

Danube Declaration 2022

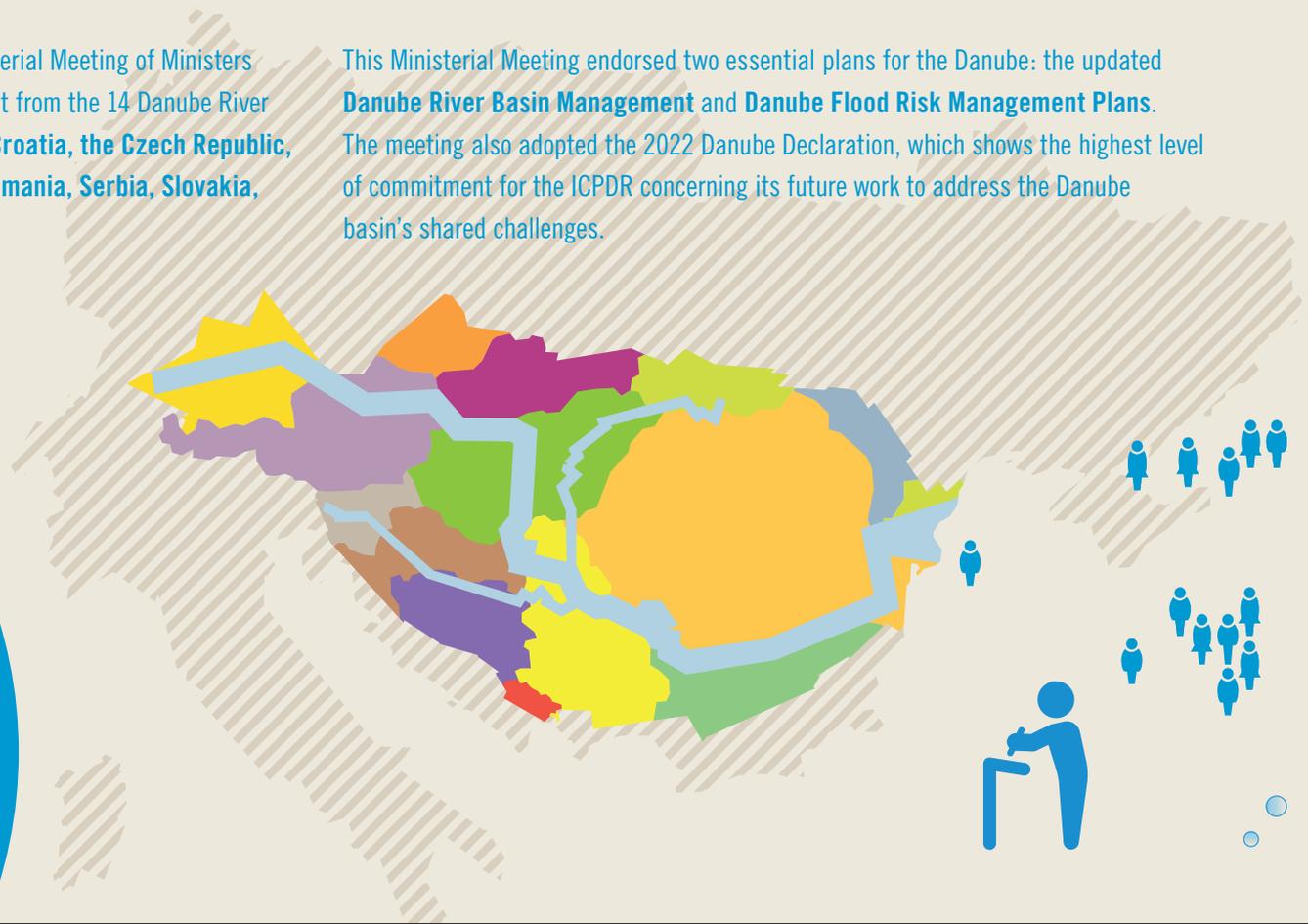
On 8 February 2022, in Vienna, the ICPDR convened its 4th Ministerial Meeting of Ministers and high-level representatives responsible for water management from the 14 Danube River Basin countries (**Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine**) as well as the **European Commission**.

This Ministerial Meeting endorsed two essential plans for the Danube: the updated **Danube River Basin Management** and **Danube Flood Risk Management Plans**.

The meeting also adopted the 2022 Danube Declaration, which shows the highest level of commitment for the ICPDR concerning its future work to address the Danube basin's shared challenges.

Danube Declaration – Let us explain!

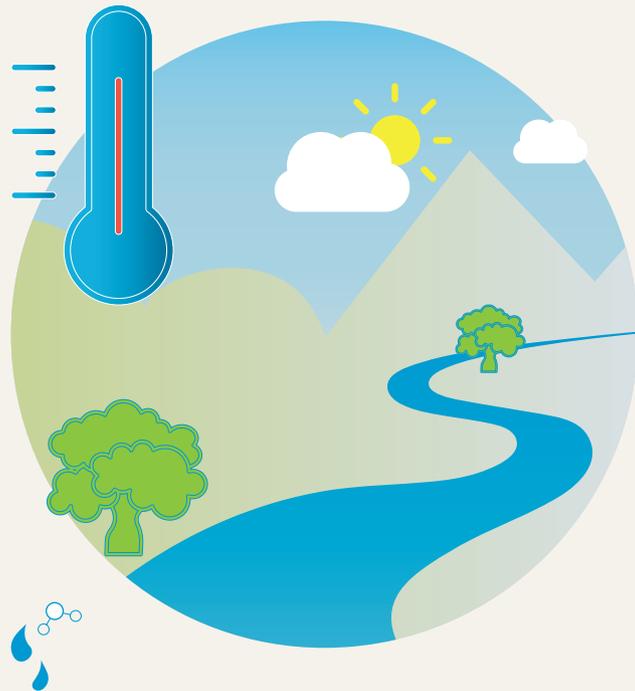
Every six years, a new and updated 'Danube Declaration' is signed and adopted by the ICPDR countries, updating, and extending the objectives and direction of travel for the Danube River Basin (DRB). It's a vital part of strengthening the ICPDR's goals for improving and maintaining the DRB.



The 2022 Danube Declaration outlines areas of concern and action on the path towards a cleaner, healthier, and safer Danube River by 2027.

Adapting to Climate Change

The “Effects of Climate Change” are a growing and [significant water management issue](#) for the Danube River Basin. These effects include drought, water scarcity, extreme weather conditions, and other impacts of a changing climate. Developing sustainable adaptation measures to improve the resilience of aquatic ecosystems and supporting water balance activities (in other words understanding where your water comes from and where it goes to) are needed. Improving cooperation and exchanging good practices on climate change adaptation measures are also essential.

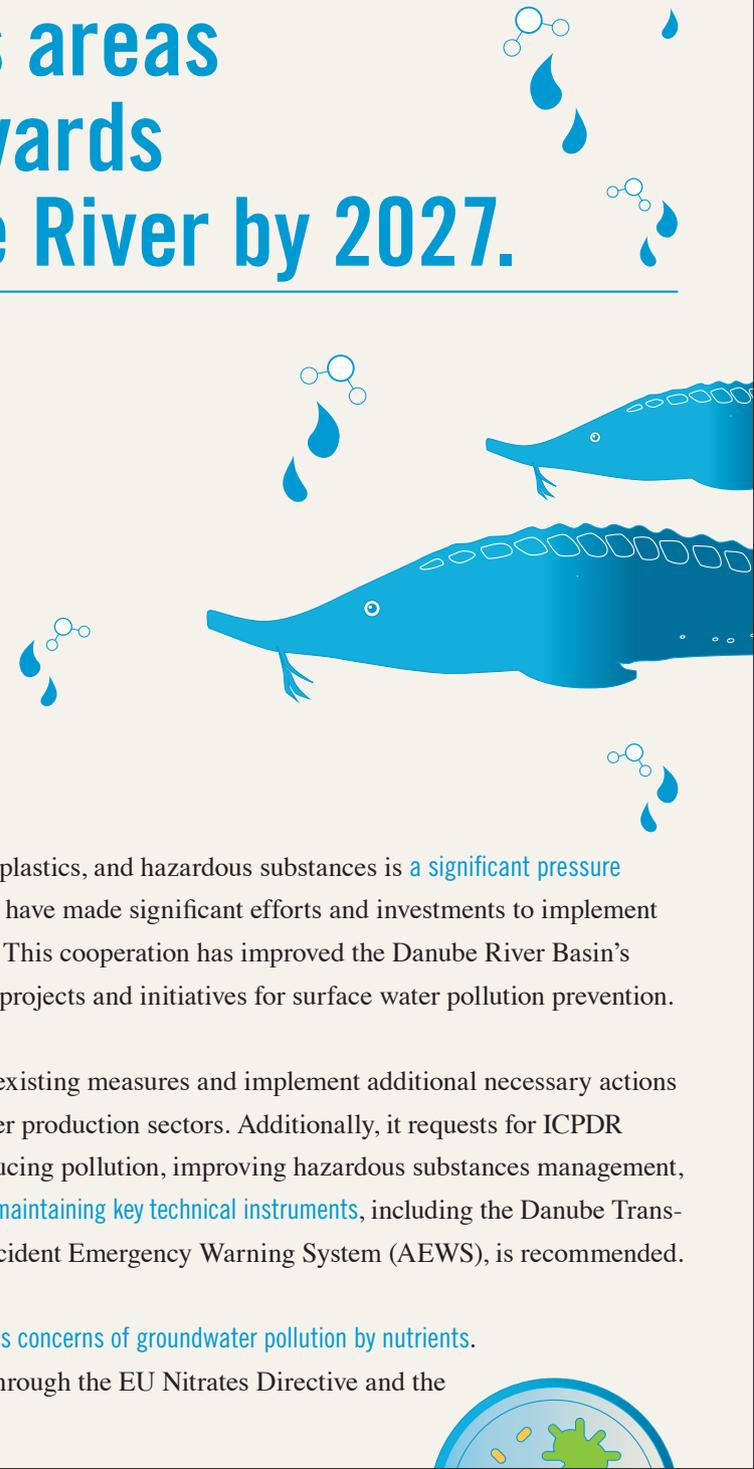


Addressing Pollution

[Pollution of surface waters](#) by organic materials, nutrients, plastics, and hazardous substances is [a significant pressure that needs to be addressed at basin-wide level](#). Yet countries have made significant efforts and investments to implement control and safety measures, greatly reducing pollution. This cooperation has improved the Danube River Basin’s waters through basin-wide monitoring, controlling, and projects and initiatives for surface water pollution prevention.

[The Declaration calls for the Danube River Basin](#) to maintain existing measures and implement additional necessary actions for surface water, industry, mining, agriculture, and other production sectors. Additionally, it requests for ICPDR countries to implement policy recommendations on reducing pollution, improving hazardous substances management, and the safety of tailings management facilities. Lastly, [maintaining key technical instruments](#), including the Danube Transnational Monitoring Network (TNMN) and Danube Accident Emergency Warning System (AEWS), is recommended.

In addition to surface waters, [the Declaration also addresses concerns of groundwater pollution by nutrients](#). Measures aimed at prevention should be implemented through the EU Nitrates Directive and the [EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive](#).



Ecosystems

Groundwater extraction and hydropower and their impacts on ecosystems remain a complex focus of the Danube Declaration.

The importance of hydromorphological alterations of freshwater ecosystems in the Danube River Basin from flood protection infrastructure, hydropower, navigation, agriculture, and water supply are highlighted. The main achievements in addressing these pressures, such as numerous hydromorphological measures implemented to improve conditions in 2009–2021 and several basin-wide collaboration projects, have helped make the Danube River Basin's waters healthier.

The upgrades of databases on hydromorphological alterations and the improvement of methodologies that can help assess pressures are encouraged. Other recommendations include restoration, protection, and mitigation measures for habitats, river continuity, and ecological migration corridors across borders. Further flood and drought mitigation, nature conservation, hydromorphological measures, and effectiveness monitoring are also suggested.

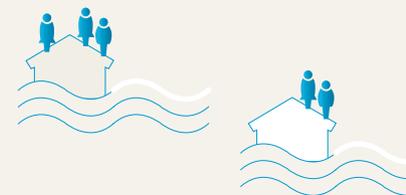
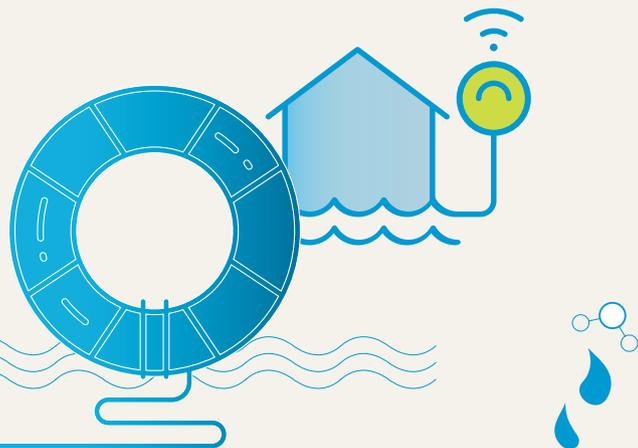
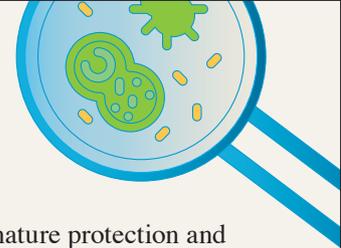
The over-abstraction of groundwater likewise remains a critical pressure. Appropriate controls on the abstraction, including registers and applicable authorization procedures, are recommended. Following the [EU Water Framework Directive \(WFD\)](#), the long-term annual average rate of abstraction must not exceed available groundwater resources. Regarding navigation, the ongoing collaboration with the [Danube Commission on the Joint Statement on Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection](#), and the [EU METEET](#) (The Mixed Environment Transport External Expert Team) initiative, is encouraged. Regarding hydropower, the ongoing use of the ICPDR's "Guiding Principles on Sustainable Hydropower Development in the Danube Basin" is encouraged, as is the continuation of ICPDR Hydropower Workshops.

Addressing Flood Risks

Flood risk management measures and the application of the solidarity principle have contributed to a [significant reduction of flood risks in the basin](#). The objectives of the [Danube Flood Risk Management Plan Update 2021](#) are broad and robust enough to address all relevant aspects of flood risk management, including the impacts of climate change. The Declaration gives special attention to the measures with positive downstream effects outlined in this document. These measures include natural water retention, warning systems, reduction of risk from contaminated sites in floodplain areas, river restoration, and flood protection measures through the continuous restoration of flood plains.

The Declaration also addresses nature protection and marine environments. Attention is brought to the potential collaborations between the [EU WFD](#) and the [EU Biodiversity Strategy](#) for 2030. Collaboration concerning protected areas, restoration, species/habitats conservation, and the need to strengthen cooperation with nature protection authorities is essential.

[Sturgeons](#) also continue to be a priority species in the Danube River Basin. The Declaration gives its full support for the [ICPDR Sturgeon Strategy](#) (2017) and the cooperation with the Danube Sturgeon Task Force to implement the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons. The possibility of opening fish migration routes at the Iron Gate dams is also mentioned. Lastly, Romania and Bulgaria are encouraged to continue working on implementing the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in the Black Sea Region in cooperation with the Black Sea Commission.



Cooperation and Public Participation



The Declaration further commits to cooperation with and the support of the [ICPDR Observers](#) and the [EU Strategy for the Danube Region \(EUSDR\)](#). Reinforcing synergies with these two entities will bring further valuable inputs to ICPDR activities. [Public participation](#) is also highlighted as instrumental, a role most notably demonstrated during the drafting of the Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP) and the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan (DFRMP) Updates 2021.



Along with public participation, the development and use of [ICPDR communication tools and channels](#), such as social media platforms, have positioned the ICPDR digitally and have increased its visibility. This allowed the ICPDR to share its achievements and make a mark on the international communications stage.

Two great examples of this successful cooperation and outreach activities are the fourth [Joint Danube Survey \(JDS4\)](#) and the [#HaveYourSay Public Consultation Campaign](#). Both events gave Danubian citizens a unique opportunity to both contribute to the Danube River Basin Management and Danube Flood Risk Management Plans and to (re)discover their shared river basin. The success of JDS4 in 2019 was made possible through the active participation of all ICPDR countries. It resulted in valuable scientific results and raised awareness for the ICPDR. This success also resulted in the unanimous request by the ICPDR countries for a fifth Joint Danube Survey (JDS5) to be held in 2025.

Our Way Forward

While connected to various environmental impacts, industries such as the ones mentioned in the Declaration are still vital to maintain, and contribute to achieving, various [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) in the Danube River Basin. In this sense, the nuanced approach to creating a sustainable future Danube described in this Declaration is about forging fruitful partnerships. In all, the Danube Declaration goes a long way towards preparing for six years of facing future challenges together. Preparing the Danube River Basin to play its part in a broader European project is a priority for which we must make no half measures.

This Declaration signals a bolder programme of measures [to put the Danube River Basin at the forefront of an ever-greener European continent](#).

The full document can be downloaded here:
www.icpdr.org/flowpaper/viewer/default/files/nodes/documents/danube_declaration_2022.pdf

