

---

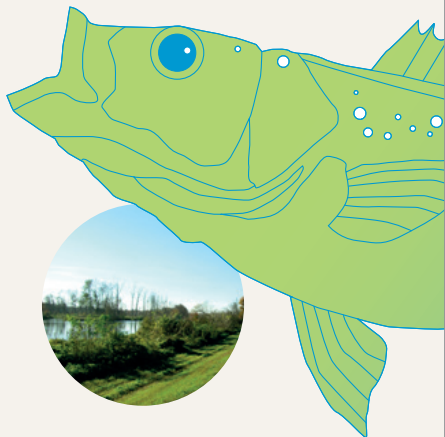
**ICPDR** IKSD

International Commission  
for the Protection  
of the Danube River

Internationale Kommission  
zum Schutz der Donau

# From Convention to Action – 25 Years of the ICPDR

---



# The Flow of Cooperation

## A history of the ICPDR

There is a long history of transboundary cooperation in the Danube Basin, and scholars of international law often identify the Danube Basin as the region where international organisations first evolved.

### Did you know?

The Danube passes through several large cities including four national capitals: Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest and Belgrade.



1994

29 JUNE  
Danube River Protection Convention (DRPC) is signed by eleven of the Danube Riparian States and the European Community

1995

1 JANUARY  
Austria achieves accession to the European Union

1996

TransNational Monitoring Network (TNMN) starts

1997

Accident Emergency Warning System (AEWS) first comes into operation

1998

22 OCTOBER  
Danube River Protection Convention (DRPC) comes into force

1999

ICPDR Secretariat is established at the UN in Vienna; ICPDR Expert Groups start regular meetings

2000

23 OCTOBER  
EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) is adopted

1616

Austro-Turkish treaty grants navigation rights to Austrians

1856

Treaty of Paris establishes first international body with powers on the Danube

1948

The Danube River Conference returns control to the Danube countries

1985

Bucharest Declaration

1989

The fall of the Iron Curtain

1991

Environmental Programme for the Danube River Basin

1994

Danube River Protection Convention is signed, creating the ICPDR

2008

All major Danube countries are contracting parties to the ICPDR

### Early river agreements

As early as 1616, the Danube was a keystone in negotiating peace, when an Austro-Turkish treaty signed in Belgrade granted Austrians the right to navigate the middle and lower Danube.

The 1856 Treaty of Paris, settling the Crimean War, created the first – and for many years the only – international body with significant powers on the Danube. The European Commission of the Danube, made up of Danube countries along with major shipping powers such as Great Britain and France, guaranteed freedom of commerce and navigation along the Danube River for all European countries.

### Bringing the basin together

After World War II, new East-West political alliances called for a new approach in river management. The Danube River Conference was held in Belgrade in 1948, and shifted control of navigation from the non-river powers to the exclusive control of each country.

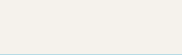
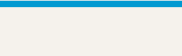
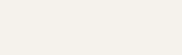
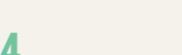
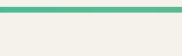
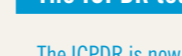
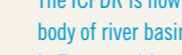
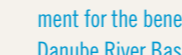
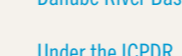
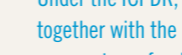
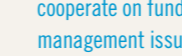
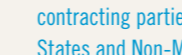
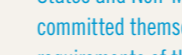
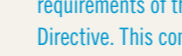
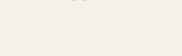
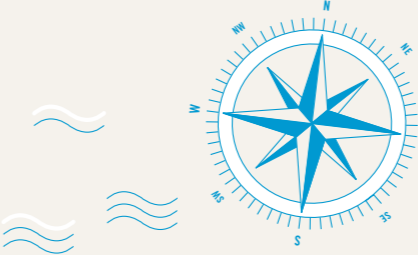
Recognising the increasing degradation of water quality, the eight (at that time) countries along the Danube River signed the Declaration of the Danube Countries to Cooperate on Questions Concerning the Water Management of the Danube (Bucharest Declaration) in 1985.

The East-West political division of the Cold War cut the Danube Basin in two and severely constrained information sharing and transnational data exchange. In 1989, the fall of the Iron Curtain transformed geopolitical conditions on a global scale with countries and frontiers reshaping across Europe.

### A legal framework

In 1991, the countries created the Environmental Programme for the Danube River Basin to support national actions to protect the river basin. Under the programme, countries agreed to adopt a shared environmental monitoring system, address liability for cross-border pollution, protect wetland habitats and conserve areas of ecological importance.

The Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River (Danube River Protection Convention) was signed on June 29, 1994 in Sofia, Bulgaria, by eleven of the Danube Riparian States – Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine, as well as the European Community. Serbia, then in union with Montenegro, joined the Convention in 2003, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2005. After seceding from Serbia, Montenegro became the 15<sup>th</sup> ICPDR contracting party in 2008.



## Leading the region in water management

Since its creation, the ICPDR has brought together representatives from the highest ministerial levels, technical experts, and members of civil society and the scientific community to continuously improve the state of the Danube River Basin water bodies.

Experts guide the work of the ICPDR on:

- River Basin Management
- Pollution Control
- Water Quality
- Public Participation and Communication
- Information Management and Geographic Information Systems

Environmental protection is a community responsibility, and the active involvement of the public was one of the core principles of sustainable water management as acknowledged by the Danube River Protection Convention when it was signed in 1994.

To date, 24 organisations hold observer status – representing private industry and intergovernmental organisations – and through this status, cooperate actively with the ICPDR.

Through the Danube Declarations of 2004, 2010 and 2016, the Danube countries have continued to cooperate ever-more closely.

- Ensuring naturally balanced waters free from excess nutrients
- Preventing risks from toxic chemicals
- Preserving healthy and sustainable river systems
- Managing reduced damage from floods
- Safeguarding Danube resources for future generations.

The ongoing goal of the ICPDR is to implement the Danube River Protection Convention and make it a living tool to coordinate sustainable and equitable water management, including conservation, improvement and rational use of waters for the benefit of the Danube River Basin's countries and people for many years to come.



# The Faces of the River

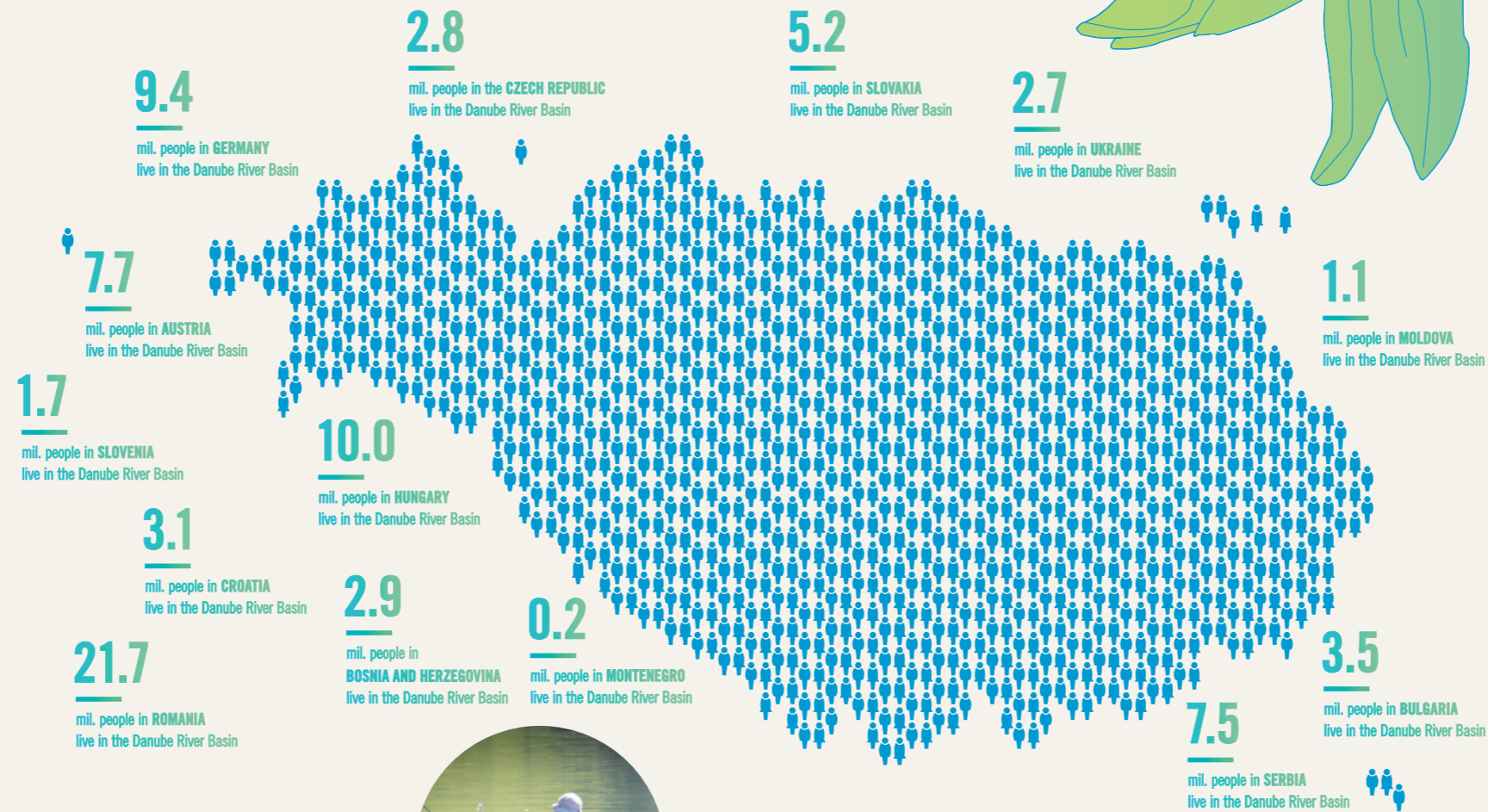
## Living and working in the Danube River Basin

People have been living along the Danube and its tributaries since even the earliest human settlements – attracted by the region’s rich diversity of plants and animals, fertile land and strategic geographic position. Originating over 7,500 years ago, the Vinča culture existed along the Danube River even predating civilisations in Mesopotamia or Egypt. Many of its innovations – in writing, farming and copper metallurgy – are some of the earliest examples of technological advancements, not just in Europe but in the world.

Later, the Danube formed the northern border of the Roman Empire, and was used as a transport route for troops as well as supplies for settlements downstream.

Each group of people who have come to the Danube Basin have made an impact on the region through their traditions, beliefs and knowledge. At the same time, they have also been influenced by the cultures already living in the area, and the river itself has inspired a wide range of artists.

Today, over 80 million people in 19 countries call the Danube River Basin home, and their lives are connected through their dependence on the waters and resources of the region.



### Human uses of the Danube

- Drinking water
- Energy
- Transport
- Industry
- Agriculture
- Fisheries
- Tourism
- Recreation



### Human impact on the river's status

However, the actions of people in the region affect the status of the river and its ecosystems, leading to serious problems for water quality and quantity, as well as a critical loss of biodiversity.

Inadequately treated wastewater ends up in the Danube, putting the drinking water supply of millions of people at risk, and leading to problems for irrigation, industry and fishing.

Excessive amounts of nutrients enter the river from agricultural fertilisers, thus devastating fish stocks and clogging the water with algal blooms. Industrial accidents or floods flush hazardous and toxic substances directly into water bodies.

Changes to the river's structure for navigation, hydropower or flood defence can reduce flow rates and/or interrupt natural sediment transport as well as the migration routes of animals.

### Shared resources mean shared responsibility

Everyone shares responsibility for the river. The Danube countries – along with the EU – are working together under the ICPDR to help restore the waters of the basin and safeguard them for future generations.

### Did you know?

One of the very earliest forms of writing (some historians even claim the first) anywhere in the world was created along the Danube River by the Vinča culture, and included about 700 characters and symbols.

### Ways to get involved

Everyone has a say. Public participation programmes allow all of the Danube Basin's residents to make their voices heard and get involved for their waters.

- Danube Day
- Danube Art Master
- Danube Box
- Danube Watch
- Information events
- Public consultation
- Social media

For centuries the Danube River has played a role in the political, cultural and socio-economic development of the region. This shared resource has created a history of cooperation that inspires others around the world.

2001

First Joint Danube Survey (JDS) is carried out; Danube Watch magazine is relaunched

2002

ICPDR's Flood Protection Expert Group (FP EG) is established

2003

Serbia joins the Danube River Protection Convention

2004

1<sup>st</sup> Danube Day is held on 29 June; 1<sup>st</sup> Danube Basin Analysis adopted; Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia join the EU

2005

Bosnia & Herzegovina joins the Danube River Protection Convention

2006

ICPDR Expert Groups on Public Participation and Information Management & GIS are established; education toolkit Danube Box is launched

2007

EU Floods Directive (FD) is adopted; "Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the DRB" concludes; ICPDR wins Thies International Riverprize



# Committed to the future of the Danube

## The work of the ICPDR to face the region's challenges

The goal of the ICPDR is to achieve a cleaner, healthier and safer Danube River for all citizens to enjoy.

- Cleaner waters – less pollution from settlements, industry and agriculture
- Healthier waters – better ecosystems for aquatic plants & animals
- Safer waters – with less damage from floods

### Tackling pressures together

As a platform for cooperation, the ICPDR is constantly improving the tools used to manage environmental issues in the Danube River Basin.

### Assessing the status of the river

Water quality in the Danube has improved over the years, but there is still much work to be done to meet the region's goals for water status. To assess trends in water quality, the ICPDR oversees the **Trans-National Monitoring Network (TNMN)**. The network carefully monitors physical, chemical and biological conditions in

the Danube and its tributaries, and provides an overview of pollution levels as well as long term trends for water quality in the basin. It is based on national monitoring programmes and, as of 2017, includes 109 monitoring stations across the Danube and its tributaries.

### Did you know?

It is generally safe to swim in the Danube, though local pollution hot spots downstream of big cities and the mouths of polluted tributaries should be avoided.

## Healthier

habitats and ecosystems for aquatic plants and animals

### The world's biggest river expedition

As a basis for sound decision-making, Danube countries need high quality and comparable data. The **Joint Danube Survey (JDS)** collects and analyses samples taken from the river to improve the validity and comparability of water quality data received from its regular monitoring programme, the **TransNational Monitoring Network**. The survey is always a huge undertaking,

### Guarding against flood damage

Although floods are natural events and part of the water cycle, they cause massive damage and risk to human lives. The ICPDR has made flood prevention a priority from its very beginnings, and facilitates the implementation of the **EU Floods Directive**. The **Danube Flood Risk Management Plan**, adopted in 2016, addresses all phases of the flood risk management cycle and focuses particularly on prevention (preventing

### Cross-border solidarity

Efficient cooperation with all neighbouring countries, including coordinating joint actions on transboundary rivers during flood and ice defence, is not only essential to prevent floods but also to implement **The Solidarity Principle**. Countries should

involving several research ships, dozens of scientists and an intense, six-week sampling tour along the Danube and major tributaries. So far, surveys have been carried out in 2001, 2007, 2013, and 2019. The results of the survey are included in each cycle of the **Danube River Basin Management Plan**, and help Danube countries to select the right measures to solve problems in the basin.

damage caused by floods by avoiding construction of houses and industries in present and future flood-prone areas or by adapting future developments to the risk of flooding), protection (by taking measures to reduce the likelihood of floods or the impact of floods in a specific location such as restoring flood plains and wetlands) and preparedness (providing instructions to the public on what to do in the event of flooding).

share responsibilities fairly when measures are jointly decided for the common benefit, and measures should not be applied when their extent or impact would significantly increase flood risks in the countries upstream or downstream.

## Cleaner

reduced pollution from settlements, industry and agriculture

## Safer

with less damage from floods

### Alerting downstream neighbours

Accidents can happen in the blink of an eye. But thanks to an upgraded **Accident Emergency Warning System (AEWS)**, messages about those accidents can be sent just as quickly. The AEWS is activated whenever there is a risk of transboundary water pollution, or threshold danger levels of hazardous substances are exceeded.

### Achieving basin-wide goals

In a mere 25 years, the ICPDR has reached many milestones on its path to achieving the targets for cleaner, healthier and safer waters.

- Organic emissions have been cut to half the levels of 2005
- Nutrient pollution from phosphorus has been cut by 30%
- Nitrogen emissions have been cut by 10%

### Did you know?

The Danube River Basin has been the site of many disastrous floods in the past – recent massive floods occurred in 2002, 2006, 2010, 2013 and 2014.

The work of the Danube countries and the ICPDR continues to bring together all stakeholders in the region to find a balance between the needs of the people living in the basin, and the needs of the river itself.

2008

Montenegro becomes the 15<sup>th</sup> ICPDR contracting party after seceding from Serbia

2009

First **Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP)** is adopted by the ICPDR

2010

16 FEBRUARY **2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Meeting** is held; **Flood action plans** for the 17 sub-basins in the Danube catchment area get adopted

2011

Preliminary **Flood Risk Assessment (PDFRA)** Report is completed; **Integrated Tisza River Basin Management Plan** is approved

2012

ICPDR **Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change** is published

20



# Europe's Lifeline

## The most international river in the world

From the Black Forest to the Black Sea, the Danube is a vital lifeline that flows through the heart of Europe. Covering more than 800,000 km<sup>2</sup> or 10% of continental Europe, the Danube River Basin draws water from 19 countries – making it the most international river basin in the world.

### The Danube River

Source: **Donaueschingen, Germany**  
 Length: **2,860 km**  
 Width: **up to 1.5 km**  
 Depth: **1–8 m**  
 Average discharge: **7,000 m<sup>3</sup>/s**

### The Waters of the Danube Basin

The Danube gathers the waters of more than 300 tributaries.

The main tributaries: **Inn, Morava, Drava, Tisza, Sava, Iskar, Siret, Prut**

### Drava Sub-basin

The Drava River is the fourth largest and fourth longest Danube tributary at 719 km in length, and connects the Alps to the Danube and the Black Sea. The Drava flows through Austria, Slovenia and Croatia, where it forms the border between Croatia and Hungary before heading back into Croatia again to meet the Danube near Osijek. The Drava has been considerably regulated with dams constructed to generate hydro-electricity and channels dredged to direct its flow. Nevertheless, natural habitats along the middle and lower reaches host unique assemblages of flora and fauna, and several endemic species.

### Did you know?

The large retention areas of the Sava are some of the most effective flood control systems in Europe.

### Sava Sub-basin

The Sava contributes almost 25% to the Danube's total discharge where the two rivers meet in Belgrade, and has the largest discharge of water to the Danube of any tributary, with about 1,564 m<sup>3</sup>/s. It is also the second largest sub-basin by catchment area at 95,419 km<sup>2</sup>.

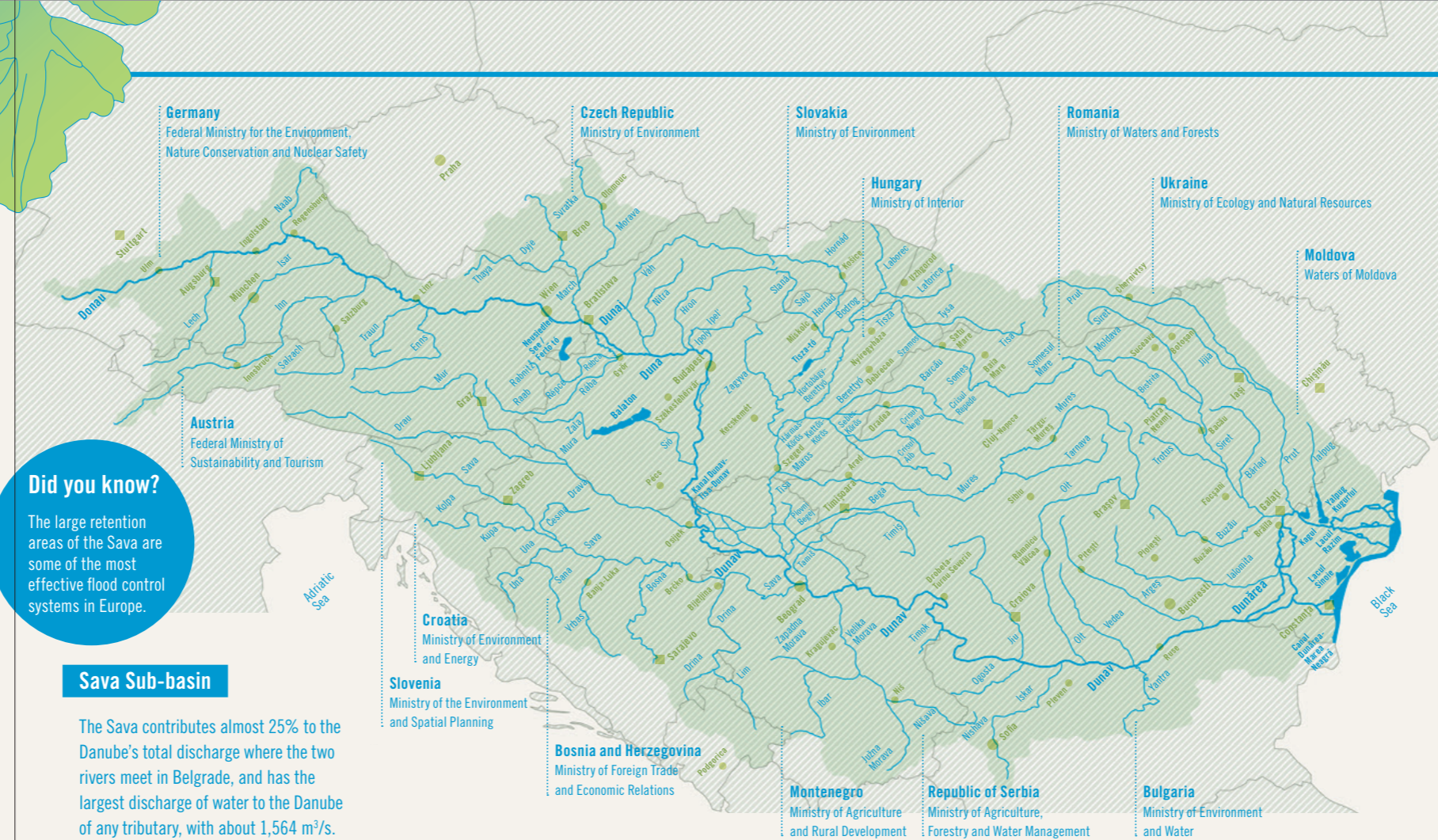
The river rises in the mountains of western Slovenia, and passes through the lowlands of Croatia before forming the border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Continuing through Serbia, it reaches its confluence with the Danube in Belgrade.

The **International Sava River Basin Commission** was established in 2005 to promote regional cooperation throughout the Sava River Basin on issues related to navigation, economic development, comprehensive water management and environmental protection.

### Tisza Sub-basin

The Tisza is the longest tributary of the Danube (966 km) and the largest sub-basin, draining an area of 157,186 km<sup>2</sup>. Mountain streams, meandering rivers and diverse floodplains are characteristic of the Tisza River Basin. Five countries share this beautiful sub-basin – Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine – along with the prob-

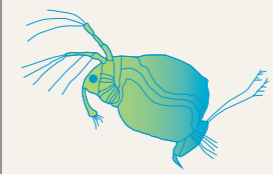
lems it faces. Frequent floods occur; landslides in the uplands have become more frequent due to deforestation; and accidental pollution and accidents at tailings dams (such as a cyanide spill at Aurul Baia Mare in January 2000) drastically affect wildlife and drinking water.



### Danube Delta

The Danube Delta is shared by Romania and Ukraine, and is Europe's largest remaining natural wetland, covering more than 5,500 km<sup>2</sup>. The unique ecosystems of the Danube Delta – a labyrinthine network of river channels, shallow bays and hundreds of lakes, interspersed with extensive marshes, reed-beds, islands and flood-plains – form a valuable natural buffer zone, filtering out pollutants from the Danube River, and helping to improve water quality in the vulnerable waters of the Black Sea.

It is one of the continent's most valuable habitats for wetland wildlife and bio-diversity, but its ecosystems are affected by changes upstream, such as pollution and the manipulation of water discharge, as well as by ecological changes in the delta itself.



### Black Sea

The Black Sea covers an area of 436,400 km<sup>2</sup>, although the catchment area is six times larger than its surface. It is supplied by a number of major rivers, such as the Danube, Dnieper, Rioni, Southern Bug and Dniester. The **Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution** (Bucharest Convention) was established in 1992 by the six Black Sea countries – Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine – in order to control land-based sources of pollution, stop the dumping of waste and support joint actions in the event of accidents (such as oil spills).

### Did you know?

The Black Sea is the world's most isolated sea, connected to the ocean only through the Istanbul Strait, a 35 km natural channel which is as little as 40 m deep in places.

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 agriculture, industry and cities – issues which are jointly addressed by the Danube Basin countries through the ICPDR.



13

ICPDR member Croatia joins the EU; JDS3 is carried out

2014

The Danube Basin Analysis Report is updated; Danube Day celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary

2015

2<sup>nd</sup> DRBMP and 1<sup>st</sup> Danube Flood Risk Management Plan (DFRMP) adopted

2016

ICPDR declares its three pillars of "cleaner, healthier and safer waters for everyone to enjoy" at the 3<sup>rd</sup> ICPDR Ministerial Meeting

2017

Severe ice events throughout the region trigger groundwork for the ICPDR comprehensive Ice Report

2018

Sturgeon Strategy and Update to the Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change are published

2019

ICPDR celebrates 25 Years of the DRPC; JDS4 is carried out