

DANUBE WATCH

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International
Commission
for the Protection
of the Danube River

Internationale
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zum Schutz
der Donau

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Credit: Slovak Ministry of Environment

Dear readers,

An enormous collective effort ended on 18 May: the draft of the Danube River Basin Management Plan has been finalised and offered to the public for discussion.

Over 250 dedicated experts provided professional and personal efforts to develop this Plan, a key element requested by the EU Water Framework Directive. It is my task to thank all of you for your dedication and for adding to this plan, which will now shape our cooperation and joint activities from Germany to Ukraine and the Czech Republic to Montenegro.

It goes without saying that integrated and multi-disciplinary documents like the Danube River Basin Management Plan also have weaknesses – we are aware of this. Some of the open issues such as the sediment problem and the ongoing pressure from infrastructure development have been pointed out in the public participation process. We hope to include some of these issues in the final Plan, which will be ready by the end of the year. Others will take longer and can only be included in the next cycle of the EU Water Framework Directive. But be assured that we will continue our efforts beyond the finalisation of this first Danube River Basin Management Plan.

Having a Plan is one thing – the other is how to implement it. Our challenge now is to secure the needed

funding. Despite the economic crisis, it will be crucial to find investments for these activities. Clean water scores high on the agenda of the European citizen as the article on page 13 shows. Therefore taxpayers' money also needs to be spent in this field. We will work towards this goal.

However, I would also like to underline that the basin-wide river basin management plan is an addition to the national plans which have been developed in all Danube countries that are members of the European Union and are under development in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. These national plans are held together by the international plan – together they will shape the management of the Danube and its tributaries for the coming years ... for the people and the nature of the Danube River Basin.

In conclusion, I would like to thank many, many people throughout the basin who contributed to the Danube River Basin Management Plan. I hope that by continuing to cooperatively work together, we can meet the ambitious goals we have set.

Olga Srsnova

General Director of the Division of Waters and Energy Sources at the Slovak Ministry of Environment and ICPDR President for 2009



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Danube Watch is the official magazine of ICPDR, the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. Danube Watch enhances regional cooperation and information sharing on sustainable water management and environmental protection in the Danube River Basin. It reports on current issues affecting the Danube Basin, and on action taken to deal with challenges in the river basin. Striving for scientific accuracy while remaining concise, clear and readable, it is produced for the wide range of people who are actively involved in the Danube River Basin and are working for the improvement of its environment.

The ICPDR accepts no responsibility or liability whatsoever with regard to information or opinions of the authors of the articles in this issue.



Credit: Mello



Credit: Mello



Credit: Mello



Credit: Kondrachov

IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

A report by the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC) describes the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystems for South-East Europe (SEE). Many SEE regions are areas most vulnerable to climate change where the highest future impacts of climate change can be expected, such as increased flooding, crop failure and changes in species distribution. The ECNC is an independent organisation working for the conservation and sustainable use of nature, biodiversity and landscapes.

For more information, please visit: www.ecnc.org

DJERDAP NATIONAL PARK OPENS VISITOR CENTRE

Located in the northeast part of Serbia at the border to Romania, the Djerdap National Park has opened a new Visitor's Centre. The Centre features exhibits on the history, culture and flora and fauna species of the region. The national park includes many natural and cultural values, including the Lepenski vir archaeological site, the Golubac fortress and the Djerdap gorge – the Iron Gate.

For more information, please visit: www.npdjerdap.org

REPORT ON BATHING WATER QUALITY

The European Commission has published a report on the water quality of bathing areas, covering coastal and freshwater bathing areas where bathing is explicitly authorised or is traditionally practised. During bathing season Member States monitor and report on bathing water quality against minimum standards for physical, chemical and biological parameters. Maintaining high quality bathing water is vital to the health of millions of people who enjoy swimming in seas, rivers or lakes during the summer months.

www.ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-bathing/

POLLUTANT RELEASE AND TRANSFER REGISTER LAUNCHED

After more than seven years of development the German online Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) was launched in Berlin in June 2009. The PRTR offers online information on pollutants released into air, water or soil by industries, factory farming, sewage works or other possible polluters. Access to the register is free of charge. Some 45,000 interested online visitors per day were registered in just the first two days after the launch.

For more information, please visit: www.ecologic-events.eu/referenzen.htm

7–8/10/2009

HAMBURG, GERMANY

SIXTH SEDNET CONFERENCE: THE ROLE OF SEDIMENTS IN COASTAL MANAGEMENT

European concerns over the issue of sediment management are growing as revealed by River Basin Management Plans which are to be published in 2009 under the EU Water Framework Directive. Ongoing river restoration projects in Hamburg coincide with dredging needs, a topic serving as the key element for this conference, which aims to enhance the cross-cutting science-policy dialogue.

For more information: www.sednet.org

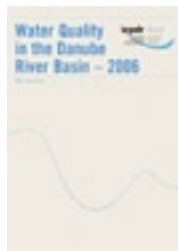
20–23/10/2009

ZHENGZHOU, CHINA

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL YELLOW RIVER FORUM

Organised every second year, the Forum will focus on 'Ecological Civilization and River Ethics' in the framework of integrated river basin management. It also aims to promote public awareness of river protection, appeal to the greater society to strengthen river management, and formulate harmonious coexistence between humans and rivers. A small ICPDR delegation will participate in the Forum and share the lessons learned from the Danube Basin.

For more information: www.yrcc.gov.cn/trsweb/gjlt3e/



TRANSNATIONAL MONITORING NETWORK YEARBOOK 2006

The Transnational Monitoring Network (TNMN) Yearbook 2006 is out and illustrates the joint effort of the Danube countries to regularly measure the water quality of the Danube River. The TNMN Yearbook 2006 contains background information, a basic overview of the water quality status as well as all figures and tables currently available.

See http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/tnmn_yearbooks.htm



Credit: ICPDR

THANK YOU, ŽELJKO OSTOJIC

For many years Željko Ostojic, Head of the International Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Regional Development, Forestry and Water Management, led the Croatian Delegation to the ICPDR. Željko retired this spring and the ICPDR would like to thank him for all his efforts and wishes him good luck for the future.

DANUBE DAY 2009: Shared Waters – Joint Responsibilities

Marking 15 years since the signing of the Danube Convention, Danube Day 2009 was a celebration of all that has been achieved. From a landmark Stakeholder Forum to events that created friends across borders, Danube Day was a success throughout the region.

It's impossible to summarise Danube Day in a sentence: the sheer variety of events, organisations, nationalities, cultures and people involved, as well as the amount of energy and enthusiasm they generate, is mind-blowing. Fourteen countries, each with their own mix of peoples, traditions and beliefs, varying histories, conflicts and politics come together on Danube Day to form one basin, united in celebration, united in their Danube identity.

The 2009 theme, 'Shared Waters – Joint Responsibilities', emphasised the challenge of many countries working together. Events organised by over 420 national and international partners, such as the Coca-Cola System and Borealis, focused on finding ways to share the Danube waters without compromising the use and enjoyment by others – now and for the future.

"Through Danube Day, we declare our shared responsibility to protect our precious resource and together plan for a sustainable future," said Philip Weller, Executive Secretary of the ICPDR.

Flowing in one direction. Danube Day engaged the diversity of people whose everyday actions affect the rivers. Only through joint understanding and mutual respect can a positive future be forged. The ICPDR's Second Stakeholder Forum in Bratislava brought members of the agricultural, industrial, commercial and environmental sectors to discuss management of the rivers (see article, page 20). The 'Greet the Danube' horn blast reverberated across the basin, an acknowledgement by shipping companies that rivers are the source of their trade and require protection. Local stakeholder events in the Lower Danube sent NGOs from



Danube Day gets bigger and bigger each year: from cultural festivals and water games, to conservation seminars and river clean ups, activities offered everyone a chance to celebrate their 'Danube Solidarity'. *Credit: Various*





Ukraine and Moldova on a marathon boat tour, where a frank discussion with business leaders took place.

Danube Day is also about getting the message to as many of the 83 million inhabitants as possible. Events this year more than made this happen. High profile publicity, press events and widespread media coverage meant audiences could be counted in hundreds of thousands – in some cases, millions. In Vienna, you couldn't fail to miss Danube Day as the logo was displayed for all to see on the colossal 202-metre-tall Millennium Tower. Opposite the Donauinselfest, two to three million festival-goers saw it beamed onto Vienna's most famous skyscraper. Tulcea's event was covered by 21 media organisations; Bosnia and Herzegovina national radio did a special broadcast and Ukrainian organisers said that "all Ukraine was watching or reading about this event!"

Ministers get their feet wet. Events this year saw Ministers wading into rivers, releasing fish, holding up giant jigsaws, handing out prizes and generally doing their utmost to promote the day. They hosted press conferences in five countries; in Dunasziget, Imre Szabo and other key officials, surrounded by press photographers, donned Wellington boots to release young sturgeon into the Zátonyi Danube.

"The Danube unites not only people, destinies and cultures, but energies and capacities which must be gathered in our efforts for the conservation and efficient use of the resources offered to us by the Danube Basin," said Nicolae Nemirschi, Romanian Minister of Environment.

Mobilising for action. It wasn't only politicians who got their hands dirty: in Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine people collected rubbish, putting a stop to plastic bottles on their tour of Danube countries. Inventive youngsters turned the rubbish into remarkably stunning 'eco-fashion'.

In Croatia, experts discussed sustainable management; Moldova held meetings with Lower Prut residents; and in Serbia the Parties to the Sava Agreement signed a protocol on water pollution from navigation (see article page 12).

Friends across borders. Rivers united neighbouring communities – a unifying force where once they were a line of division. The 'Danube Challenge' took young Austrians and Slovaks on an adventure from Linz to Bratislava. Joined by Olympian Christoph Sieber, they competed in watery challenges; pulling their ship over the border using just ropes and teamwork tested everyone to their limits.

Young people saluted the Danube with pedal power in the Green Bikes for Peace extravaganza. The 30-day



Through larger-than-life statements and huge crowds, events in Austria and Ukraine made it clear that everyone must get involved for our shared river basin. *Credit: BMLFUW/Kern and AQA*

Italy to Hungary action highlighted sustainability issues. Championing Danube Day in Linz, a raft was built from discarded plastic bottles to carry messages for a sustainable world. In Silistra, Bulgarians and Romanians met for a water sports contest. In Tulcea, a message from the Mayor of Ulm helped engender Danube solidarity from source to mouth.

The Danube Art Master contest helps develop the sense of Danube solidarity in children, resulting in thousands of pieces of art along rivers. Slovenia's finale was held on the Island of Love, Prekmurje; Germany's at the Weltenburg Monastery in Bavaria. A glance at the titles of winning artworks reveals the children's strong message: "Danube - the way of peace"; "The Danube offers us life - but what do we give it back?" and "Danube - powerful song of the European countries".

Fun flows across the Basin. It wouldn't be Danube Day without festivals: Hungarians celebrated in Dunasziget; young Moldovans sang traditional songs by the Prut; in Bratislava, a treasure hunt with a difference saw children pass through national checkpoints, learning from experts on the way. Belgrade's family day and Galati's water games were big hits. In Ukraine, thunderstorms didn't dampen the spirits at the Tisza Children's Festival: sudden downpours brought out the survival spirit in everyone. People got on and in their rivers; Czech Art Masters won a Morava safari and thousands enjoyed cruises.

"Looking back over previous years, we can see a growth in children's knowledge and awareness of the Danube Basin ... and their role in the protection of waters," said Olena Marushevska from the All-Ukrainian Ecological League speaking about Danube Day in Dilove, Zakarpattya Oblast.

Children are an important part of Danube Day. Youngsters in Moldova proved that future generations will protect and preserve our precious resources. *Credit: ICPDR*



A jigsaw of nations. As a result of the work of governments, NGOs and businesses, Danube Day achieves more each year. Multiple events throughout the river basin brought people and cultures together, like the Danube puzzles launched this year.

"Fitting together the Danube jigsaw pieces symbolises the interdependence of Danube countries and their potential for cooperation," said Andor Nagy, Chair of the Environmental Committee of the Hungarian Parliament.

Suzie Holt lives in Devon, UK, and is a writer on environmental issues. She has been involved in Danube Day since its start in 2004 and prior to that worked for WWF on the Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative.

Borealis joins the Business Friends of the Danube partnership



As key stakeholders in the Danube Basin, businesses can create problems or contribute to solutions. More businesses operating in the Danube Basin have already embraced the need to demonstrate corporate social responsibility by voluntarily assisting the ICPDR and Danube countries.

Borealis, a leading provider of innovative, value-creating plastics solutions, has joined the Business Friends of the Danube partnership. As a member of the Business Friends of the Danube, Borealis will join The Coca-Cola Company, Coca-Cola Hellenic, the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation ORF and

TRIGOS. Water for the World was nominated in the 'Society' category by an independent jury of TRIGOS representatives and economic and academic experts.

“The Business Friends of the Danube is the natural regional partnership for our Water for the World programme,” says Mark Garrett, CEO of Borealis AG. “With our operations in Burghausen, Linz and Schwechat and our market leadership in Central and Eastern European countries, Borealis has a strong presence in the Danube River Basin. Being a Business Friend of the Danube complements our strategy and is an important step forward in enhancing the contribution our company can make in this region.”

Mark Garrett, CEO of Borealis, a leading provider of innovative, value-creating plastics solutions, signs the Business Friends of the Danube partnership agreement, with Olga Srsnova, ICPDR President 2009. *Credit: Borealis*



Creating solutions at home and abroad. Headquartered in Vienna, Austria, Borealis has major production sites on the Danube providing plastic materials to the infrastructure, automotive and advanced packaging markets across Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

others in ensuring high standards of operation by businesses in the region, and in developing and supporting joint activities that promote efficient and sustainable sanitation and water conservation solutions.

For Borealis, this includes participation in Danube Day as well as activities to enhance knowledge transfer to promote better use of water resources, improved wastewater treatment and precision farming practices in the Danube River Basin.

Recognised leadership in responsibility. The Business Friends of the Danube partnership will be the regional component of Borealis' global programme for water and sanitation, Water for the World, which the company initiated in 2007 with its joint-venture Borouge. Water for the World fosters local knowledge and partnerships to provide sustainable solutions for safe water and sanitation, and was recognised by the Austrian Corporate Social Responsibility award

“We are delighted to welcome Borealis to the Business Friends of the Danube,” says Philip Weller, Executive Secretary of the ICPDR. “The company has extensive expertise in developing innovations that support ecologically sustainable water management solutions. We are looking forward to working with them to encourage awareness and the transfer of knowledge and best practice to projects that will preserve the uniqueness and long-term resources of the Danube River Basin.”

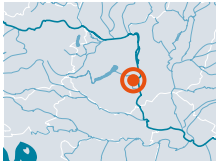
The Business Friends of the Danube partnership was launched in 2008 by the ICPDR and offers companies the opportunity to enter into mutually beneficial partnerships that help to preserve and protect the Danube and its tributaries.

For more information, please visit: www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/business_cooperation.htm

Jasmine Bachmann works on public participation in the ICPDR Secretariat, and is the Executive Editor of Danube Watch.

“Being a Business Friend of the Danube complements our strategy and is an important step forward in enhancing the contribution our company can make in this region.”

Mark Garrett, CEO of Borealis AG



Putting the Danube Box to the test

Schools play a vital role in spreading environmental messages. And as more teachers look for ways to incorporate information about the Danube and its tributaries into their lessons, the Danube Box is proving to be a valuable tool to create awareness and understanding about the protection of this valuable resource.



From the 400 teams registered, 8 groups moved ahead to participate in the National Final in Budapest. *Credit: Keresztes*

Hungary was the first to translate the Danube Box, and the Hungarian version, Duna Ismerettár, was launched at the beginning of the 2007/2008 school year with a nation-wide online competition at www.danubebox.hu. Organised by the Hungarian Ministry of Environment and Water and the Ministry of Education in cooperation with Global Water Partnership Hungary and supported by Coca-Cola Hungary, the competition challenged three-student teams, grades 5–13, to test their Danube knowledge in river-related quizzes. Nearly 400 teams registered for the contest's second year, and the winning teams and their teachers won a week in a camp in the Duna-Dráva National Park as the grand prize.

József Lengyel has been a geography teacher at Péter András Gimnázium and Szigeti Endre Szakkepző School for the last three years. He has been very involved in the Danube Box contest and was present at both last year's final with two teams and this year's with three teams. Both years his teams were among the top three winning groups.

Danube Watch: How did you get involved with the Danube Box competitions?

THE DANUBE BOX

The basin-wide educational kit, based on the principles and objectives of sustainability and environmental education, is made possible through cooperation with The Coca-Cola Company, Coca-Cola Hellenic and the ICPDR under the framework of the Green Danube Partnership. The Danube Box includes quizzes, teacher training, online competitions, interactive web journeys and many more inviting activities.

Some 10,000 kits (including handbook, poster, family cards, CD-ROM) and an additional 2,500 CD-ROMs (the full pack in digital version) have been produced and nearly all copies have already been distributed to schools. All national versions are available online and more than 7,000 visitors have downloaded the Danube Box in the last six months alone. Based on statistics collected on a voluntary basis with the online orders, the Danube Box has reached about 900,000 children.

For more information, please visit:
www.danubebox.org

Lengyel: I found out from a colleague at the school who looks up various calls for contests on the internet. She immediately thought of me as she knows how committed I am to natural science and environmentally-directed education. I first came in contact with

the teaching kit when the school received it as part of early registration for the first competition.

Danube Watch: How did you incorporate the project work into your normal classes?

Lengyel: Unfortunately, because of the low number of classes dedicated to natural science, I can only minimally prepare children in class. Moreover, I can only teach with the Danube Box when the class curriculum includes subjects of river protection or river-related issues. So we organised vocational classes in the afternoons and, with some instruction, also had the children prepare at home.

An important part of the preparation process was that the children had to act as a team and they managed this very well. Focusing on team work is important because while one might be better at recognising certain types of animals, another might learn the topography or cultural and economical issues more easily.

through the competition. This is so important because natural science classes tend to be put aside in favour of social sciences.

What's more, getting to know the Danube Box and learning from it has had a positive effect on the children's approach to nature. This is also thanks to the fact that the package visually and engagingly presents the rivers, their fauna, the cultural differences and the social effects that belong to their environment. Although the Danube is quite far away from our town, we could clearly observe the characteristics of our surrounding rivers. The children have absolutely become more environmentally aware and they pay more attention to the waters and their usage.

Danube Watch: Has the Danube Box been used outside the contest?

Lengyel: The package can easily be used in special classes. For the moment, we try to apply the easier wa-

Lengyel has had three teams in the National Final in the last two years: Crazy Berries won first place in both years, and Z.I.R. and Sárreiek have both made it into the top three teams.

Credit: Keresztes



Danube Watch: How did the children respond?

Lengyel: It was easy to get the children interested as they are all interested in nature and they are all thinking of continuing their studies in the field of natural sciences. Thus the Danube Box fits in perfectly.

There were a lot of students interested in the competition this year and we had enough interest for many more teams. But while there was no limit to the number of teams from school that could participate, we opted to keep the number of teams to three for efficiency reasons. The fact that all three of them made it to the finale supports our decision.

Danube Watch: What effect has the Danube Box had on students?

Lengyel: The children have become more interested in natural science classes such as geography or biology

ter-related tests; however, my biology and chemistry colleagues and I intend to broaden these tests in the future. Moreover, I try to introduce information related to economy – such as industrial water usage – to curricular classes.

As for the contest, I am absolutely satisfied with the present form – although I really couldn't say otherwise since in the two previous contests we've had a team win First Place and another score a winning place!

However, I think it's important to highlight that the first merit is that of the children who enthusiastically participate. If they didn't study or weren't so enthusiastic about it, even the most targeted preparation wouldn't be worth anything at all.

Danube Watch: Thank you , and good luck next year!

Cooperation for common solutions

The joint management of the Sava River Basin by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia is an important prerequisite for sustainable development by the participating countries, bringing important potential benefits for the Danube Basin as well.



The junction of the Krka and Sava Rivers in Slovenia. The large retention areas of the Sava are one of the most effective flood control systems in Europe. Their management is seen as an international model for sustainable flood management.

Credit: ISRBC

This 25 June marked four years since the creation of the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) to implement the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin (FASRB). Over the last four years the ISRBC has made considerable progress in implementing the FASRB, providing the first remarkable results towards the achievement of its principal goals – the establishment of the international regime of navigation on the Sava River and its navigable tributaries, and the establishment of sustainable water management in the Sava River Basin.

The Sava River Basin Management Plan and the Flood Risk Management Plan are being developed in accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive and Flood Directive. A European Commission-funded project, to be launched by the end of this year, will follow up the recently finalised Characterisation Report and will significantly support further development of the Sava RBM Plan by 2011. Initial steps in the establishment of the Sava GIS have been made as well.

Much progress has been made in the field of navigation. The ISRBC has developed a set of rules to develop a unified regulatory system in the Sava River Basin, harmonised with the rules at European level, and work to re-establish the marking system on the Sava River waterway is nearly finished. A feasibility study for the rehabilitation and development of transport and navigation on the Sava River waterway is complete, and will be followed up with environmental impact assessment studies and a detailed design of the waterway.

Additionally, the establishment of the River Information Services on the Sava River is under way.

Meeting everyone's needs. By the nature of the FASRB, the ISRBC is supposed to balance the needs for development against environmental protection requirements. In this regard, the implementation of the Joint Statement on Guiding Principles for the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin is considered highly important and beneficial.

"Implementation is very important in the Sava River Basin, considering that the Sava River waterway has been neglected for many years," says Branko Bai, ISRBC Chairman. "We still have many important steps to take where we can demonstrate the implementation of the Joint Statement, and I believe that our joint efforts will finally result in a project that will be sup-



The Second Meeting of the Parties to the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin was held on Sava Day, 1 June 2009. *Credit: ISRBC*



ported by all relevant stakeholders.”

Implementation of the Joint Statement is, furthermore, a core of a good cooperation of the ISRBC with the ICPDR and the Danube Commission, in addition to the Memorandums of Understanding on cooperation that have been signed with the two Danube commissions.

Cooperation continues. Sustainable development of the region was also a focus of the Second Meeting of the Parties to the FASRB, held on Sava Day, 1 June 2009, in Belgrade. The Declaration was adopted at the meeting, and the Parties signed the protocol preventing water pollution caused by navigation. The meeting encouraged final harmonisation of two additional protocols, regulating the issues of flood protection and emergency situations.

“This is considerably important for all countries, and especially, for the Republic of Serbia, since protection against detrimental effects of waters, such as floods, as well as water quality protection, is highly significant

for downstream countries in the basin and given the water supply of the settlements along the Sava River – such as Sremska Mitrovica, Šabac, Belgrade, etc.,” says Ambassador Stanimir Vuki evi , of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

With a good spirit and strong willingness to succeed, the commitment of the Parties remains focused on future progress. “The Sava River is the communion of our interests in the region in terms of economic, political, social and cultural context,” says Djurdja Adleši , Vice-president of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

For more information, please visit: www.savacommission.org

Dejan Komatina is the Secretary of the International Sava River Basin Commission.

68% of Europeans believe water is a serious problem

Some 68% of Europeans think the quality of water in their country is a serious problem, according to a special Eurobarometer survey on Europeans’ opinion on water issues published by the European Commission this spring. The most worried are the Greeks, where 90% of people are concerned about water, and the least alarmed are the Austrians (26%). The report also shows that Europeans see the quantity of available water as an equally serious problem.

Deteriorating water quality. More Europeans (37%) feel the quality of water in their country has deteriorated over the last five years. Three out of four Cypriots believe the quality of water has deteriorated compared with 16% in Austria and 48% of Danes.

Industry and agriculture are seen as having the biggest impact on the quality and quantity of water in European countries and an overwhelming majority of Europeans think climate change will have an impact on water resources.

Europeans take action. Some 84% of Europeans say they are taking steps to reduce water-related problems. The use of environmentally-friendly household chemicals is another way Europeans are reducing their household’s impact of water. With 78%, Austrians are the most likely to use such chemicals while only 33% of Romanians are.

For more information, please visit: www.water-europe.eu/participate

Kirstie Shepherd is a freelance journalist living in Vienna and has called the Danube River Basin home since 2000.

“Without enough good quality water our economies and societies can neither thrive nor survive,” says European Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas. “Europeans realise the seriousness of the issue and they understand that action is needed to maintain clean and sufficient water resources for the survival of our society.”



Credit: pressebox.de



Intensive electrofishing was done by core team and national teams to gain representative samples within one day. *Credit: Rodinger*

Fishing the entire Danube in just 42 days

A team of scientists from both the upper and lower Danube take on the extraordinary task of sampling the fish of the region in the first ever fish survey for the entire length of the Danube, part of the Joint Danube Survey 2.

Fish are a major biological quality element for the assessment of the ecological status in running waters. Realising that fish sampling would be crucial to the programme of the Joint Danube Survey 2 (JDS2), the ICPDR enlisted the Austrian Federal Agency for Water Management (BAW) and the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna, to put together a fish survey for the JDS2. Generously supported by BAW with know-how, manpower and money, the ambitious project managed to do what no one had done before: to collect fish samples from all along the entire Danube and its tributaries – and to do it in a month and a half.

Under the coordination of Niels Jepsen of the EC Joint Research Centre in Ispra, the core fishing team was equipped with a vessel and electrofishing gear. The core team worked alongside the national teams to guarantee comparable sampling methodology and benefit from local knowledge while speeding up the sampling procedure. One day was allowed for each site, and each of the test reaches was sampled using electrofishing by day and by night, since it was agreed that night fishing would effectively detect additional species and age classes. Drifting trammel nets were used for deeper areas and, although time consuming, delivered the only sturgeon specimens caught during the survey.

Welcome and unwelcome species. In total, over 64,000 individual fish were caught and measured, consisting of 71 separate species – 66 species in the Danube and 58 in the tributaries. Although common species like bleak and Prussian carp dominated the catches, asp occurred at almost all sites along with ide, roach and pikeperch, and some unwelcome species as well.

AUSTRIAN FEDERAL AGENCY FOR WATER MANAGEMENT

Founded in 1995, the Federal Agency for Water Management (Bundesamt für Wasserwirtschaft – BAW) supports the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management. It develops the fundamentals for water management legislation in Austria. The BAW ensures the Austria-wide use of unified standards of biological monitoring. BAW experts are active consultants and educators, and a pilot project on management innovation has been set up at the BAW.

For more information, please visit: www.baw.at.

In the last ten years, the regulated upper and middle section of the Danube – wherever artificial bank protection is abundant – has been heavily colonised by invasive fish species, especially gobies from the Black Sea. “It was surprising to find the Chinese sleeper, an invasive fish species native to the Amur River,” says Grigore Davideanu of the Romanian Natural History Museum. “We knew that it was present in some waters in northeast Romania but we hoped it would need more time to get to the southwest.”

Potential for recovery. A number of rare, threatened species are missing from the survey’s list, including large migrating sturgeons, which are at risk from poaching, or the European mud-minnow, which depend on muddy floodplain backwaters. But results clearly demonstrate that species diversity along the Danube is high, and recovery seems possible. However, the abundance of formerly dominating species like nase, dace, barbel or bream is a cause for concerns, since their numbers reflect habitat availability. To achieve a good ecological status as required by the EU Water Framework Directive, we have to act now to enhance river connectivity and protect spawning grounds and sheltered habitats for young fish.

Only the beginning. Despite the difficulties of the survey, the core team is already thinking about future fish surveys, although without the confines of the JDS2 schedule. “A stand-alone Danube fish survey would be more effective, since fish sampling demands a totally different time regime and strategy,” says Gabor Guti

of the Hungarian Danube Research Station. “A larger international team with well-advised local experts and two sampling boats are essential.”

But all team members agree that the most important outcome was the international cooperation. “JDS2 and the fish survey was a unique opportunity for fish scientists along the Danube to exchange information on equipment and sampling strategies,” says Christian Wiesner of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna. “It was the first step towards a standardisation of fish sampling and assessment methods on large rivers in Europe.”

For the complete scientific report, please visit: <http://www.icpdr.org/jds/publications>.

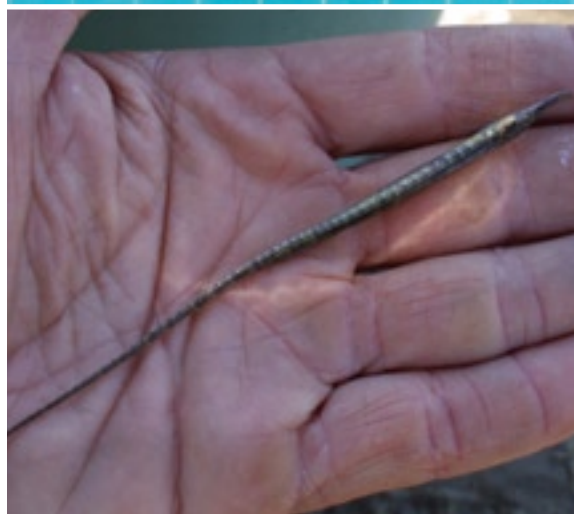
In total, over 64,000 individual fish were caught and measured.



For stellate sturgeon and other large migratory sturgeons, the two Iron Gate dams represent an insurmountable barrier on their way upstream to distant spawning areas in the Hungarian lowlands. *Credit: Wiesner*



A new menace for native species – the Chinese sleeper goby. *Credit: Davideanu*



Blackstriped pipefish managed to pass both Iron Gate dams and was found between submerged plants at river km 960. *Credit: Guti*

Nikolaus Schotzko works with field methodology and assessment of fish ecological status at the Federal Agency for Water Management in Austria. He was part of the Fish Survey core team from the planning stages and managed all the data for the survey.

Supporting a regional understanding of climate change

The impacts of climate change on global water resources will affect our lives and economies. Scientists around the globe are looking at all the evidence of past and ongoing climate change and using models to come up with predictions for our future environment and weather.



CLAVIER

The nations in Central and Eastern Europe face triple challenges through the ongoing economic and political transition, continuing vulnerability to environmental hazards, and longer-term impacts of global climate change. The aim of CLAVIER is to help cope with these challenges. *Credit: Lazar*

The CLAVIER project is supported by the European Commission's 6th Framework Programme under the 'Thematic Sub-Priority Global Change and Ecosystems'. The key goals:

- investigation of ongoing and future climate changes and their associated uncertainties in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC)
- analyses of possible impact of climate changes in CEEC on weather pattern and extremes, air pollution, human health, natural ecosystems, forestry, agriculture and infrastructure as well as water resources
- evaluation of the economic impacts of climate changes on CEEC economies, concentrating on four economic sectors, which are agriculture, tourism, energy supply and the public sector.

Ongoing and future climate changes are drastically influencing the hydrological cycle and its variability. These changes are most visible in Central and Eastern Europe, with a series of extreme floods hitting the Tisza Basin in 1998–2001 and the Danube River in August 2002 and spring 2006. The transboundary character of the water bodies clearly underlines the necessity to improve flood safety across the whole region, and a number of ambitious projects have been launched in recent years in Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine to address these issues. However, to succeed, such efforts must be supported by the reliable assessment of climate change on the regional scale.

In 2006, the European Commission launched the project Climate Change and Variability: Impact on Central and Eastern Europe (CLAVIER) to investigate climate changes and their associated uncertainties in Central

and Eastern European countries. The project focuses on Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, however user groups from all Central and Eastern European countries will benefit from the results.

The CLAVIER research covers a wide range of issues relevant to the potential impact of climate changes, including weather patterns, air pollution, extreme events and water resources. Furthermore, to assess the local and regional impact, the project includes an evaluation of the economic impact on agriculture, tourism, energy supply and the public sector.

Bringing international studies to the regional level.

Researchers from six countries and varying disciplines analyse existing data and climate situations from 1951 to 2050. This ensemble of model situations is a cross product of various greenhouse-gas-emission scenarios from the International Panel on Climate Change. “Such an exhaustive combination is designed to evaluate the uncertainties existing in the different stages of regional climate change information,” says Laurent Li of the Institute Pierre Simon Laplace in Paris.

A crucial part of the project is setting up and maintaining the project database, which is important for an interdisciplinary team. “We aim to establish an

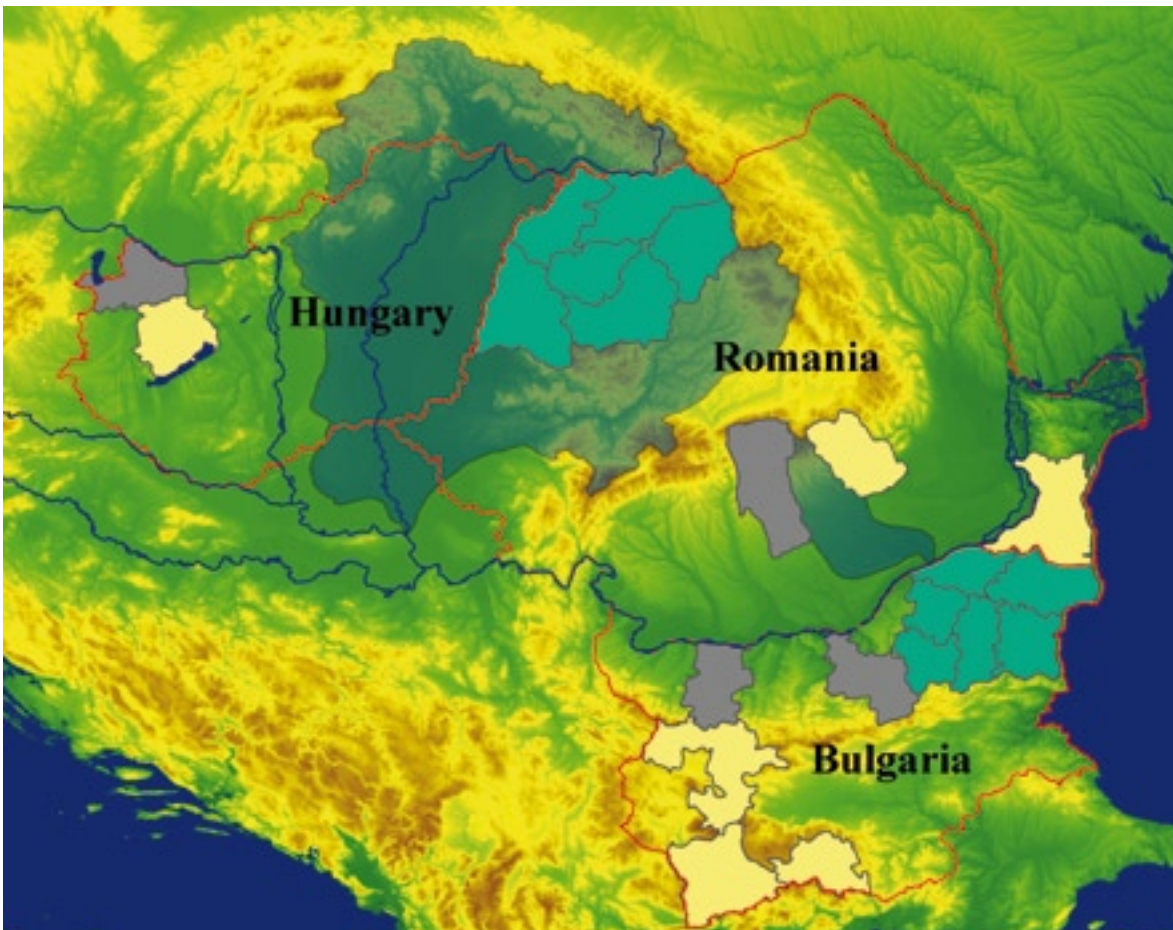
interface between regional climate models and models or studies focusing on impacts of climate and climate change in Central and Eastern Europe,” says Andreas Gobiet from the Wegener Centre in Graz.

Understanding weather changes. It is generally expected within the climate research community that extreme weather events will be more intense and occur more often. The CLAVIER project has therefore identified 24 indices for extreme events typical for the CLAVIER target regions, mainly based on temperature, precipitation and wind speed. “Weather regimes are a main factor in organising the local weather and climate of Central and Eastern Europe,” says András Horányi of the Hungarian Meteorological Service in Budapest, one of the project’s partners.

Based on the preliminary results of the main investigations, more frequent winter and spring floods on major rivers are expected over the next 40 years, while low flow periods could last longer.

For more information, please visit:
www.clavier-eu.org

Daniela Jacob is the coordinator of the CLAVIER project at the Max Planck Institute for Meteorology.



The CLAVIER project focuses on Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania – in particular the Tisza and Arges catchments, as well as the hydrological regime of Lake Balaton. The project’s target regions: cyan – hydrological/water management; green – agriculture; grey – energy; yellow – tourism.



Partnerships beyond the basin

The ICPDR is forging alliances around the world to share experiences on integrated river basin management and to develop innovative and collaborative solutions to water quality and quantity pressures with other international river basins.

The Orange-Senqu River Basin is shared by four countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa.
Credit: Vogel/GTZ

The work of the ICPDR depends on cooperation. As the most international river basin in the world, the ICPDR brings together representatives of 14 countries and the European Commission to make decisions that affect the 83 million people living in the basin. But the ICPDR looks beyond the basin for inspiration and ideas, and working with other river basins provides an opportunity to learn from similar challenges and experiences to see the Danube through other perspectives.

Cooperation between The Orange-Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM) and the ICPDR began last year at the impetus of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), which is the lead International Cooperating Partner working with water in the Southern African region. A delegation from

THE ORANGE-SENQU RIVER COMMISSION

The Orange-Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM) promotes the equitable and sustainable development of the resources of the Orange-Senqu River. ORASECOM provides a forum for consultation and coordination between the riparian states to promote integrated water resources management and development with the basin. The highest body of ORASECOM is the Council, which is supported by various Task Teams to manage projects, and a Secretariat, based in Pretoria, South Africa.

The Orange-Senqu River Basin extends over four countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa, covering an area of 985,000 km². Almost 59% of the basin falls within South Africa, 26% in Namibia, 12% in Botswana and 3% in Lesotho. The two main tributaries are the Senqu and the Vaal Rivers.

ORASECOM, as well as from the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission, spent a week in the Danube Basin in July 2008 for a study tour, with stops in Hungary and Serbia and the ICPDR Secretariat to share experiences on transboundary basin management.

The ICPDR and ORASECOM discussed topics related to institutional capacity and agreed to establish a long-term relationship of cooperation.

Valuable differences. At first glance, the two basins may not seem to have much in common, but in fact they share many traits. Both river basins face shared pressures, like eutrophication, and similar challenges, like managing transboundary resources. But it is the differences between the two commissions that make



cooperation so valuable. The climate of the Orange-Senqu River Basin varies significantly from the temperate Lesotho Mountains, through dry grasslands and savannahs to the arid semi-desert Nama and Succulent Karoo regions. “The issue of climate change is one that they are dealing with now in southern Africa, and there is so much we can learn from those experiences,” says Philip Weller, ICPDR Executive Secretary.

Allocation of water, too, is an important issue for ORASECOM, and one that the countries are addressing successfully. “This part of the world has really managed to turn shared water practices into a vehicle for peaceful cooperation and integration,” says Horst Michael Vogel, Programme Leader for GTZ Transboundary Water Management in the Southern Africa Development Community. “All the countries in the region have realised that water is such a strategically important resource for everyone and that everyone has to get along.”

Sharing solutions. A second visit this July brought an ORASECOM delegation to the Danube Basin to discuss transboundary monitoring and river basin management. Several field trips were included as part of the visit: the group travelled to the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management to

discuss monitoring, and visited the monitoring station at Hainburg. They also went to the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute, so they had a chance to see activities in two Contracting Parties. The ICPDR has a lot of experience in joint water quality monitoring networks, which ORASECOM is eager to establish in their own basin.

The ICPDR’s experience in public participation could also help ORASECOM establish effective regional instruments in southern Africa. The success of the Danube Box has inspired ORASECOM to create a similar educational tool adapted to local conditions, and they are hoping to strike a business partnership with South African petrochemical giant SASOL.

A lasting partnership. The two commissions have agreed to an initial three-year period of cooperation. Fritz Holzwarth, Head of the German Delegation to the ICPDR, visited an ORASECOM Meeting in April. A Memorandum of Understanding has been proposed, and more visits are planned. A delegation from ORASECOM will attend the 12th Ordinary Meeting of the ICPDR in December.

“We view cooperation with the ICPDR as an opportunity to learn from their many years of experience and practice in water resource management on the Danube Basin,” says Lenka Thamae, Executive Secretary of ORASECOM.

Kirstie Shepherd is a freelance journalist living in Vienna and has called the Danube River Basin home since 2000.

The ICPDR hosted two Southern Africa basin commissions, ORASECOM and OKACOM, on study visits to the Danube River. Below, the Katse Dam, part of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, provides revenue to Lesotho by transferring water from the catchment of the Orange-Senqu River in Lesotho to meet the growing demand for water in the major industrial and population centres in South Africa. *Credit: Vogel/GTZ*





The Danube is on everybody's agenda

By July 31, the public consultation phase on the draft Danube River Basin Management Plan was closed, but the evaluation of the inputs and comments received will keep the ICPDR experts busy until the end of the year.

Public participation extends to all water users, to non-governmental organisations, such as local and national environmental groups, and to other stakeholders. Key organisations and citizens' groups likely to be affected by decisions need to be involved. The Second ICPDR Stakeholder Forum was held on 29-30 June in Bratislava under the ICPDR Presidency 2009 of Slovakia. This forum provided an opportunity to discuss the draft Danube River Basin Management. *Credit: GWP CEE/Mueller*



“Through the public participation process we were able to reach our stakeholders very effectively,” said Olga Srsnova, ICPDR President 2009 at the Stakeholder Forum. “Like pieces of a puzzle forming the whole picture, we are getting better results if we combine knowledge and experience.”

“Your Danube, your life – participate and make your stake!” With these words, the ICPDR invited the public to comment on the draft Danube River Basin Management Plan, and many individuals and organisations took their chance. Over 50 individuals filled out the online questionnaire, ten stakeholders sent in-depth comments on different aspects of the draft plan via email and over 70 people participated at the Second ICPDR Stakeholder Forum held in Bratislava at the end of June.

Valuable concerns, criticisms, suggestions and comments have been collected and handed over to the ICPDR Expert Groups working on the plan. The experts will now carefully review each comment: some suggestions might already be reflected in the final Danube River Basin Management Plan (see article on page 22), others might be taken into account in the next implementation cycle. For all ideas not considered, an explanation will be formulated and circulated in a ‘Response Paper’ by the end of the year.

Raising concerns. About 80% of the persons who completed the questionnaire would be willing to pay more for good water treatment facilities if the costs were shared by all water users. Also, a ban on phosphate containing laundry detergents would be supported by 80% of the persons. Remarkably, nearly 90% of the respondents support the recreation of wetlands even if it means that some individual properties may no longer be able to be used as agricultural land.

Many issues were brought up during the Stakeholder Forum, such as the clear signal for an intensified dialogue with the agriculture sector, as the impact of agricultural practices on water quality and quantity is not fully taken into account in the current plan. The question was also raised of what the ICPDR

is doing to ensure that the provisions of the EU Water Framework Directive are respected in new infrastructure projects all along the Danube. The public made its stake – it is now the ICPDR’s turn to develop and provide answers by the end of the year, when the Danube River Basin Management Plan will be finalised.

Encouraging all voices to be heard. The past months of intensified dialogue have proven to be effective despite the fact that the main stakeholder groups are already actively involved as accredited observers in the ICPDR working structures. Through this dialogue, organisations outside the regular reach were also able to be included. And this is beneficial for the Danube and its tributaries, as underlined by Ania Grobicki, Executive Secretary of Global Water Partnership, quoting an African proverb: “If you would like to go fast, go alone. If you would like to go far, go together.”

Jasmine Bachmann works on public participation in the ICPDR Secretariat, and is the Executive Editor of Danube Watch.

Looking into the future of the Black Sea

A new monitoring and assessment project will store, analyse, visualise and disseminate information on past, present and future states of the Black Sea Basin to assess and predict its sustainability and vulnerability.



The Black Sea is the world's most isolated sea – connected to the oceans via the Mediterranean Sea through the Bosphorus, Dardanelle and Gibraltar straits, and linked with the Sea of Azov in the northeast through the Kerch Strait. The Black Sea also suffers from severe environmental, social and economic problems. The new enviroGRIDS project addresses these issues by bringing to the region several emerging information technologies that are revolutionising the way we observe our planet.

The state-of-the-art enviroGRIDS project will assist governments to monitor and assess environmental trends in the Black Sea catchment. Launched in April, the project answers a call by the European Commission for capacity building for the development of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), which links existing and planned observation systems around the world, allowing decision makers to access an extraordinary range of information.

Analysing and visualising environmental trends. The system will be looking at the entire catchment area, and technical partners will use a hydrology tool called the Soil and Water Assessment Tool, a complementary tool to the MONERIS system used by the ICPDR. “The idea is not to replace the existing tools,” says Anthony Lehmann, Project Coordinator for enviroGRIDS, “but we will be able to compare and hopefully bring some new information to what you already have in the Danube.”

A gap analysis on earth observation systems in the region will identify specific areas where the majority of efforts are needed. The ICPDR, as one of enviroGRIDS partners, will perform and supervise the analysis, and recommendations from the analysis should complement the existing geographical information systems of the ICPDR.

To achieve its task, enviroGRIDS will take advantage of the most powerful computer network in the world, a computer grid assembled by the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), one of enviro-

GRIDS’ partners. This grid will become one of the integral systems of GEOSS.

Building sustainable development in the region. In addition to modelling the catchment and contributing to GEOSS, the third main axis of the project is capacity building. The project aims to build significant local, national and regional capacity on observation systems to better exchange knowledge and information. As partners, the ICPDR and the Black Sea Commission (BSC) will help involve decision and policy-makers and disseminate project results. “An important part of the process was to get the ICPDR and the BSC involved,” says Lehmann. “The ICPDR has a well-developed network of communication and rather than build something new, it makes sense to use existing prominent institutions.”

The Black Sea’s catchment area is large, with a total surface of around 2 million sq km, five times the surface of the Black Sea itself. The environmental vulnerability of the Black Sea region is well known, and the new system will assist countries to make decisions on the region’s future. *Credit: Mello*



In addition, the know-how and results will be made available outside the Black Sea Basin. “The ICPDR and its experience can serve as a model for how catchments are monitored and modelled,” says Lehmann. “The ICPDR is the best example in the region for other big rivers to follow.”

Kirstie Shepherd is a freelance journalist living in Vienna and has called the Danube River Basin home since 2000.

A new plan for water management – for 2015 and beyond

The first ever management plan for the Danube River Basin has been drafted, describing the significant pressures that affect the region and some real solutions to meet the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive in 2015 and for the years to come.



The Danube River Basin Management Plan gives the first-ever detailed basin-wide picture of how pressures in the region will be addressed. *Credit: Popp*

It's been nine years in the making, but a management plan for the Danube and its tributaries demonstrates an innovative approach for basin-wide issues by offering up answers to the pressures and impacts on water status in the region in the form of a Joint Programme of Measures – for some 20,000 river kilometres. The Danube River Basin Management Plan, a draft of which was completed this May, is a result of fifteen contracting parties focusing their efforts to achieve shared goals.

The ICPDR has been working toward this Plan since the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) came into force in 2000. The WFD requires all EU Member States to ensure the 'good status' of all surface and ground waters by 2015. In addition, the WFD insists on the development of international river basin management plans to assist in reaching those goals.

While obligatory for all EU Member States, all other Danube countries committed themselves to implementing the Directive, and the ICPDR was made the



facilitating platform, with meeting the goals of the WFD its highest priority.

Back to river units. The first step toward drafting the plan was the production of the Danube Basin Analysis 2004. The first comprehensive analysis of the entire river basin, the DBA looked at characterisation, impacts of human activities and economic aspects of water uses in the Danube Basin, and described which water bodies are at risk of failing the WFD environmental objectives by 2015. Furthermore, the Danube Basin Analysis enabled the identification of four significant water management issues that can directly or indirectly affect the quality of surface and ground-water bodies:

- **pollution by organic substances**
- **pollution by nutrients**
- **pollution by hazardous substances**
- **pressures from hydromorphological alterations.**

Addressing transboundary issues. The Danube River Basin Management Plan provides a description of each of the significant pressures in the basin corresponding to each significant water management issue, and responds to each with visions and management objectives.

“This is a major outcome, as it gives a detailed basin-wide picture for the first time of the

most urgent management issues in detail,” says Marieke van Nood of the European Commission Environment Directorate-General, and Co-chair of the ICPDR’s River Basin Management Expert Group. “But it also identifies areas where more work is needed in the future, such as sediments.”

Though the draft plan includes preliminary data only, it presents results of the water status assessment, and whether or not the WFD objectives of ‘good status/potential’ will be met for specific water bodies. “Data

collection was a huge task for all involved and the Danube countries worked hard to deliver the best data available,” says Knut Beyer of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, and Co-chair of the ICPDR’s River Basin Management Expert Group. “But serious gaps still exist.”

The management plan also includes an overview of monitoring networks, a final designation of Heavily Modified Water Bodies, exemptions applied under WFD article 4(4) & 4(5), an economic analysis of water uses, an inventory of protected areas and a brief overview of water quantity and climate change issues.

A plan for the whole basin. The entire process has reflected the joint cooperation from all Danube countries, as well as the input from stakeholders across the whole river basin. Public participation has been built into every stage of development, and a draft of the management plan was available for public consultation since May until the end of July 2009.

“One of the commonly stressed necessities with regard to water management is that people have to think ‘outside the water box’, taking into account a broad range of views and interests while implementing ‘Integrated Water Resource Management’,” says Raimund Mair of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management. “It is essential to gain the thinking and contributions of representatives from various sectors with different backgrounds already during the drafting process of the plan.”

To encourage face-to face input, the ICPDR held its Second Stakeholder Conference in Bratislava in June, bringing together a broad spectrum of stakeholders, and the comments will be integrated in the final Plan where appropriate (see article on page 20).

Putting the plan into action. With the first draft of the management plan complete, the ICPDR’s River Basin Management Expert Group will continue to revise it until December. At that time, the final version will go before the Heads of Delegation to the ICPDR for approval at the 12th Ordinary Meeting. Once approved, the Danube River Basin Management Plan with its Joint Programme of Measures will go into effect. A Ministerial Meeting on the plan will be held in February 2010, and all the Danube countries will start work on making the plan a reality.

For more information, please visit: www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/river_basin_management.htm

Kirstie Shepherd is a freelance journalist living in Vienna and has called the Danube River Basin home since 2000.

The River Basin Management Expert Group was created to develop the strategy, but completion of the management plan was possible only through the strong support of all the Expert Groups, Task Groups and Heads of Delegation of the ICPDR.

Collaboration between cities and regions generates the new European Danube region

The Danube is a symbol for the future of international understanding and support in Europe. A new organisational structure is creating a development area of local and regional partnership from the Black Forest to the Black Sea

“The Danube as sine qua non Europas.” The Hungarian writer Péter Esterházy’s statement is not only a historical truth, but also reflects the current political development: with Romania and Bulgaria, six Danube countries have joined the EU since 2007, and Croatia and Serbia also see their future in the European Community. This creates a new European axis from the Black Forest to the Black Sea, uniting many diverse peoples and cultures.

Linking the region. The Europe of the future is a Europe of cities and regions. Nothing embodies this principle of European constitutional politics better than the ever-closer cooperation and partnership of our cities and regions along the Danube. Joint projects in culture, science, education, ecology and business have been and are being developed. Partnerships and personal friendships are being established, and firm structures that connect our cities and regions are being created.

The ever-closer cooperation and partnership of our cities and regions along the Danube is producing joint projects in culture, science, education, ecology and business. *Credit: Mello*



The next step is to give the growing local and regional cooperation along the Danube a solid organisational structure. Therefore, the Council of the Danube Cities at the Fourth European Conference of Danube Cities and Regions was founded on 11 June 2009 in Budapest. The Council will be a powerful voice at European institutions, and make a concrete contribution to establishing an integrated European Danube region.

A few days after, on 19 June this year, the European Council instructed the EU Commission to develop a ‘Danube Strategy’ by the end of 2010. This EU decision has spurred on an ambitious project: the creation of a common, politically, economically and culturally linked development area along the Danube, a European Danube region from the Black Forest to the Black Sea.

The history, present and future on the Danube is most immediately experienced in cities and regions. Think of Ulm with its rich history emerging along the Danube. Three hundred years ago, thousands of people – the Danube Swabians – headed down the river on the ‘Ulmer Schachtel’ to southern Hungary, to the Banat, to the Batschka, in the hope of finding a new home; and over the centuries they produced fertile landscapes and settled down to live. That is history. Many people today have a personal relationship to the regions and countries along the Danube because of their family background – whether they are Danube Swabians or have other migration backgrounds – and are now rediscovering their personal Danube history.

Shared support. Cooperation is the key, as renewed in the final declaration of the recent European Conference of Danube Cities and Regions in Budapest: “The basic principles of our common development are democracy, tolerance, humanism, respect for religious freedom and the unconditional will to refrain from any form of nationalism and to oppose extremism.”

Only through these values is a European identity possible. And where else can a European identity develop, if not along the Danube?

Ivo Gönner is the Lord Mayor of Ulm, and President of the Council of the Danube Cities and Regions.

Peter Langer is the Director of the Ulm Danube Office, and Speaker of the Council of the Danube Cities and Regions.



Protecting the joint heritage of Europe

A new network of national parks, biosphere reserves, special protected areas, special zoological reserves and protected landscape areas is providing a new quality in conservation through international cooperation.

The enlargement of the European Union has created a new framework for political and societal cooperation along the Danube. The dynamic economic development and the subsequent massive increase in traffic along the Danube corridor are exerting pressure on the last remaining natural wetlands and river stretches. At the same time, EU directives like NATURA 2000 and Water Framework Directive provide common regulative policies for enhanced nature conservation at a transnational level. The preservation of our shared natural heritage on the Danube is a common European task, now more than ever.

Protected Areas, such as the Nature Reserve Gornje Podunavlje, act as stepping stones in the network of habitats and, therefore, play an important role in the implementation of NATURA 2000. *Credit: Nature Reserve Gornje Podunavlje.*

Building on already existing bilateral cooperation, eight individual Danube Protected Areas signed a declaration in 2007 which aimed to create a network of protected areas (see Danube Watch 2/2007). This led to the joint elaboration and submission of the project DANUBEPARKS within the framework of the EU South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme. From a total of 821 applications, DANUBEPARKS was one of only 40 projects which were selected and approved. With a budget of 2.7M and duration of three years, DANUBEPARKS should erect structures for a sustained and intense collaboration within the framework of the Danube River Network of Protected Areas, and concrete transnational projects should begin to be implemented. On 9 June 2009, DANUBEPARKS was officially christened with the signing of the “Declaration of Vienna”.

“Because the Danube is a cohesive ecosystem it is especially important to work together on a transnational basis on all matters having to do with habitat management and conservation,” says Carl Manzano, Donau-Auen National Park Director. “In fact, this is the only way to protect and sustain our shared natural heritage.”

A partnership for conservation. With the Donau-Auen National Park acting as lead partner, a total of

DANUBEPARKS is a permanent platform for know-how and experience transfer among the Danube Protected Areas. It will assist in the development and formulation of shared transnational strategies and concepts and in the implementation of cross-border and transnational revitalisation and conservation projects.

Conservation of species. Existing nature reserves today already play a vital role in conservation on the Danube. Yet animals and plants do not obey national boundaries when seeking out suitable habitats. This is why cross-border species conservation projects are a top DANUBEPARKS priority.

The Danube sturgeons and the White-tailed Eagle are symbols of the urgent need for transnational species protection programmes in the Danube region. For successful spawning, the migratory sturgeon requires a barrier-free river flow upstream from the Black Sea to Vienna. Due to the construction of power plants on the middle reach of the Danube, the continuous flow so vital to the migratory sturgeon has been interrupted.

“Local conservation measures alone are not enough for the maintenance of biodiversity in the Danube region,” says Grigore Baboianu, Governor of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve in Romania. “What is really

The DANUBEPARKS programme will assist in the development and formulation of shared transnational strategies and concepts and in the implementation of cross-border and transnational revitalisation and conservation projects.
Credit: DANUBEPARKS.



12 Protection Areas and National Parks in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia are participating as project partners in the implementation of the DANUBEPARKS project.

The DANUBEPARKS project includes seven concrete work packages: development and management of the network; floodplain management; river morphology and revitalisation; conservation of species; monitoring and NATURA 2000; nature tourism and communications, marketing and public relations.

necessary for the protection of endangered species are internationally-coordinated conservation endeavours and cross-border efforts. DANUBEPARKS will be able to make a significant contribution.”

Thanks to its expansive range, the presence of the majestic White-tailed Eagle, the largest bird of prey on the Danube, is a sign of connected and contiguous riverine habitats. The implementation of a transnational conservation strategy is required to develop the Danube as a central habitat for the White-tailed Eagle in South East and Central Europe.



Partner of the Danube River Network of Protected Areas

1	Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve	7	Duna-Drava National Park
2	Srebarna Nature Reserve	8	Duna-Ipoly National Park
3	Kalimok-Brushlen Protected Site	9	Danube Flood Plain Protected Landscape Area
4	Persina Nature Park	10	Zahorie Protected Landscape Area
5	Special Nature Reserve Gornje Podunavlje	11	Donau-Auen National Park
6	Nature Park Kopački Rit	12	Danube Flood Plain Restoration Area Neuburg-Ingolstadt



Speaking with one voice on important issues. An additional priority for project partners is the development of nature tourism in the Protected Areas. The creation and realisation of joint visitor concepts and programmes within the framework of DANUBE-PARKS should help to strengthen each individual area administration and serve to anchor the protected area more firmly in its own region.

“Especially important is the exchange of ideas and experiences among the Protected Areas,” says Eszter Buchert, Deputy Director of the Duna-Drava National Park. “We all are facing similar problems and can thus learn from each other. I am particularly excited about developing and implementing joint activities and ideas for nature tourism.”

At the same time, collaboration at a transnational level should expand the horizons of each individual

DECLARATION OF VIENNA

The substantial preparatory work of recent years was rewarded in June 2009 with the foundation of DANUBE-PARKS through the signing of the 'Declaration of Vienna'. The Danube River Network of Protected Areas will guarantee an ongoing collaboration among Protected Areas along the Danube as well as the realisation of transnational projects addressing diverse conservation issues. A budget of € 2.7M will support this pilot project over the next three years.

protected area regarding management tasks and cement their role in conservation tasks at a national level. DANUBE-PARKS should enable the Danube Network Protected Areas to speak with one voice on behalf of the shared natural heritage of the Danube.

For more information, please visit: www.danubeparks.org.

Georg Frank is the Project Manager DANUBE-PARKS.

The Danube River is home to a rich biodiversity, with protected areas playing an essential role in the protection of that biodiversity. But for many species even large protected areas are not big enough for their protection, especially for organisms with large territories and migratory species, hence the need for transnational conservation measures.
Credit: Baumgartner

← The Network of Protected Areas within the Danube River Basin expands cooperation, coordination and consultation and strengthens links between 12 national parks and protected areas in 8 Danube countries. Fold out to see a map of this network.

ICPDR MEETINGS

For final dates, please consult the ICPDR calendar, available at www.icpdr.org.

14-15/9/2009	SARAJEVO, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
	PROGRAMME AND MEASURES EXPERT GROUP
15-16/9/2009	BUCHAREST, ROMANIA
	TASK GROUP ON GROUNDWATER
17-18/9/2009	VIENNA, AUSTRIA
	TISZA GROUP
8-9/10/2009	BUCHAREST, ROMANIA
	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION EXPERT GROUP
12-13/10/2009	TO BE DETERMINED
	MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT EG
29-30/10/2009	TO BE DETERMINED
	RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT EXPERT GROUP
10-11/12/2009	VIENNA, AUSTRIA
	ICPDR ORDINARY MEETING

DW 03/09 UPCOMING ISSUE

MINISTERIAL MEETING 2010

BUSINESS AND NATURE: ONE EUROPE - MORE NATURE

PLANNED BIOSPHERE RESERVE ON MURA AND DRAVA

RESULTS FROM THE TWINNING PROJECT IN CROATIA