

Background Briefing for Journalists

3rd ICPDR Ministerial Meeting

9 February 2016

ICPDR - International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River

The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) is an International Organisation consisting of 14 cooperating states and the European Union. Since its establishment in 1998, the ICPDR has grown into one of the largest and most active international bodies of river basin management expertise in the World. The ICPDR deals not only with the Danube itself, but also with the whole Danube River Basin, which includes its tributaries and the ground water resources.

The goal of the ICPDR is to implement the Danube River Protection Convention (DRPC) and make it a living tool. In addition, the ICPDR is the body that coordinates the implementation of EU Water Framework Directive and EU Floods Directive in the Danube River Basin.

The ICPDR's mission is to promote and coordinate sustainable and equitable water management, including conservation, improvement and rational use of waters for the benefit of the Danube River Basin countries and their people. The ICPDR pursues this mission by making recommendations for the improvement of water quality, developing mechanisms for flood and accident control, agreeing standards for emissions and by assuring that these are reflected in the Contracting Parties' national legislations and applied in their policies.

The Danube River Basin

The Danube River Basin comprises of an area of approximately 800,000 km². It is the world's most international river basin, as it extends into the territories of 19 countries – the 14 main ones are contracting parties of the ICPDR.

The ecosystems of the Danube River Basin are highly valuable in environmental, economic, historical and social terms, but they are subject to pressures and pollution from urban areas, agriculture and industries and to man-made structural changes - issues which are jointly addressed by the Danube Basin countries through the ICPDR.

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) of 2000

Water does not stop at administrative or political boundaries, so the best way to protect and manage water is by close international co-operation between all the

countries within the natural hydrological unit of the river basin – bringing together all interests upstream and downstream.

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD, formally “Directive 2000/60/EC”) establishes a legal framework to protect and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems; prevent their deterioration and ensure long-term, sustainable use of water resources. The Directive provides for an innovative approach for water management based on river basins, the natural geographical and hydrological units, and sets specific deadlines for EU Member States. The WFD addresses inland surface waters (rivers and lakes), transitional waters, coastal waters, groundwater and, under specific conditions, water dependent terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands.

It establishes several integrative principles for water management, including public participation in planning and the integration of economic approaches, and also aims for the integration of water management into other policy areas. For better coordination, the WFD calls for the creation of international districts for river basins that cover the territory of more than one country. EU Member States are required to pursue actions to achieve good status in all bodies of surface water and groundwater by 2015, respectively by 2027 at the latest.

In 2009, the first Danube River Basin Management Plan was adopted, with an update for the next 6-year period until 2021 adopted in 2015. The DRBM Plan aims to further protect and enhance the status of all waters, to prevent their deterioration and to ensure the sustainable, long-term use of water resources. It includes latest assessments on significant pressures, water status and a programme of measures jointly agreed by the Danube countries for the period 2015 until 2021. It establishes and strengthens several integrative principles for river basin management, including economic approaches and integration with other sector policies like energy, transport and adaptation to climate change.

The EU Floods Directive (FD) of 2007

The EU Floods Directive (FD, formally “Directive 2007/60/EC”) aims to reduce and manage the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity.

The Directive requires Member States to first carry out a preliminary flood risk assessment by 2011 to identify areas at risk of flooding. For such areas flood hazard and flood risk maps were drawn up by 2013 and first flood risk management plans were established by 2015, focusing on prevention, protection and preparedness. The Directive applies to inland waters as well as all coastal waters across the whole territory of the EU.

The Directive shall be carried out in coordination with the Water Framework Directive, notably by flood risk management plans and river basin management plans being coordinated, and through coordination of the public participation procedures in the preparation of these plans. All assessments, maps and plans prepared shall be made available to the public.

Member States shall furthermore coordinate their flood risk management practices in shared river basins, including with third countries, and shall in solidarity not undertake measures that would increase the flood risk in neighbouring countries. Member States shall take into consideration long term developments, including climate change, as well as sustainable land use practices in the flood risk management cycle addressed in this Directive.

Further information: www.icpdr.org

Press release and photo download: <http://www.icpdr.org/main/mm16>