Causal Chain Analysis) 1999, the new WFD-oriented water management was built up since the year 2000 with the benefit of

diverse UNDP/GEF-funded studies and important expert support. These activities always included the Tisza basin and its specific subjects (e.g. it was the first in the Danube basin to have a regional analysis of pollution risk spots).
The current MSP CTA/PM was in 2004-2007 deputy head of the UNDP/GEF DRP office and thus secures the important transfer of the comprehensive UNDP experience into the ongoing MSP activities.

3.2.9 Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector

Main *internal* linkages are designed between Component 1 (water management strategies and the integrated Tisza basin plan) and Component 2 (the three demonstration projects) activities. Regular communication and mutual information during the stakeholder workshops should serve this need.

External linkages are with the Tisza Group which involves few other stakeholders, such as UNEP (Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention), the Regional Environmental Centre (working a lot on regional development and NGO capacity building in South-Eastern Europe), the WWF-Danube Carpathian Programme and the wider ICPDR network: The latter is probably the most important one due to the same Government representatives and experts being involved in both the MSP and ICPDR activities.

There are direct linkages between the MSP project and Carpathian Convention (via the interim Secretariat in Vienna) with its implementation of a land and water resources demonstration project in the Carpathians and the development of a regional Flood Prevention Strategy and Action Plan respectively (coordinated with the ICPDR).
In addition, there is contact with the WB mining project in Romania and the EU climate projects (e.g. CLAVIER). The linkages with the GEF IW-LEARN programme and the WaterWiki project are rather underdeveloped.

- The MSP linkages with other interventions are rated **satisfactory**.

3.2.10 Management arrangements

The management of this MSP was arranged within the existing ICPDR structures which offer significant cost benefits to the overall project, specifically in the management / co-ordination. This includes:

1. A *Project Implementation Unit* (PIU) based in ICPDR Secretariat in Vienna.
    - A part-time (30% full-time equivalent) Chief Technical Advisor/Project Manager (CTA/PM), Mr Peter Whalley. He works closely with the Executive Secretary of the ICPDR, Mr Philip Weller, who is the PSC chair and PIU supervisor, in directing the work of the MSP.
    - A small PIU team based at the ICPDR Permanent Secretariat undertaking the project management and the technical activities that are not subject to consultants or contractual work.
        - The Project Assistant and Project Co-ordinator, Mrs Diana Heilmann who works 100% full-time;

- The Part-time Project Administrator / Financial Management, Mrs Anna Koch, working 20% full-time equivalent.

Further, PIU and the entire Tisza project receives considerable support from all the ICPDR Secretariat's Technical Experts.

The ICPDR provides the office space for the PIU and co-finances the administrative support for the MSP. The ICPDR and its Secretariat provide national co-ordination of activities through their existing mechanisms.

2. A *Project Steering Committee* (PSC) was set up, composed of key representatives from Tisza country Governments.

3. The MSP has a dedicated publicly available *website* http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/tisza_undp_gef.htm that is to be linked to the IW: LEARN website (not yet done).

➢ The management arrangement is rated **highly satisfactory**.

3.3 Implementation

3.3.1 Implementation approach

The implementation is based on a work plan that relates the planned activities with a time plan as follows:

Figure 1: Tisza River Basin MSP – Work plan outline (source: *UNDP Project Document 30 January 2008*)

Activity	Quarter											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Component 1: Integration of water quality, water quantity, land use, and biodiversity objectives within integrated water resources/river basin management under the legal umbrella of the EU and ICPDR **Activities:**												
i) Pollution reduction strategies												
ii) Flood and drought mitigation strategy												
iii) IRBM plan synthesis												
iv) Dissemination and replication												
Component 2: Implementation of IWRM principles through the testing of new approaches on wetland and floodplain management through community-based demonstration **Activities**												
i) Identification of potential demonstration projects;												
ii) Agreement on priority projects												
ii) Implementation of demonstration projects												
iv) Feedback and presentation of results												
v) Development of a replication strategy												

The implementation relies on many persons represented in the Tisza Group and PSC (the competent national institutions) who are already experienced with international water management.

The evaluation found that Component 1 is organized by

1. securing effective communication among the "dispersed" persons, i.e. the PIU team, project partners and all beneficiaries via few regular meetings and frequent electronic means (e-mails, phone/skype):

2. discussing and agreeing all steps and key issues at the level of the Tisza Group and PSC (meeting 3 times per year), and

3. involving national experts who are drafting national water pollution reduction and flood & drought mitigation strategies.

The project timing is challenged between two interests: The overall timeline is rather narrow which assures that a certain momentum supports efficient progress and a visible end of work but most stakeholders involved, notably from governments, are already under other substantial work load pressure that may sometimes undermine the qualities of their input and of the joint outputs. Securing good project quality depends on the Tisza chairpersons, national delegations and the PIU team. Impression is that so far good progress was achieved but signs of capacity limits and commitment fatigue (e.g. delays of deliverables, weak preparation by meeting participants and gaps in the wider communication) exist and should be addressed.

- The evaluation concludes that the chosen implementation approach seems to be fine under the given circumstances but daily commitment of all involved stakeholders should be strengthened. This firstly relates to securing the wider awareness of national key stakeholders OUTSIDE the project and Tisza Group who should be kept informed about the project progress and the implications of the developing outcomes (see also point 3.1.4). Secondly, strengthened commitment is needed to achieve a good quality of the future strategies and integrated Tisza RBM Plan, i.e. their national adoption (Project Outcome 1).

- The implementation approach is rated **satisfactory**.

3.3.2 Use of the logical framework during implementation

The LogFrame is an important guidance for project management and an M&E tool that is regularly and actively used by all partners, notably the PIU and PSC, during MSP implementation. The evaluator did not find any problem in this application.

- The use of the logframe during implementation is rated **satisfactory**.

3.3.3 Partnerships arrangements for implementation

Since 1991, GEF has been instrumental in forging partnerships with the countries of the Danube region and other donors, mainly the European Union. For the implementation of the MSP project, effective partnerships were arranged with the **key governmental stakeholders** involved in this region, i.e. the five National Governments, the European Commission, the ICPDR as coordinating platform for sustainable basin management, UNEP through its land use and wetland protection

work under the Carpathian Convention as well as UNDP as main capacity building institutions executing GEF international waters projects (Danube- Black Sea Partnership).
Other **observing partners** include the Regional Environmental Center (Szentendre), as a body consulting NGOs and regional development in this region since the 1990s, as well as WWF as the leading environmental NGO.
The main partnership work is achieved by means of the **Tisza Group**, set up under the ICPDR since 2005, as the main water resource management advisory panel focusing on the EU WFD work which under this GEF project is being expanded to also deal with the integration issues.
The partnership supervising body is the **Project Steering Committee**, where all partners are securing joint and – as far as could be evaluated – smooth – MSP implementation.
Main implementation body for the daily execution and coordination of the MSP all partners is the **Project Implementation Unit** at ICPDR Secretariat. It focuses on overall project and Component 1 (development of national strategies and the ITRBMP). UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre was chosen by the partners as the suitable institution to secure implementation of Component 2 (identification and facilitation of the 3 local demonstration projects).
In the course of this mid-term evaluation no problem or barrier of this arrangement was found, thus indicating that the partnerships are functioning very well.

- The partnerships arrangements for project implementation are rated **highly satisfactory**.

3.3.4 Financial Planning

The MSP's financial planning is relatively simple because the project is sub-divided in only few activities and these again among few partners. The project budget as shown in Sections III and IV of the UNDP/GEF Project Document (2008) provides for the allocation of GEF and partner contributions for all activities over the 3 years project period. This includes both cash and in-kind contributions.

According to the APR/PIR (June 2009), the status of co-financing indicates no relevant changes. Details are given in the table in Annex 5. It can be stressed that there was an extra cash input from the EC and there is considerable in kind support through the EC-DG Environment co-chair of the Tisza Group.

- The financial planning is rated **highly satisfactory**.

3.3.5 Monitoring and evaluation and its feedback used for adaptive management

The entire MSP Project is being regularly monitored, reviewed and evaluated by the Project Steering Committee on the base of related PIU activities. Main reports about progress and support monitoring and evaluation are*:*

- Quarterly **Progress Reports** of the CTA/PM to the implementing and executing agencies;

- Internal Project Implementation Reviews (**PIR**) by the CTA/PM, submitted to the implementing agency after every 12 months (the first from June 2008 to 30 June 2009);
- Annual project report/ project implementation review (APR/PIR) and associated IW **Results Based Management** Framework of the CTA to be presented for discussion and approval to Tripartite meeting (i.e. PSC convening the project, UNDP and governments) and shared with the GEF Regional Coordination Unit.
- This independent **MTE** to be undertaken in month 18 (November 2009) to be presented to a tri-partite/PSC review to be held in accordance with UNDP procedures;
- An independent **final project evaluation** to be undertaken in the last month of implementation of the project (planned for April 2011).
- The **financial audit** according to UNDP/GEF rules and regulations

Progress is also presented and assessed at key meetings associated with the Project, such as the Tisza Group Meetings, ICPDR Ordinary Meetings.

The UNDP/GEF Regional Technical Advisor reports in August 2009 in the APR/PIR that "*the project is well progressing, … is expected to achieve its objectives … according to the work plan and budget, three transboundary demonstration projects are under implementation. The project team and the country support team should be praised with project progress*."
The PIR 2009 states for progress toward achieving project objectives that for most Project Indicators the progress level achieved does yet not meet the target level, because most outcomes will be reached only between December 2009 and May 2011.
Also, the *Rating of Progress towards Meeting Objective* after the first 12 months (June 2009) is indicated as "*satisfactory*" by the National Project Managers, the UNDP Country Office Slovakia and the UNDP Regional Technical Advisor.

In November 2009, the PIU and the TG re-assessed the project progress and recommended the PSC meeting on 9 December 2009 several revisions of the time-table, work plan and of one M&E progress indicator under Component 2. This reflects their pro-active use of the M&E as a project management tool and their adaptive management response according to the real project development. The changes made are also needed because especially the second half of the project period (autumn 2009 to spring 2011) can be seriously specified only after an advanced stage of the project. The evaluator assumes that further adaptation will be needed for the final project year upon completion of the draft IRBMP in June 2010.

- The current status of M&E is rated **satisfactory**.

3.3.6 Execution and implementation modalities

The management of this MSP being embedded within the existing ICPDR structures effectively provides significant benefits to the overall project, specifically in the management / co-ordination within the ICPDR network and beyond. The PIU team is able to work on a daily base and in a convenient door-to-door situation; the CTA/PM is regularly present and usually promptly available via skype and e-mail.
Also, the many outside contacts of the PIU members being Secretariat staff allows them to communicate the Tisza MSP issues also on occasion of other ICPDR activities with many IWRM-related persons in the Tisza Government institutions. This constitutes an added value.

The embedding of the PIU within the ICPDR Secretariat and overall institutional structure ensures synergies between these bodies and enables considerable in-kind contributions from the ICPDR to reduce the operational costs of Project / Technical Management of the MSP. The personnel of the PIU plays a significant technical role in the implementation of the MSP, and ensures the co-ordination between the development of the IRBM Plan, the local demonstration projects and other relevant activities outside the MSP.

The PIU team acts with permanent communication with all partners and good response towards making progress and achieving the targeted outcomes. Current examples are the preparation of the meetings in November in Kosice and in December in Vienna as well as the reminded delivery of the pending flood protection strategy (delayed by a few weeks).

The PSC agreed in 2008 the Terms of Reference, appointed the project National Focal Points (NFPs) and/or Delegates in coordination with existing mechanisms under the ICPDR.

The MSP-dedicated public website at the ICPDR http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/tisza_undp_gef.htm provides useful brief information about the project with

- Summary
- Objectives
- Project activities related to GEF and the MSP components 1 and 2
- News section, currently presenting the 3 demo projects with their key documents.

It was, however, found that the website is not up to date anymore (e.g. the Inception Report and other pdf files from 2008 are no more “news”) and there is a mixing of different documents from PSC (2nd meeting December 2008!), demo projects (call for project ideas!) and presentations from the first PSC meeting that should be re-ordered and moved away from the “News” section of the webpage.
There is also yet no link to the IW: LEARN website.

- The execution and implementation modalities are rated **satisfactory**.

3.3.7 Management by the UNDP office (Bratislava Regional Center)

The UNDP Bratislava Regional Center (BRC) has a multiple key function in the Tisza MSP project, notably in relation to

- the preparation of the UNDP/GEF Tisza MSP proposal that was a complex task resulting in the successful granting of GEF funds and partner co-financing commitment, and
- supporting the execution of the Objective 2 / Component 2 activities (demonstration projects and stakeholder involvement).

During execution, the BRC co-financed MSP project funds in international and local Technical Assistance for

- the selection and development of the 3 demonstration project proposals
- the demonstration project activities in Ukraine
- the regional stakeholder workshop on 13 November 2009 in Kosice
- the demonstration projects evaluation (completed in December 2009).

The evaluation indicated that the UNDP BRC activities are very engaged and

respond to various needs of the project, thus supporting good progress in the related activities.

- The management by the UNDP office is rated **satisfactory**.

3.3.8 Coordination and operational issues by the PIU

The Project Implementation Unit, embedded at the ICPDR Secretariat in Vienna, has a central function in the project, notably in relation to Component 1 activities.
The evaluator's impression and the comments received during interviews indicate that its activities are very committed, supportive and progress-oriented to the overall and daily needs of the project.
The fact that the CTA/PM is located elsewhere is not perceived by partners or the evaluator as a constraint or problem.
The progress of all activities is carefully monitored and evaluated by the PIU staff in relation to the work plan and timetable. Constraints in progress, e.g. delays in the production of studies, reports, are addressed by regularly updating these documents and endorsing these changes by the project partners and beneficiaries, as is the case at the annual PSC meetings (e.g. on 9 December 2009).

- The coordination and operational issues are rated **highly satisfactory**.

3.4 Current Results

It is evident that at the current state of the MSP project allows only an interim assessment of progress and first results but should be rather cautious with an evaluation how much the overall results will be achieved.

3.4.1 Attainment of objectives

At this mid-term stage of the MSP project, various planned progress was made towards achieving all objectives:
There is already

- in relation to the Overall Objective an advanced 4th draft of the IRBMP (September 2009),
- in relation to the Objective 1 (integrate water quality, water quantity, land use and biodiversity) there are drafts written resp. near completion of the important Tisza basin strategies on nutrient pollution reduction as well as flood and drought management.
- in relation to the Objective 2 (demonstrating effective wetland and flood management) 3 local projects with various stakeholder involvement were successfully started.

There is therefore no indication that MSP Objectives would not be attained. It is, however, relevant to still raise at this project stage the question how much the upcoming *agreed* policy, in particular the new Tisza IRBMP, will bring about an effective change/improvement of current management practices. This could be reflected in form of

- IRBMP objectives to adapt certain land uses in floodplains to the new water management needs, and
- quantitative objectives for mitigation measures that were identified as

essential to reduce the pressures from current water and land uses.

It is also open at this stage how much experiences made in the demonstration projects will effectively be taken up and strengthen the Tisza IRBMP. At this interim stage predictions cannot be made and the evaluator is impressed about the good spirit and progress in the TG and overall MSP execution team. It is, however, important that the opportunity provided by this MSP project is used for a clearly improved water management concept and practice.

- The attainment of objectives is rated **satisfactory**.

3.4.2 Sustainability

The sustainability of this GEF supported activities benefits from the fact that this work could be embedded within the overall responsibilities and structures of the ICPDR and specifically its Tisza Group. The ICPDR is already a financially sustainable institution (with funding derived from the Contracting Parties to the Danube Convention) and all its work aims at sustainable water management policies. The sustainability of the TG beyond the GEF project is not necessarily assured (the mandate of the related MoU then ends).

The MSP through its unique support to innovative and crucial water management and transboundary strategy planning work is providing effective and tangible institutional benefits to the Tisza Group and national authorities to ensure that these organisations are – partly for the first time, partly better - equipped with new policy tools to deal with the wider responsibilities of implementing an integrated management plan.

At the end of the GEF project, the sustainability of the project shall be ensured with the *adoption of the integrated Tisza management plan* and *National integrated management plans* and the government commitment to effectively implement them. The continuation of the Tisza Group and - probably even more - the inter-ministerial committees and the allocation of respective government funds to these plans will be important, sensitive and clear signs of sustainability. With respect to the current global financial crisis and the ongoing reform process in Tisza basin countries there is the ***risk that only a light ITRBMP could be concluded*** in the hidden spirit to achieve at least a minimum joint agreement. Such hesitation, however, would undermine the sustainability and effectiveness of a joint management: If measures to reduce pollution, mitigate flood and drought impacts and improve land uses are executed only in few examples but not along the agreed strategies, then expected environmental and economic benefits will not be achieved.

The demonstration projects will assist in obtaining multi-stakeholder and community level support for integrated environmental resources management.

But the overall Plan will only succeed if it is able to gain support from local communities and national governments; the current support from international donors (multi-lateral and bi-lateral) will cease in the near future. The IRBM Plan must therefore be integrated into the national policy and planning frameworks and must receive multi-sectoral support. Securing this is a key task for the final project phase.

The project is also benefiting from the past GEF Danube Regional Project's experience and the related wider basin activities under both the DRP itself and the associated Danube - Black Sea Partnership. The project is following up with the

Slovak and Hungarian demonstration projects to GEF and World Bank projects (the Tisza – biodiversity project (HU) as well as HRMEP project - Component D (RO).

- The sustainability is rated *at this stage* as **satisfactory**.

3.4.3 Replicability

As stated in ch. 3.1.6, the project is designed to develop and support replication to ensure the broader dissemination of the lessons learned and results achieved during the implementation of the MSP. Both the demonstration projects and the development of the IRBM Plan are expected to provide valuable lessons that are expected to have applicability elsewhere in the Tisza / Danube Basins and more generally, worldwide. To ensure that this important activity is given a high priority, several dedicated activities have been devoted to dissemination and developing replication actions.

Successful replication will depend on whether mechanisms can be found to improve resource management at the same time as increasing environmental protection. If successful, similar projects could be implemented in other sub-basins of the wider Danube River and Black Sea basin.

The *Replication* Strategy is still to be fully developed over the next months, it will focus on its successes, and the more innovative initiatives, in integrated planning. Elements of the replication strategy is awareness about the MSP objectives and activities by means of the website, the stakeholder workshops (at regional and demo project levels) and a new English, colour information brochure that was produced in October 2009.

The same refers to the *Replication of the Demonstration Projects* throughout the Tisza region and wider Danube basin. Specifically, the *Replication Strategy* aims at also assessing in the course of the final stakeholder workshop in autumn 2010 the replication aspects from a Tisza basin point of view.

A central interest of the project in terms of results dissemination and replication is **stakeholder involvement** in both Components. The new brochure about the MSP project was produced to improve stakeholder information, such as at the first of two regional meetings in November 2009 in Kosice. Within *Component 1,* stakeholders will be more intensively involved in the final project stage by commenting the published draft Tisza IRBMP in summer 2010, and in *Component 2* by participating at the final demonstration project events and the final regional stakeholder workshop in November 2010. Only then, the awareness raising and replication promotion of this MSP is planned to be fully exploited in the Tisza and other Danube sub-basins, and in other regions elsewhere.
This should also motivate for further input by stakeholder groups for the implementation of the IRBM plan.

Stakeholders are also being actively engaged in Component 1 at **national level** for the development of an integrated management plan. So far, this happened only at a limited extent but stakeholder involvement is expected to be expanded in the coming months. This will certainly strengthen the replicability of the project.
Even if for the time being it is premature to already completely evaluate the replicability its potential is recognised and being explored. Therefore:

- The replicability is provisionally rated **satisfactory**.

3.4.4 Contribution to upgrading skills of the national staff

The integration of various (resource management) sectors, such as pollution treatment, flood protection, drought management and drinking water supply, wetland management (incl. biodiversity protection) as well as land use (agriculture including irrigation, forestry, etc.) are a big challenge for the national staff in any country, notably for Tisza countries being the first to apply this method.
By consequence, the MSP-supported integrated resource analysis and management planning process at national and Tisza Group levels, and specifically the drafting of the ITRBMP, constitute important skill challenges for the involved staff that are already resulting in a better awareness, mutual understanding and cooperation across sector limits, as could be observed at the Tisza Group meeting on 12 November in Kosice and in interviews conducted.
The building up of these skills allows some countries (here Serbia and Ukraine) to be come more involved into and substantially contribute to transboundary water management than they would be without this GEF support.
Other reality is, however, that only a limited amount of national staff is actually directly involved in this project and that these persons are usually the same like those involved at ICPDR level. So, the wider dissemination and replication effect of this skills upgrading for other national staff will come only over longer time.

- The upgrading of the national staff skills is rated **satisfactory**.

3.5 Conclusions from Findings

The evaluation found that excellent progress is made both at national and Tisza region levels.
Regarding Component 1, all parties succeeded to produce their national strategies within the agreed timeframe. The targeted ITRBMP exists already as an advanced document that is being drafted in a very cooperative and result-oriented group work.

As regards Component 2, three interesting and relevant demonstration projects could be identified and contracted. Their implementation makes good progress and will result – at least in most cases – in very useful results both at local field level and in terms of their regional demonstration character.

- The conclusion of the mid-term evaluation is a **satisfactory** rating.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Corrective actions for the project

The evaluation has not found any issue or activity that would need corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring or evaluation of the project.
Identified current weaknesses are addressed in the following chapters 4.2 and 4.3.

4.2 Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project

During the second half of the MSP Tisza project the following actions are recommended to strengthen initial and overall benefits:

- **Strengthen the communication between Components 1 and 2** and the mutual awareness of their key stakeholders. Demonstration project executants should be regularly informed about Component 1 subjects and progress: This should be more than a 15 minutes presentation at the beginning of a MSP Stakeholder Meeting. More time should be set aside during future TG meetings and Stakeholder Workshops to secure mutual information and feedback.

- **Improve the project website** http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/tisza_undp_gef.htm:
  - Establish the weblink to *IW:learn*
  - Improve structure of the webpage, i.e. separate Component 1 and 2 as well as demo projects, at best via new sub-folders.
  - Keep information about the project activities up-to-date, e.g. move outdated news away or to the general information level.

- **Secure national commitment**: The national adoption of the future ITRBMP is a key outcome of the MSP project and should be secured. If the MSP resp. TG work shall make a difference in basin management practices, then there should be an effective change/improvement of the current status. This would also mean to
  - *adapt certain land uses in floodplains* to the new water management needs, and
  - agree in the ITRBMP on *quantitative objectives for mitigation measures* that were identified as essential to reduce the pressures from current water and land uses.

  These quality steps should be early addressed and prepared within the national governments and the expected (level of) commitment be reported to and agreed within the TG.

- **Strengthen integration of other water-related sectors in the upcoming ITRBMP development:** Past expert discussions and ITRBMP development was concentrating on the water quality aspects that are quite familiar to most TG members. Impression is, however, that water quantity aspects, and even more biodiversity and land use, were yet handled in the TG from some distance, i.e. their future assessment and real integration has been postponed into the second half of the project. Reality is that this period is much shorter than perhaps perceived by TG members: As of December 2009, there is only

6 months left up to the publication of the draft ITRBMP, and only 2 months before the crucial Integration Workshop will take place. There is the clear risk that a comprehensive assessment of these new issues and their integration around the upcoming Integration Workshop, just a 1.5 days event, may not be sufficient to meet all integration needs.
In addition to the proposal made for future directions under chapter 4.4, it is therefore recommended to consider involving competent experts from these "new" sectors (floods, droughts, wetlands and land use – notably agriculture) already in the preparation of this workshop and of the ITRBMP drafting, including of the TG 14 meeting. It should be discussed among MSP partners if the preparation of the Integration Workshop should be done in form of e.g. a "strategic integration meeting" in February 2010.
These additional experts should be competent for the entire Tisza region and become soon familiar with the MSP objectives and ambitions. They should continue their involvement into the drafting process during the short period (less than 8 weeks?) after the Integration Workshop to assure in the ITRBMP the full integration of "their" issues with the already well prepared water quality aspects.

- **Secure sustainability of the new integrated Tisza basin management**: The current work is based on a Ministerial *Memorandum of Understanding* (2004) that will soon – in fact at latest with the end of this MSP project in early 2011 - have accomplished its main objectives (setting up a Tisza Group to produce a *Tisza Analysis Report* including flood risk management and of a *Tisza WFD sub-basin management plan* in the framework of the ICPDR and execute a related UNDP/GEF Tisza project). The implementation of this WFD sub-basin plan and of its complementing integration issues needs to be sustained in order to secure effective implementation of integrated basin management. This refers both to a continuation of the Tisza Group, the national inter-ministerial committees and of various cross-sector and transboundary cooperation (such as at border water commissions) as well as to the budgetary implementation of ITRBMP measures, for which probably again international co-funding will be needed. It is recommended that such high-level multi-national commitment will be prepared through a new or updated MoU on occasion of the endorsement of the ITRBMP, i.e. before the end of this MSP.

4.3 Proposals for future directions

With respect to the **MSP strategic objectives no. 1** *To integrate water quality, water quantity, land use and biodiversity objectives into an integrated water resources/river basin management plan* there is impression that **land use** is not sufficiently addressed in the analysis and no clear subject of the future IRBMP (action part). This weakness also relates to the fact that land use is a subject of the MSP strategic objectives no. 2 demonstration projects, and that their expected results and lessons will address the need to improve current land uses in order to achieve a more integrated river basin management.
For the Component 1 integration process it is strongly recommended to better address **land use issues**, as were already referred to e.g. in chapter 2.1.4 in the "*Discussion document on integration of water quality and quantity issues in Tisza River Basin*" (November 2008), notably in terms of

- **intensive agriculture**
- **forest management**

- **Flood management strategies - preventive land uses**

Even though it is concluded there that "Land uses can influence the water quality and water quantity aspects of water related ecosystems and has to be taken into account in connection to the integrated management", **these important issues seem somehow disappearing in the subsequent integration chapter**, i.e. under *Significant Issues, Visions* and *Management Objectives* of this and subsequent integration documents (the latest being the *Summary Document towards an integrated Tisza RBM Plan*, November 2009).
Integrated flood and drought management as well as the reconnection of floodplains for pollution retention and biodiversity objectives will also affect the current land use in floodplains and other wetlands with its often diverging land use interests, i.e. the newly validated ecosystem services will have to be addressed at many local sites across the basin during the future ITRBMP implementation, as shown in the Component 2 demonstration projects. Related economic aspects could be incorporated into the chapter 7.6.1 *Economic control tools – cost recovery* of the ITRBMP. Integrated river basin management is thus various land resource management aspects that are usually subject of local administration units (e.g. districts and communes). The key terms to be taken into account in this respect are thus

- **ecosystem services**
- **regional (spatial) development.**

An excellent but at the same time last opportunity to address these issues will be the upcoming Integration Workshop in May 2010, where 2 of the tentative agenda topics will address land use development. it is assumed that some useful results and lessons will come from the 3 demonstration projects but probably too late for the plan drafting.

Another issue that does not seem to be sufficiently addressed in the course of an *integrated* assessment and management plan is **morphological alterations**. The *Summary Document* refers in ch. 3.1 Box 1 "Key issues on integrated water management in connection to water quantity management" to "*Hydromorphological pressures from flood protection measures*" to be one of the priority pressures but morphology is not further addressed under the subsequent *Visions and Management Objectives* (Box 2). Chapter 2.1.2 briefly refers in its specific conclusions for the Tisza to "*Intensive agriculture … that led to an increase in soil pollution, erosion and agricultural run off…*" but ch. 2.1.3 Hydromorphological alterations does not directly address morphological alterations in the sediment balance (e.g. siltation, bed erosion) as an effect of river continuity interruptions (dams/weirs, dikes etc.), changed land uses and related bad practices (notably in agriculture, forestry). .

- It is therefore recommended that on the base of existing studies **morphological alterations** in the TRB will – at least in a general way – be acknowledged within ch. 2.1 *Update pressure analysis* and further addressed in ch. 3.1 as a new *Vision* and related *Management Objective* (e.g. stating that future land use practices as well as river engineering interventions must aim to prevent further morphological deterioration and to support restoring the morphological balance). It is evident that the current data base in the TRB is rather limited but this should still allow to recognize this management issue.

5. Lessons learned

The complex GEF project has proved to run successfully: The combination of ambitious and largely innovative policy development together with three examples of local field actions seems to work and there is potential of mutual benefit.

Integrated river basin management requires water managers to also assess water aspects that they are not used to deal with, i.e. floods, droughts, land use and biodiversity. Their integration within this project is progressing but still difficult and needs to be further strengthened in the second "half-time" of the MSP project. An earlier involvement of experts representing these sectors/issues might have eased and strengthened the integration.

At this mid-term stage of the project it is difficult to already address which are the best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success of this MSP project.

"*Best practice*" in this respect is probably the allocation of the PIU at the ICPDR Secretariat which secures close coordination with Danube-basin wide water management and follows up on the UNDP/GEF Danube – Black Sea strategic partnership.

There is no "*Worst practice*" but the overall budget (i.e. capacity) limitations among all partners and in the narrow GEF budget put a lot of pressure on al involved persons, notably at the national governments and the PIU to still achieve the very ambitious project objectives.

It would also have been desirable to allow the execution of some more demonstration projects and to base the strategy work on a better data base, notably in relation to the "new" fields of flood and drought management (e.g. more quantitative data from different parts of the basin for further model calculations to assess which parts need which type of improved water retention etc.).

Annexes

Annex 1: ToR UNOPS for Mid-term Evaluation of the Tisza MSP

Annex 2: Schedule of the conducted MTE

Annex 3: List of persons interviewed during the MTE

Annex 4: List of documents and websites reviewed

Annex 5: UNDP/GEF Tisza MSP Co-financing Table

Annex 6: Summary of Mid-term review of MSP Tisza demonstration projects

Annex 1

Terms of Reference

(UNOPS IICA4/CMTE/EMO/IWC/01, September 2009)

Mid-Term Evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Medium Sized Project: Integrating multiple benefits of wetlands and floodplains into improved transboundary management for the Tisza River Basin (UNDP/GEF Tisza MSP)

Project Background

The Tisza River is the largest tributary of the Danube River Basin. The basin has been subjected to many anthropogenic influences over the last 150 years that has resulted in a significantly degraded system. These include engineering works on the river for navigation and flood protection leading to the loss of wetlands and floodplains, and accentuating problems of floods downstream, excessive use of agro-chemicals (leading to nutrient and toxic substance pollution) lack of waste water treatments and mining activities releasing toxic substance pollution. In addition, predictions indicate that future growth of agriculture, coupled with climatic changes that already produce record flooding, will increase pressures on the available water resources. These problems require a concerted action by all the Tisza River Basin countries to develop and implement a more ecosystem-based approach to integrated river basin management and to address, as a priority, wetlands and floodplain restoration and management.

The GEF funded project is implemented by the UNDP through its Bratislava Regional Centre and executed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) based in Copenhagen and International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) Secretariat, based in Vienna.

The project will test the ability of a GEF-catalyzed transboundary basin institution to operate at a subsidiary transboundary basin level for the site-specific concerns that sub-group of countries face. The ICPDR, which has an overall coordination to water management in Danube River Basin has established the ***Tisza Group*** whose role, as the responsible institution for managing the transboundary issues of the Tisza River Basin, was reaffirmed by all five countries of the basin in a Ministerial Declaration in 2004 and a recent October 2007 restatement of commitments. The formation of the Tisza Group enables the countries of the basin to effectively implement the European Union's (EU) Water Framework Directive (WFD), Flood Directive and the ongoing activities of implementing the agreed Danube River Basin SAP at a different, smaller transboundary scale. If successful, the test would enable replication in other smaller basins of the Danube and capacity building for other basins in the GEF international waters portfolio.

The members of the Tisza Group will be part of the Project Steering Committee, which will also includes representatives of the Carpathian Convention (interim secretariat provided by UNEP), the European Commission and UNDP.

Funding of the UNDP/GEF Tisza MSP includes:

	USD
GEF Grant	1,000,000
Governments (in-kind)	400,000
UNDP(Cash)	200,000
ICPDR (in-kind)	100,000
EC (Cash)	180,000
UNEP (in kind)	50,000
TOTAL	**1,930,000**

Project Objectives and Expected Outputs

1. To **integrate** water quality, water quantity, land use, and biodiversity objectives within **integrated water resources/river basin management (IWRM/IRBM)** under the legal umbrella of the EU and ICPDR, and;
2. To begin implementation of IWRM principles through the testing of new approaches on wetland and floodplain management through community-based demonstration. The community-level pilot activities will link to the development and implementation of an agreed river basin management plan following the principles of IWRM and tested at the regional/local level under the governance arrangements established for management of the Tisza River Basin. The integration of water quality and quantity management is considered to be a significantly innovative approach in the basin and the results of this will be utilised elsewhere in the Danube River Basin through catalytic policies and actions of the ICPDR.

The MSP has two key components resulting in the following expected outcomes 1; the adoption of policies and legislation within the countries of the Tisza River Basin that promote the optimal use of wetlands / floodplains and other habitat for flood mitigation, nutrient retention, biodiversity enhancement and social amenity value consistent with the EU WFD and IWRM; and 2; demonstrations of effective floodplain management strategies including the adaptation to increased flood events as a consequence of fluctuating flow regime for, nutrient retention, habitat restoration, and flood management implemented at local level. These outcomes and project outputs of actual hectares of wetlands reconnected/restored/conserved will encourage the replication of these GEF-funded pilots as new approaches on the use of wetlands with their multiple environmental benefits throughout the region and with potential for global dissemination.

Mid-Term Evaluation Objectives

The purpose of the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) is to examine the performance of the project since the beginning of its implementation. The MTE will include both the evaluation of the progress in project implementation, measured against planned outputs set forth in the Project Document in accordance with rational budget allocation and the assessment of features related the process involved in achieving those outputs, as well as the initial and potential impacts the project. The evaluation will also address the underlying causes and issues contribution to targets not adequately achieved.

The MTE is intended to identify weaknesses and strengths of the project design and to come up with recommendations for any necessary changes in the overall design and orientation of the project by evaluating the adequacy, efficiency, and effectiveness of its implementation, as well as assessing the project outputs and outcomes to date. Consequently, the MTE mission is also expected to make detailed recommendations on the work plan for the remaining project period. It will also provide an opportunity to assess early signs of the project success or failure and prompt necessary adjustments.

The evaluation will follow approaches adopted by GEF for the assessment of IW projects.

The MTE mission will also identify lessons learnt and best practices from the Project which could be applied to future and other on-going projects.

Scope of the Mid-Term Evaluation

The scope of the mid-term evaluation will cover all activities undertaken in the framework of the project. The evaluators will compare planned outputs of the project to actual outputs and assess the actual results to determine their contribution to the attainment of the project objectives. The evaluation will diagnose problems and suggest any necessary corrections and adjustments. It will evaluate the efficiency of project management, including the delivery of outputs and activities in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness and cost efficiency. The evaluation will also determine the likely outcomes and impact of the project in relation to the specified goals and objectives of the project.

The evaluation will comprise the following elements.

(xiv) Assess whether the project design is clear, logical and commensurate with the time and resources available;

(xv) A summary evaluation of the project and all of its major components undertaken to date and a determination of progress towards achievement of its overall objectives;

(xvi) An evaluation of project performance in relation to the indicators, assumptions and risks specified in the logical framework matrix and the Project Document;

(xvii) An assessment of the scope, quality and significance of the project outputs produced to date in relation to expected results;

(xviii) An assessment of the functionality of the institutional structure established and the role of the Project Steering Committee (PSC);

(xix) Identification and, to the extent possible, quantification of any additional outputs and outcomes beyond those specified in the Project Document;

(xx) Identification of any programmatic and financial variance and/or adjustments made during the first 1.5 years of the project and an assessment of their conformity with decisions of the PSC and their appropriateness in terms of the overall objectives of the project;

(xxi) An evaluation of project coordination, management and administration provided by the PMU. This evaluation should include specific reference to:

- Organizational/institutional arrangements for collaboration among the various agencies and institutions involved in project arrangements and execution;
- The effectiveness of the monitoring mechanisms currently employed by the PMU in monitoring on a day to day basis, progress in project execution;
- Administrative, operational and/or technical problems and constraints that influenced the effective implementation of the project and present recommendations for any necessary operational changes; and
- Financial management of the project, including the balance between expenditures on administrative and overhead charges in relation to those on the achievement of substantive outputs.

(xxii) A prognosis of the degree to which the overall objectives and expected outcomes of the project are likely to be met;

(xxiii) An assessment of the M&E approach adopted by the project;

(xxiv) Progress towards sustainability and replication of project activities;

(xxv) Lessons learned during project implementation;

(xxvi) Recommendations regarding any necessary corrections and adjustments to the overall project workplan and timetable for the purposes of enhancing the achievement of project objectives and outcomes.

Evaluation Methodology

The Mid-term Evaluation will be conducted in a participatory manner working on the basis that its essential objective is to assess the project implementation and impacts in order to provide basis for improvement in the implementation and other decisions.

The evaluation will start with a desk review of project documentation and also take the following process:-

(viii) Desk review of project document, outputs, monitoring reports (such as Project Inception Report, Minutes of Steering Committee meetings including other relevant meetings, Project Implementation Report (PIR/APR), quarterly progress reports, and other internal documents including consultant and financial reports);

(ix) Review of specific products including datasets, management and action plans, publications and other material and reports;

(x) Interviews with the Project Manager and other project staff in the Project Management Unit;

(xi) Participation at a regional stakeholder workshop (November 13, 2009, Kosice) where an independent review of the demonstration projects will be presented (supported through UNDP co-financing). Participation at this meeting will enable a wide range of stakeholders (including the Tisza Group) to be interviewed and enabling the results of the demonstration projects to be incorporated into the MTE.

(xii) Consultations and/or interviews with relevant stakeholders involved, including government representatives in; local communities, NGOs, European Commission, other UN agencies and organisations.

(xiii) Presentation of a draft report at the UNDP/GEF Tisza MSP Project Steering Committee (9th December 2009, Vienna)

Expertise/experience required by Evaluator

The Evaluator is expected to have the following expertise and experience:

- International/regional consultant with academic and/or professional background in river basin management and familiarity with the EU WFD. A minimum of 15 years' relevant experience is required;
- Substantive experience in reviewing and evaluating similar technical assistance projects, preferably those involving UNDP/GEF or other United Nations development agencies and major donor;
- Excellent English writing and communication skills; demonstrated ability to assess complex situations in order to succinctly and clearly distill critical issues and draw forward-looking conclusions;
- An ability to assess the institutional capacity and incentives required;
- Understanding of political, economic and institutional issues associated with transboundary water in Central and Eastern Europe;
- Familiarity with GEF International Waters portfolio

Proposed Schedule

The consultant would be expected to begin a desk review and telephone/email discussions with key stakeholders in October 2009. Participation in the planned joint Tisza Group Meeting / Stakeholder Workshop (12/13 November 2009, Kosice) and the Project Steering Committee (9th December 2009) is required.

Deliverables

The expected output from this evaluation is a report including:

(i) An executive summary, including findings and recommendations;

(ii) A detailed evaluation report covering items presented above in the Scope of the Mid-Term Evaluation following the contents as indicated in Annex 1 of this TOR with attention to lessons learned and recommendations; and

(iii) List of Annexes prepared by the consultants, which includes TORs, Itinerary, List of Persons Interviewed, Summary of Field Visits, List of Documents reviewed, Questionnaire used and Summary of results, Co-financing & Leveraged Resources etc.

The report together with the annexes, shall be written in English and shall be presented in electronic form in MS Word format.

The report will have to provide to the GEF Secretariat complete and convincing evidence to support its findings/ratings

The Report will include a table of planned vs. actual project financial disbursements, and planned co-financing vs. actual co-financing in this project, according the table attached in Annex 2 to this TOR.

Draft evaluation report – 30 November 2009
Presentation at PSC – 9th December 2009
Final report – 30 January 2010

Estimated Costs

10,000 USD – 12,000 USD including fees, travel costs accommodation, communication costs, etc.

Rating Project Success

The evaluation will rate the success of the project on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the highest (most successful) rating and 5 being the lowest. The following items should be considered for rating purposes:

- Achievement of objectives and planned results
- Attainment of outputs and activities
- Cost-effectiveness
- Impact
- Sustainability
- Stakeholders participation
- Country ownership
- Implementation approach
- Financial planning
- Replicability
- Monitoring and evaluation

Each of the items should be rated separately with comments and then an overall rating given. The following rating system is to be applied:

1= Highly Satisfactory = HS (90 % -100 % achievement)
2= Satisfactory = S (75 % - 89 %)
3= Marginally Satisfactory = MS (60 % - 74 %)
4= Marginally Unsatisfactory = MU (50 % - 59 %)
5=Unsatisfactory = U (49 % and below)

Annex 2: Schedule of the conducted MTE

Date	Subject	Location
20 October,2009	Briefings and project information by PIU	Vienna, Austria
9-10 November 2009	Trip organisation, desk review	Vienna, Austria
11 November 2009	Travel Vienna - Kosice	
12 November 2009	13th Tisza Group meeting	Kosice, SK
13 November 2009	UNDP/GEF Tisza MSP Stakeholder meeting	Kosice, SK
13 November 2009	Return travel Kosice - Vienna	
19 November 2009		Vienna, Austria
End Nov. – early Dec. 2009	Phone and personal interviews	Vienna, Austria
8 December 2009	Finalisation of draft MTE report	Vienna, Austria
9 December 2009	Presentation of draft MTW report at MSP Project Steering Committee meeting+	Vienna, Austria
	Finalisation of MTE report	Vienna, Austria

Annex 3: List of persons interviewed during the MTE

Name	*Organization / Institution / Position*	*Tisza MSP role*
Bartková Eleonóra	GWP Slovakia	SK rep. Tisza Group BODROG demo project (SK)
Egerer Harald	UNEP office Vienna, Interim Secretariat Carpathian Convention	Co-funder Tisza MSP
Feher János	VITUKI, Hungary	National drought expert, BODROG demo project
Heilmann Diana	UNDP/GEF MSP -ICPDR	MSP PIU, technical assistant Tisza Group
Iarochevitch Alexei	Ukrainian Center of Environment and Water Projects	UA rep. Tisza Group National water mgmt. expert
Kunikova Emilia	Slovak Water Resources Institute	SK rep. Tisza Group National water mgmt. expert
Kiralj Livia	Senta Municipality - Environmental and Health Inspector, Serbia	ILD demo project (RS)
Koch Anna	ICPDR Secretariat, financial management officer	Tisza MSP finance administrations
Kovács Péter	Ministry of Environment and Water, Hungary	HU rep. Tisza Group
Liska Igor	ICPDR Secretariat, technical expert on water quality	Coordinator ICPDR Flood Action Programme
Mamaev Vladimir	GEF Regional Technical Advisor, UNDP Europe and the CIS	Tisza MSP Contact person
Manivchuk Vasyl	Project Director	Manager UPPER TISZA demo project (UA)
Marushevska Olena	Project Manager	UPPER TISZA demo project
Nood Marieke van	European Commission, DG Environment	Co-chair Tisza Group
Popovici Mihaela	ICPDR Secretariat, technical expert on pollution control	ICPDR rep. Tisza Group
Rast Georg	WWF Germany, senior water management officer	WWF rep. Tisza Group, UNDP consultant for demo projects
Tothova Klara	UNDP BRC, CST Environmental Officer, Europe and the CIS	Tisza MSP project officer
Vasiljevic Branislava	Independent Consultant	UNDP consultant for MTE of demo projects
Vogel Birgit	ICPDR Secretariat, technical expert on river basin management	ICPDR rep. Tisza Group
Whalley Peter	UNDP/GEF MSP -ICPDR	MSP Project Manager
Weller Philip	ICPDR Secretariat, Executive Secretary	PIU supervisor, PSC chair

Annex 4: List of Documents and Websites Reviewed

GEF Tisza MSP documents and reports

UNDP –GEF Medium Size Project- Integrating multiple benefits of wetlands and floodplains into improved trans-boundary management for the Tisza River Basin UNDP Project Document PIMS 3339 (30 January 2008

GEF Annual Performance Review (APR) – Project Implementation report (PIR) 2009, PIMS 3339

UNDP Project Quarterly Progress Report on project risks (1 July 2008 – 30 June 2009) for PIMS3339IWMSP Enhancing Env Suist in Tisza river (from 3 Sep 2009).

Inception Report July 2008, UNDP/GEF Integrated River Basin Management in the Tisza. 11 pages.

Inception Project Steering Committee Meeting of the UNDP/GEF Tisza Medium Sized Project. Minutes, 11 June 2008. 13 pp.

Project Steering Committee Meeting of the UNDP/GEF Tisza Medium Sized Project. Minutes, 9 December 2008. 6 pp.

Six-months Progress Report of the UNDP/GEF Tisza Medium Sized Project for the period January – June 2009.

Quarterly Progress Report of the UNDP/GEF Tisza Medium Sized Project for the period January – March 2009.

Project Progress Report of the UNDP/GEF Tisza Medium Sized Project 27 November 2008 (Progress update November 2008 and work plan 2009). 4 pp.

Project Interim Progress Report of the UNDP/GEF Tisza Medium Sized Project November 2009 (Progress update October 2009 and work plan 2010). 7 pp.

MSP Component 1

Analysis of the Tisza River Basin 2007 (Initial step toward the Tisza River Basin Management Plan – 2009), ICPDR. 136 pp.

Discussion document on integration of water quality and quantity issues in Tisza River Basin" (November 2008)

Integrated Tisza River Basin Management Plan (Draft 4, September 2009). 117 pp.

MSP Component 2

Vasiljevic Branislava 2009: Mid-term Review of three demonstration projects implemented under the UNDP/GEF Project "Integrating multiple benefits of wetlands and floodplains into improved trans-boundary management for the Tisza River Basin". Final. 67 pp.

List of Web Sites

http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/tisza_undp_gef.htm

http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/tisza_basin.htm

http://danubis.icpdr.org/pls/danubis/DANUBIS_DB.DYN_NAVIGATOR.show *(Tisza Group Working Area incl. UNDP/GEF Tisza MSP Project* – restricted access*)*

Annex 5

UNDP/GEF Tisza MSP

Co-financing Table

Co financing (type/ Source)	IA own Financing (mill US$)		Government (mill US$)		Other Sources (mill US$)		Total Financing (mill US$)		Total Disbursement* (mill US$)	
	Proposed	*Actual*	*Proposed*	*Actual*	*Proposed*	*Actual*	*Proposed*	*Actual*	*Proposed*	*Actual**
Grant	0.2 UNDP	0.2	0.18 EC	0.19			0.38	0.39	0.38	0.222
Credits										
Loans										
Equity										
In-kind			0.4 Tisza Gov.	0.4	0.15 ICPDR,UNEP	0.15	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.185
Non-grant Instruments										
Other types										
TOTAL	**0.2**	**0.2**	**0.58**	**0.59**	**0.15**	**0.15**	**0.93**	**0.94**	**0.93**	**0.407**

** as of June 2009*

- Other Sources refer to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector etc.
- "Proposed" co-financing refers to co-financing proposed at CEO endorsement.
- Describe "Non-grant Instruments" (such as guarantees, contingent grants, etc):
  - *Source/amount/in-kind or cash/purpose*.
- Explain "Other Sources of Co-financing":
  - *Source/amount/in-kind or cash*

ANNEX 6

MID-TERM REVIEW of three demonstration projects

implemented under the

UNDP/GEF Project "Integrating multiple benefits of wetlands and floodplains into improved trans-boundary management for the Tisza River Basin"

Atlas Nr. 52079

FINAL REPORT, November 2009
By Branislava Vasiljevic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project is an integral part of the GEF- Mid-Size Project (MSP) "Integrating multiple benefits of wetlands and floodplains into improved trans-boundary management for the Tisza River Basin". The UNDP pilot and demonstration component aims at developing, implementation and evaluation of trans-boundary community-led projects that promote sustainable development through integrated land and water management (ILWM) practices at the community level in Tisza countries: Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine. The selected demonstration projects focus at community level actions to be implemented within 18 month period, with the total grant available 350 kUSD in the frame of the umbrella GEF/MSP project. Three trans-boundary initiatives, which represent different trans-boundary regions, are selected and funded, each with budget average of 100-150 kUSD.

The objective of the demonstration projects is to generate important insights and lesion learned that will provide information to the umbrella GEF project, and other trans-boundary ILWM within the region and worldwide. Moreover, the main focus of the project is community-driven governance interventions that will promote community ownership of project activities and outcomes.

The lessons learnt and project implementation mechanisms tested will be incorporated into the Strategic Action Plan and National Action Plans, to be replicated in future local and community-level projects.

This project is being implemented in close co-operation with International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and its Tisza Group (UNDP/GEF Danube Project), European Commission and Carpathian Convention Secretariat (UNEP, Vienna). ICPDR is responsible for the overall implementation of the umbrella GEF- Mid-Size Project.

This mid-term review of demonstration projects was initiated by UNDP Bratislava - as the GEF project co-financing partner. It provides an in-depth reflection of project

progress, priority actions for the next phase of the project and for other future UNDP/GEF ILWM and sustainable development projects.

This evaluation is based on a desk review of project documents and on interviews with project staffs and key project stakeholders. Additionally, the Questionnaire (Annex 3) has been used to provide additional information for the review. The methodology included the development of an evaluation matrix to guide the entire data gathering and analysis process. The findings were triangulated with the use of multiple sources of information when possible. This report is structured around the proposed terms of references (TOR), briefings by ICPDR and UNDP, and other methodologies that are commonly used for GEF monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

The main findings of this mid-term evaluation are:

- Overall, the progress of the demonstration projects is rated as satisfactory. They are all relevant for the Tisza River trans-boundary management and ILWM within the watershed. Although the concepts and/or designs are good, for some sites the objectives of the projects seem too optimistic given the proposed timeframe and other issues that might influence project effectiveness, e.g., lack of participation of the National or Regional authorities at the stakeholders workshops, sectoral rather than integrated approach with respect to land and water management at the national and local level, etc.
- Despite the fact that the ownership of the project by the local authorities and stakeholders is ensured for the most of the demo project sites based on their involvement , the national ownership of the projects is uncertain so far, due to selective or no linkage with all relevant Ministries and Agencies at the national and/or regional level.
- Although the contribution of the projects to the capacity development is in generally acceptable, it is necessary to widen it during the next stage of the projects, in a way to identify the capacity gaps (if there are any) and capacity needs to ensure the "overall ability of the projects to perform and sustain itself".
- Nevertheless, the projects will provide tools and information to better understand the River Tisza watershed sustainable development indicator system, ecological and socio/economic system vulnerability, and prospective to implement activities that would tackle socio- economic challenges and develop opportunities for the local population (and vulnerable groups in particular), while at the same time resulting in improved environmental conditions. However, it is necessity to enforce and/or adopt policies and legislation that will provide solid base for sustainable development within the Tisza watershed, both at the local and national level, that requires interdisciplinary approach and takes into account all relevant sectors, e.g., environment, water management, spatial planning, transport, urban planning, tourism, etc.
- While the nutrient reduction was not the main component of these projects, there is need to integrate this aspect as well during the next stages of the projects, since the one of the expected outcome of the GEF/UNDP MSP "Integrating multiple benefits of wetlands and floodplains into improved trans-boundary management for the Tisza River Basin" is nutrient retention and reduction as a result of effective floodplain management. Moreover, the anticipated extreme flood/ drought events due to observed and/or anticipated climate change within the region have not been taken into account.
- Finally, the expected project results will be likely delivered but there is a risk that these outputs will not be institutionalized before the project end. Given that the MSP GEF/UNDP project goal is to improve trans-boundary management within the Tisza River watershed, it is not realistic to accomplish this goal without

stronger linkage between local and national authorities and stakeholders. This might limit the long-term impact and sustainability of the project results.

The main lessons learned are:

- Projects that are more practical than theoretical, with outputs that are visible and generate benefits at the community level with a complementary support at the local and regional/national level (authorities and policies) have a good potential to yield long term successes of the projects;
- Simple projects design that includes new and more environmentally friendly approaches for the flood management at the community level, that have acceptable potential to be replicable within the region and worldwide;
- With the respect to the involvement and significant support of the relevant stakeholders and decision makers at the local level, the projects benefits and activities will very likely persist after the lifetime of the projects. Namely, both static and dynamic sustainability, continuous flow of the same benefits to the same target groups and use and/or adoption of the projects' results by the end-users beneficiaries, in a given order are very likely to be accomplished;
- Implementing demo projects with international partners has clear advantages such as access to a broad range of skills and knowledge. However, often it also has the disadvantage of not putting enough emphasis on national ownership and involvement of all relevant decision makers;
- The timeline of the project is inadequate to strengthen the capacity that will result in implementation of the adaptive strategies, to strengthen the policy framework in a particular area (ILWM),and to implement direct actions with results expected during the lifetime of the project (e.g., land use changes);
- Management issues are often not part of the identified risks before project start-ups. However, projects often face management issues that may impact negatively project achievements. Considering these risks earlier in project implementation would help project management teams to focus more on these issues and address them earlier;
- Risk mitigation management has not been addressed in a proper way, from the degree of the risk to the management response. Appropriate risk management will improve overall success of the project;
- Simple technical solutions that are not as expensive as the traditional design practices in the flood management are more easily to construct and to maintain at the community –level. These simple technical solutions could enhance overall projects accomplishment with respect to multiple benefits of wetlands and floodplains integrating into improved trans-boundary management for the Tisza River watershed. Since these practices require less time to be constructed than the traditional one, they are easier accepted by the local population and benefits of these projects and its necessity are understand well. This acts as a driven force for a greater participation and support at the community level which result in a different types of projects co-financing;
- If the benefits of the projects for the local communities are supported with policies and legislation there are more chances for the project to succeed. The lack of efficient policies implementation or finance that will ensure sustainability of the projects may decrease the project sustainability within a longer period of time;
- Missing of conception at the National level, the state policies should make more effective daily living of people in areas within the project areas;
- In general, different project participants are aware that these projects are the part of the international project within the Tisza River basin. Additionally, there is a synergy for all projects with other similar projects for all demo projects sites.

The main recommendations are:

- The new approaches in the area of the ILWM should be introduced and enforced at the national level for all countries within the Tisza River Basin and worldwide;
- There is a need for the better linkage and cooperation between authorities, stakeholders and decision makers at various levels, i.e., local, regional and national in a given order. It can be accomplished by the better information dissemination about demo projects, frequent communication, etc. It should be two way communication and cooperation that will assure that the community –driven projects will be sustainable. Moreover, it will grant ownership of the projects both at the local and national level;
- More interdisciplinary rather than sectoral approach in the field of ILWM is fundamental at both local and national level. At the present there is contradiction between different Ministries, e.g., Ministry of the Agriculture and Ministry of the Environment. The former is responsible for the water resources and the latter is responsible for the land management. Better cross sectoral connection would provide necessary ground for the more effective implementation of the variety of projects in the field of ILWM and trans-boundary cooperation within the Tisza River watershed and other watersheds;
- Overall success of the project is satisfactory. However, inadequate risk management might have adverse impact to the overall success of the project with respect to long term sustainability. Suitable and comprehensive risk management that clearly address each of the outputs should be included in the design of the future projects to allow project management to act accordingly and in a timely manner;
- The monitoring of the project outputs and results should be carried out by the independent consultant or institution that is not directly or indirectly involved in the project activities either as a project partner or stakeholder. Otherwise there is a risk focusing on short-term production of project deliverables and forgetting the overall development objective(s) of the project;
- More detailed explanation of integrated and/ or sustainable is needed. In addition, some approximate bench marks with respect to flood risk mitigation, environmental flow conditions, nutrient reduction, etc. It will make projects outputs and results more visible for broader audience, e.g., scientific circles, Medias, local communities and regions where the possibilities for replication exist. Finally, the observed and/or anticipated climate change for a projects area should be mentioned and/or commented. As an example, to which extend the change in extreme weather conditions will affect expected project outcomes at the end of the project in the future;
- The projects should be more visible in the Media, and to broader audience. Moreover, education for the existing and potential stakeholders with respect to ILWM within the Tisza River basin is crucial;
- Within the next phase of the projects the attention and additional efforts should be made to institutionalize projects results. Follow-up discussions with the relevant Ministries, e.g., Environment, Water, Agriculture, Spatial planning, etc, to cooperate with them on the preparation of the national ILWM strategies for the Tisza River watershed;

Opportunities for UNDP and GEF

Capacity development is often part of the critical success factors for this kind of project. However, there are still various definitions of what it is and how it should be done. UNDP has accumulated an extensive body of knowledge in this area. It should ensure that for each project where capacity development is involved, a strategy

should be developed early in the project and should encompass all elements of capacity development – based on the UNDP body of knowledge on capacity development - to ensure the "overall ability of a system to perform and sustain itself".

With respect to demo project there is great opportunity to encourage dissemination of the information among the different demo projects so the lesson learned from one project or site can be applied to the other sites/project. As an example support of the local population in the Ukraine/ Romania for the Upper Tisza demo project is significant. This experience might be used to strengthen the support of the local population at some other demo locations. During the next project phase participation of diverse industries (agriculture, spatial planning) might be useful.

There is need for the TA by the UNDP for the ILD project given the perceived issues with respect to PM during the previous phase of the project.

Based on the interviews and questionnaires, better guidelines for the projects will be helpful for the future activities. It might be useful to encourage cooperation between different sectors (e.g., environment, agriculture, spatial planning, etc) at national and local level given that the land use changes are in some way part of each demo project .

Given that the demos should have some practical and visible outputs it will be useful to clarify or provide some benchmarks for the targets with respect to flood control and nutrient reduction/and or retention, namely to make outputs quantifiable. The existing body of knowledge and consultations with recognized experts will very likely be of a great assistance.

Finally some kind of training or workshop that will address Risk Mitigation Management might be helpful for all demos.

The **summary of the evaluation ratings** for each chosen criterion is as follows:

Evaluation Criterion	Summary Comments	Rating
Relevance	Proposed demonstration project are **highly relevant** to the **UNDP/GEF MSP Project** "Integrating Multiple Benefits of wetlands and floodplains into improved trans-boundary management for the Tisza River Basin" The outcomes of proposed project will encourage the replication of pilot investments as new approaches on the use of floodplains and wetlands with their multiple environmental benefits throughout the region and with potential for dissemination at the Tisza River Basin countries as well as at the national level. However, a review of the project design indicates that despite a well-defined concept, the timing to implement it was too optimistic and may limit the sustainability and the impact of the project results over the long-term.	Highly Relevant
Performance	The progress made by the demo projects to achieve their expected outcomes is rated as **satisfactory**. Those are ambitious projects with different components in "unexplored" territories (ILWM and sustainable development) that are proposing some new, simple and cost-effective technical solutions for the flood management while at the local level and supports trans-boundary cooperation within the Tisza River watershed. The projects are providing tools and instruments to better understand the River Tisza ecological and socio/economic challenges. The projects management teams have been able to deliver most of the expected results during	Satisfactory

	previous phase of the project. However, most of these tools and instruments need to be institutionalized during the remaining period of the project to be sustainable in the long-term. This is the main challenge of the project for this remaining period and the team may "run out of time".	
Efficiency	The project efficiency is rated as satisfactory. The project is well managed; following UNDP procedures. Partnership strategy, project coordination and supervisory bodies, and adaptive management have been applied. Project progress is monitored through a list of indicators, reports and quarterly management meetings. The issues that arose have been identified, and corresponding directions and actions have been included in the inception reports. The sound financial management is an integral part of the achieving projects results. The monitoring of the project and the progress reporting was done according to UNDP and GEF procedures. The proposed performance indicators list for the monitoring and/ or measurements of the projects' performances is comprehensive with respect to proposed outcomes. However, the timing of the project is to short with respect to monitoring of all indicators. The habitats response takes longer time (at least a year for changes to occur after implementation of the intervention); it is not realistic to monitor all changes within the project duration. Although the comprehensive list of the stakeholders is included in the projects design, the participation of the stakeholders should be improved. The cross- sectoral cooperation and coherence between local and national authorities should be enhanced. It will maximize long-term sustainability of the projects results. The risk mitigation strategy should be addressed in a more comprehensive manner. Considering the tasks to be implemented under the different outcomes with diverse activities within the different countries and a relatively short timeframe, there is a management risk that if something goes wrong, most project activities will be affected and almost inevitably the overall achievements of the project would also be affected.	Satisfactory
Overall success	The overall susses of the projects has been rated as satisfactory. For the most part the project results accord to the development objectives of the project. All intended or untended changes have been recognized by the project management and were reviewed timely and corrective measures are adopted if needed. The sustainability of the project achievements is similar to the potential long-term impacts of project results. It depends on the capacity of the projects implementation team to institutionalize these products. The project runs the risk of ending with these effective products "seating" on shelves and not being used. The projects contribute to capacity development. However, before mentioned risks, luck of linkage between local and national authorities, week policies, etc might have adverse consequences to capacity development and ownership of the projects. The projects have a good replication potential that can be applied within the Tisza River Basin and within the other watersheds. Finally, there is a synergy with other similar projects.	Satisfactory