

# DANUBE WATCH

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE DANUBE RIVER · [WWW.ICPDR.ORG](http://WWW.ICPDR.ORG) 2/2018

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**ICPDR IKSD**

International Commission  
for the Protection  
of the Danube River

Internationale Kommission  
zum Schutz der Donau

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The Palace of Serbia in Belgrade played host to a Ministerial Conference to mark the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Danube Convention





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## Dear readers,

As EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, I am delighted to open this edition of Danube Watch and present to you how EU Regional Policy is helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change in the Danube region.

The Danube is the most international river in the world and its fourteen states decided to combine their efforts in 2010 to set up the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, covering an area that is home to 112 million people, or one-fourth of the EU's population. The Danube Delta is Europe's largest European wetland and reed bed, and is home to the largest colony of pelicans outside Africa. Given their importance for both navigation and the environment, the Danube river and its tributaries are at the very heart of the Danube Strategy.

Since 2010, important projects have been implemented in line with one of the main pillars of the Danube Strategy, "protecting the environment". These include the Fairway rehabilitation and maintenance Master Plan, the network of Protected Areas (Danube Parks), the Danube Sturgeon Task Force, along with projects for flood prevention such as Seerisk and DAREFFORT, or the DREAM project and the BOKU hydraulic engineering laboratory. All of these projects show the commitment of policymakers and stakeholders in the Danube region to work together to enhance the well-being and the quality of life of the people in the region.

Other remarkable projects include JOINTISZA, the updated integrated Tisza River basin management plan and DanubeSediment, which aims to ensure sediment balance in the river system.

The severe floods that have affected the Danube basin in recent years are a clear demonstration of the impact of climate change on the Danube river. The EU Strategy for the Danube Region was set up to promote cooperation on such environmental issues, for example the monitoring of climate dynamics, the implementation of mitigation measures and adapting to change.

Environmental issues do not stop at national borders and this is why cooperation among countries is fundamental in providing effective solutions to such problems. This explains why the Danube Strategy not only involves the nine riparian EU Member States, but also the five neighbouring non-EU states of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine.

I very much look forward to closer and stronger cooperation within the framework of the Danube Strategy, for the benefit of the millions of citizens living in the area and the Union as a whole.

**Corina Crețu** is EU Commissioner for Regional Policy

**ICPDR** IKSD

International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River  
Internationale Kommission zum Schutz der Donau

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Danube Watch is available on the web at [www.icpdr.org](http://www.icpdr.org)

### IMPRINT

**Owner/Publisher:** ICPDR – International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, Vienna, [secretariat@icpdr.org](mailto:secretariat@icpdr.org);

**Executive Editor:** Hélène Masliah-Gilkarov; **Editor:** Robert Ives;

**Design:** Wagesreiter & Polaschek Grafikdesign OG; **Print:** Gerin Druck GmbH;

**Online publishing:** Alex Höbart; **Cover photo:** © Roman Vender, View from the mountains of Dürnstein, a town steeped in history on the Danube river.



Danube Watch is printed on IQ-Print, 170 & 100 g/m<sup>2</sup>.

Danube Watch is the official magazine of the 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 to improve 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.

# News & Events

## The Living Danube Partnership – working to restore rivers and wetlands

Vienna 26 June: the WWF, Coca-Cola Foundation, Coca-Cola Company and the ICPDR took stock of the progress of their seven-year partnership for rivers and wetlands in the Danube River Basin by releasing the mid-term report for the Living Danube Partnership. The partnership is on track to restore over 53 km<sup>2</sup> of wetland habitat by 2020, and has helped to raise nearly €20 million for wetland conservation and restoration.

River and wetland restoration projects to replenish and enhance water conditions for both flora and fauna have already been completed at various hotspots for biodiversity and include:

- installing a series of sluices to raise water levels at the Lake Neusiedl National Park in Austria to prevent its rare soda lakes from drying out;
- the widening and deepening of the supply channel and dredging of a lake in Široki Rit, Serbia to enhance conditions for waterfowl, fish, amphibians and migrating birds;
- the removal of two barriers and the construction of a new fish pass to enable the free movement of fish and the restoration of protected fish populations at the Russenski Lom Nature Park in Bulgaria.

Despite initial delays, six further projects are currently in various stages of development and are on track to deliver an estimated



12.85 million m<sup>3</sup> of replenished water and 6,829 hectares of restored wetlands by 2021.

The Living Danube Tour with its travelling educational tools has already made almost 60 stops in Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Serbia, reaching more than 75,250 people, thereby helping to raise awareness of issues concerning freshwater conservation.

In the coming years, the Living Danube Partnership will also support restoration projects in Barcs Old-Drava oxbow in Hungary, the Lankoc floodplain forest in Hungary, the Drava River side-arms in Croatia and at Garla Mare and Cetate in Romania.

## Danube Day 2018 - getting active for a healthier Danube in the UN Rotunda Vienna



On 4-6 July 2018, the ICPDR held a special exhibition and press event in the Rotunda at the Vienna International Centre (VIC). Staff at the VIC, along with other interested parties and journalists, were invited to a series of events to mark the International Danube Day celebrations.

The event was staged in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism, and the United Nations

Information Service (UNIS) to celebrate 24 years of international cooperation across the Danube River Basin. The exhibition showcased the highlights of 15 years of Danube Day through film and photographs and the vast collection of artwork created to mark the day over the years.

The proceedings opened on 4 July with a panel discussion moderated by UNIS Vienna Director, Martin Nesirky. The panel's experts were ICPDR Executive Secretary Ivan Zavadsky, Lorena Feruta from the Permanent Mission of Romania to the International Organisations in Vienna and Susanne Brandstetter and Veronika Koller-Kreimel from the Austrian Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism. This was followed by the screening of two short films: "Danube Day" and "Danube Art Master".

The second day of the exhibition featured a "meet the press" session with special guest Pascal Rösler, who travelled the 2,467 km of the Danube River from the Black Forest to the Black Sea on his stand-up paddle board (SUP) in the summer of 2017 to raise awareness of the great importance that water has on our lives. This was followed by the screening of the film 2467 – Eine Reise bis ins Schwarze Meer (2467 – A journey to the Black Sea) which documents his epic voyage.

## Joining forces to save the sturgeon – European Sturgeon Conference takes place in Vienna

A high-level conference took place in Vienna on 9-10 July, with 50 experts from national administrations, the EU, academia and NGOs coming together to discuss the transnational protection of the iconic sturgeon in the Danube River. The event was organised jointly by the ICPDR and the Austrian Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism within the framework of the Austrian EU Presidency.

The overall objective of the conference was to trigger comprehensive action for sturgeon conservation and the restoration of their habitats and migration corridors, not only in the Danube pan European level. During the two days of the conference an effective strategy was hammered out that will help to enable:

- the prevention of poaching and the illegal trade of sturgeon caviar and other related products through effective law enforcement;
- full implementation and enforcement of the Water Framework Directive (WFD);
- the facilitation of migration and the removal of the main obstacles to migration – especially at the Iron Gate dams, where there are currently no fish-pass facilities;
- the establishment of best practice breeding programmes for all sturgeon species, including the establishment of ex-situ facilities both upstream and downstream of the Iron Gate dams;
- the protection of existing spawning and feeding habitats from further deterioration.



The conference was hailed as a positive step towards bringing together relevant institutions and experts to share up-to-date information essential to sturgeon conservation activities. It also provided an overview of the challenges likely to be faced during the implementation of the recently adopted ICPDR Sturgeon Strategy. All of the conference participants stressed their commitment to promoting the need for action and raising public awareness of the sturgeon's plight.

The key messages of the European Sturgeon Conference can be accessed here: <https://danubis.icpdr.org/document/18861>

Read more about sturgeons: <http://icpdr.org/main/activities-projects/sturgeons-danube-basin>

## ICPDR hosts 9<sup>th</sup> Joint Statement Meeting in Vienna



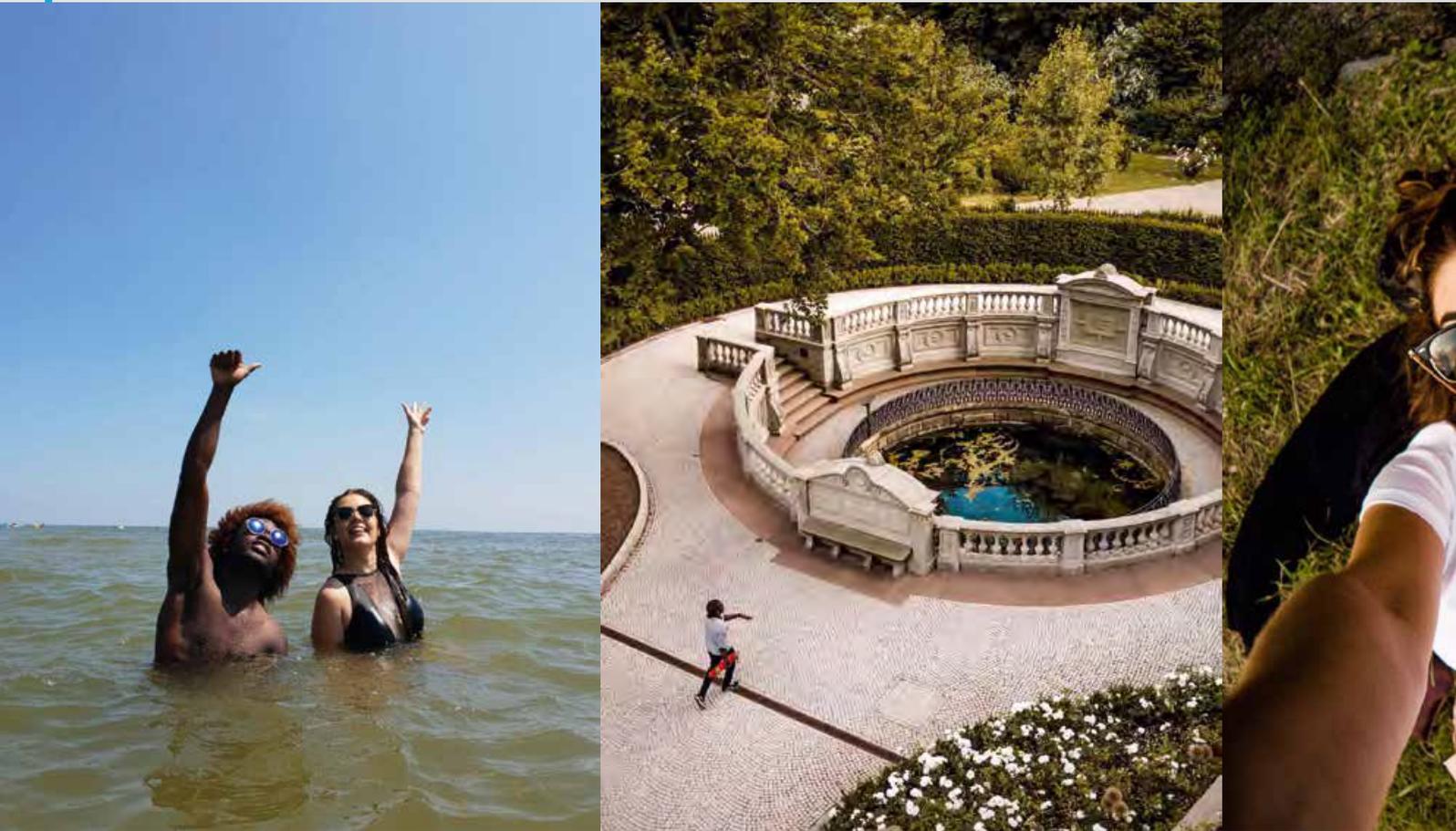
The 9<sup>th</sup> workshop on the follow-up of the Joint Statement on Guiding Principles on the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin took place on 13-14 September at the Vienna International Centre in Vienna. The event was

attended by 60 experts and representatives from both national and international institutions, the EU and various interest groups.

The primary purpose of the workshop was to inform participants about progress made concerning the implementation of the Statement's guiding principles for good practices in waterway management that ensure the equilibrium between good ecological status and good navigation status in the Danube River Basin. Challenges and solutions regarding the implementation of the Statement's objectives and lessons learnt were just some of the other issues discussed.

The workshop also provided a platform for the dissemination and discussion of new facts and perspectives of European inland waterway transport, including the EU Danube Strategy. It was generally agreed that such meetings are essential to ensure the regular exchange of information and the presentation of new initiatives. The workshop is a clear illustration that environmental and economic interests do not have to be mutually exclusive, but can in fact go hand in hand with one another.

# Danube Road Trip



The Road Trip Project is an initiative of the EU's Regional and Urban Policy department of the European Commission which took eight young people on four routes across the continent in the spring and summer of 2018. Our two travellers, Susann and Kenneth, met locals, discovered countries along the Danube and shared their experiences with the online community. Between 23 June and 21 July, they travelled the length of the Danube from the Black Forest to the Black Sea, visiting a number of INTERREG Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) approved projects.

The Danube Road Trip started on 23 June at the source of the Danube at Donaueschingen in the Black Forest, before moving on to Neuburg-Schrobenhausen on 29 June to promote a DANUBE-parksCONNECTED initiative to restore and maintain a cohesive ecosystem. Participants from non-governmental organisations, fishermen, and many others spent the day on an island on the Danube, removing the remains of old buildings, other rubbish from the area. Afterwards, volunteers and organisers celebrated both the Danube and their work with a campfire and barbecue.

The two young travellers then moved on to Austria, showing a perfect sense of timing by arriving in the country on the eve of it taking over the "rotating" six-month presidency of the EU Council. After visiting an upcycling plant in Vienna, they travelled to Bad Vöslau in Lower Austria where they took to the sky with Michael Doneus from the University of Vienna in a Cessna 172S Skyhawk to experience an iron-age archaeological heritage site from the air. The archaeological project is a finalist in the Regiostars Awards 2018, a yearly competition held by the European Commission that selects innovative projects funded by the European Regional Develop-

ment Fund (ERDF). The Iron-Age-Danube project has so far brought 20 partners from five EU countries together.

Next stop was Slovakia, where our intrepid travellers took a boat trip along a restored side-arm of the Danube before moving on to Hungary. After finding a local guide and driving upriver from Budapest to the Danube Bend, they embarked on a cycle trip on the Eurovelo 6 cycle route. A short delay at the border and the young travellers had left the EU and entered Serbia where they partied at the Exit Festival at Novi Sad: the designated European Youth Capital for 2019.

... Kenneth and Susann arrived at the end of their journey, the Danube Delta in Romania. This area of marshes, lakes, channels, streams and floating reed islands is spread over 4,500 km<sup>2</sup> and two countries and hosts an incredible diversity of plants and animals, many of which are extremely rare elsewhere in the EU. Joined by the very knowledgeable Daniel Petrescu for a boat ride in this UNESCO biosphere reserve, Kenneth and Susann spotted king fishers, pelicans, grey herons, white-tailed eagles, black cormorants and many others... The Delta hosts over 300 different species of birds.



© All fotos/European Commission #EUinmyRegion

On their way to Belgrade, Susann and Kenneth stopped in Obrenovac, which was devastated during the floods of the century in 2014. Speaking with people at the local school they discovered the magnitude of the disaster and also the support received from the EU to rebuild, and hopefully prevent such events occurring in the future. Next stop was Serbia's capital Belgrade, where they visited the innovative 'Open School'. Their host Mijat explained to them how the school was founded in 1993 during the conflict in the Balkans, mainly to provide a safe refuge for students.

The last week on the road began in Serbia, at the impressive castle fortress of Golubac, high above the Iron Gates gorge and the widest section of the Danube, before moving on to Bulgaria where they were welcomed with dance and art at the country's biggest annual festival for young people, 'The Bridge', in the port town of

Vidin. This is an event that is about building bridges and connecting people in all senses due to its location where a new bridge has been built over the Danube connecting the town with the Romanian town of Calafat. Bridges across the majestic Danube are very few and far between this far downstream.

Further downstream, in Tutrakan, our young travellers learnt all about what made the people of the region famous: fishing and boat building. Preserving this heritage and keeping the activities alive is vital for the future of the area, fisherman Rumien told Kenneth.

Across the river in Romania, our travellers entered the Danube Delta, where an amazing boat trip focussed on the region's

breath-taking wildlife. They got close to some very rare birds before visiting the

EU Regional Policy targets all regions and cities in the European Union in order to boost their economic growth and improve people's quality of life. It is also an expression of solidarity, focusing support on less developed regions.

Danube Delta Museum in Tulcea, where they got even closer to the river's most famous fish and the most expensive creature in the world: the sturgeon, also known as the Danube dinosaur. The Beluga sturgeon's caviar, sells for \$20,000 per kilo in New York.

And then suddenly the trip was over. But what better way to celebrate the end of their odyssey than with a splash in the Black Sea! The traveller's unique experiences will be featured in a road movie, and will serve as an online travel guide for Europe: off the beaten track.

# WWF Big Jump

## jumping into rivers and lakes to help protect the future of our waters

On 8 July 2018 thousands of people across Europe jumped into rivers, streams and lakes in more than 160 European 'Big Jump' events. Groups of families and friends jumped to make a statement, protect our rivers and lakes, and to show that Member States need to follow the positive spirit of the EU water law to which they are committed.

The public engagement event saw people jumping, diving, wading and kayaking in 18 European countries from Spain to Poland. The Big Jump is an annual event founded by the European Rivers Network and has taken place since 2002. WWF offices across Europe organised 46 Big Jump events, and used the occasion to kickstart its #ProtectWater campaign to promote the EU Water Framework Directive, a crucial legal instrument for protecting Europe's freshwater ecosystems.

As a landmark policy, the Water Framework Directive recognises the fact that if we are

to secure sufficient supplies of good quality water in the future, we need to conserve our freshwater ecosystems today. "This Big Jump has shown that people love rivers and lakes. It is an event that brings pleasure, joy and fun. The abundance of wildlife makes these ecosystems a special place for our threatened nature. However, it is very worrying that Member States have been skirting around their legal commitments to EU water laws for the majority of the past two decades. It is high time to understand

The introduction of the EU Water Framework Directive states that water is not a commercial product like any other, but rather, a heritage which must be protected, defended and treated as such.

that water is the basis of all life on earth and not a commercial product like any other," said Laurice Ereifej, Regional Head of Freshwater at WWF-Danube-Carpathian Programme.

"Sunday was a fun day out in places that people love, but with a serious message:

Europe's leaders must do more to protect our wonderful waterways," stated Roberto Epple, founder of the Big Jump and chair of the European Rivers Network.

Big Jump was organised at 11 locations in Hungary attracting almost a thousand people, including scouts. In Slovakia, the events took place on the Danube River in the capital Bratislava, the Hron at Banska Bystrica and the Vah at Trencin and Lip-tovsky Mikulas. In Ukraine, WWF asked people to take photos and videos of themselves and friends jumping into the river.

Big Jump is an open source event that aims to remind people of how valuable Europe's rivers, lakes and wetlands are. Big Jump seeks to inspire people to remember the powerful ties that bind them to freshwater ecosystems, and encourage them to join the fight to save them. Since 2002, around 200,000 people have taken part before in over 2,000 events.

# Rediscovering Trajan's bridge over the Danube



Gordana Karović,  
Director of the  
Underwater  
Archaeological Research  
of the Remains of the  
Trajan's Bridge near  
Kostol-Turnu Severin  
project, taking part  
in the underwater  
research in 2003.  
Photo: Institute for the  
Protection of Cultural  
Monuments of Serbia. ⋮

**The Roman Emperor Trajan (53-117 AD) is remembered as a successful soldier-emperor who presided over the greatest military expansion in Roman history. Known for his philanthropic rule and his extensive public building programmes, he was also responsible for the construction of the first ever bridge to span the Lower Danube.**

The Trajan Bridge was built between the years 103 to 105 AD east of the Iron Gate Rapids at Turnu Severin to guarantee the supply line of Roman legions during the conquest of Dacia (modern-day Romania). The bridge consisted of timber arches mounted on masonry piers spanning the 800-metre-wide stretch of the river and had a total length of over 1000 metres. A century and a half later the emperor Aurelian withdrew from Dacia and demolished the bridge. Its 54-metre spans were the longest ever constructed at the time and would not be surpassed for more than a thousand years. Today the only visible remains of the bridge are the approach sections in the village of Kostol on the Serbian riverbank and in the city of Turnu Severin on the left Romanian riverbank.

Forgotten for centuries, the remains of the bridge reappeared in 1858 when the level of the Danube hit a record low due to an

extensive drought. Initial archaeological research and excavation of the bridge was carried out during the 1980s as part of the Iron Gates Dam construction project. The underwater pillars on the bed of the Danube, their position and level of preservation were examined using a special vessel equipped with sonar. This was the first time that the length of the bridge, amounting to just under 1,070 metres, had been precisely measured.

In 2003, exactly 19 centuries after the beginning of its construction, the Serbian Ministry of Culture financed an underwater archaeological project to carry out comprehensive research on the remains of the bridge. Conducted by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia, the purpose of the project was to provide answers to a number of questions, including what construction materials and techniques had been used to sink the pillars into the riverbed and what the exact dimensions, shape and height of the bridge were.

Hydrographic measurements using multi-beam sonar were carried out in the zone of the remains across the whole section of the bridge, while other, non-destructive investigations, were conducted on the Serbian side of the river. Underwater digital photogrammetric technology was used to obtain accurate three-dimensional geometry of all

underwater archeological remains on the riverbed and to create a digital 3D model.

Unfortunately, financing of the project was discontinued before the 3D photo image of the scattered archeological elements on the riverbed could be completed. However, further research was conducted in 2014 using modern civil engineering analysis methods, coupled with a review of available materials and historical records of Roman construction techniques. This revealed that a variety of local trees, including the European oak which is still common to the area, could have provided beams both large enough and strong enough to fashion the bridge's arches and deck. The Romans probably cut the wood and fashioned much of the structure before assembling the bridge, thereby using the same construction techniques that are used today: prefabrication and construction on site. Without a definitive historical record, there is no way to be sure exactly how the bridge looked, but sound engineering analyses has greatly narrowed the possibilities. Future research will hopefully provide even more details about the bridge, widely considered to be one of the wonders of the western world at the time of its construction.

For more information, visit the Danube Virtual Museum:  
<http://virtuelnimuzejdunava.rs>



# The bigger picture:

## the viadonau Natural Resources Management System

viadonau is striving to develop and protect the Danube's natural habitats in Austria



© Barbara Becker/all photos

**Renaturation projects that include the reconnection of side-arms and riverbank restoration, the construction of new gravel islands and bedload management, restocking of sturgeon populations and habitat modelling, protected riparian woodlands with old trees being utilised as home for bats, nurturing meadows on dams to attract orchids, butterflies and bees, the renovation of dams to enhance the protection and well-being of terrapins, ecologically coordinated schedules for construction projects, nesting aids for swifts, newly created amphibian pools, species mapping, and knowledge management for environmental issues - the list of viadonau's environmental services is both extensive and diverse.**

Since 2017, viadonau's environmental services have been bundled together to form an integrated Natural Resources Management System, with each individual measure being tested in

advance for its effectiveness. Following implementation, achievements are evaluated and the financial resources for each individual project documented. An annual steering committee then guides the orientation of the nature-relevant business activities for the following years. The goal is to focus resources on those projects that bring the greatest benefit to natural habitats along the Danube. Criteria for objectives are then formulated to assess environmental benefits. The Natural Resources Management system comes with just a few easily measurable key parameters, which are collated and documented annually. Behind every "dry" indicator is a wide range of diverse ecological goals. The conclusion is, nevertheless, very simple: the larger the key figures, the greater the environmental benefits of each project.

Examples of renaturation projects range from the reconnection of side-arms, the modification of groynes and the crea-



tion of gravel islands as part of bedload management, to large-scale riverbank renaturation projects. Three key indicators are recorded annually: the length of connected side-arms, the length of the newly created natural riverbanks and the amount of repositioned bedload gravel. The achievement of ecological objectives is even more exciting: when these three key figures increase, the habitat potential for fish living in fast flowing water also increases. Gravel islands become potential breeding grounds for birds such as little ringed plovers, common sandpipers and the common tern. Spawning grounds are also created for gravel spawning fish. Bird that build their nests in steep banks such as kingfishers, bank-swallows and bee-eaters find new homes and ac-



tive bedload management alleviates the deterioration of the Danube's riverbed, thus preserving the vital exchange of water between the river and its shorelines.

The same simple evaluation system is also used to assess on-land activities that enhance the natural environment, such as meadow maintenance and the preservation of riparian woodlands. This includes not only the mowing of grass on dams, but also their renovation and other construction measures that are carried out in as natural a way as possible. Management of meadows and grasslands also covers neophyte control and species conservation projects, including protection measures for the *Zerynthia polyxena* butterfly and orchids. The annual recording of results is again extremely simple and creates a balancing act between the various different types of measures: Meadows and areas of natural forest are cultivated according to strict ecological criteria and in the case of construction projects, the natural balance is assessed before during and after the project. Once again, an ecological system of objectives is at the forefront, whereby viadonau ensures that maintenance and construction measures are carried out in as naturally a way as possible. These measures benefit dry grasslands and species-rich meadow communities with their typical inhabitants of bees, butterflies, grasshoppers and lizards, with the dams also serving as feeding areas and migration corridors.

The first signs of success are already visible. Between 2017 and 2018 the key indicators for ecologically valuable meadows and natural woodland areas that fall under viadonau's area of responsibility showed a clear improvement. This positive trend can also be seen with the company's renaturation projects.



## Team Environment / Ecology as a Platform for Environmental issues



The Natural Resource Management System is clearly a tool which will guarantee the preservation and development of the Danube's natural habitats in the future.

**Barbara Becker** is an environmental expert at viadonau. She has been a member of the team Environment / Ecology since 2005. She coordinates viadonau's natural environment management system and is dedicated to ecological natural environment management and the preparation and implementation of renaturation projects.

# Danube Day 2018:

## 30,000 people got active for a healthier Danube!

When the ICPDR began planning the first Danube Day in 2004, it was beyond our most ambitious hopes that it would grow into the huge, established event that it is today. While the first event in 2004 was undoubtedly an international success, our partners then numbered around 150, with 100 events taking place.

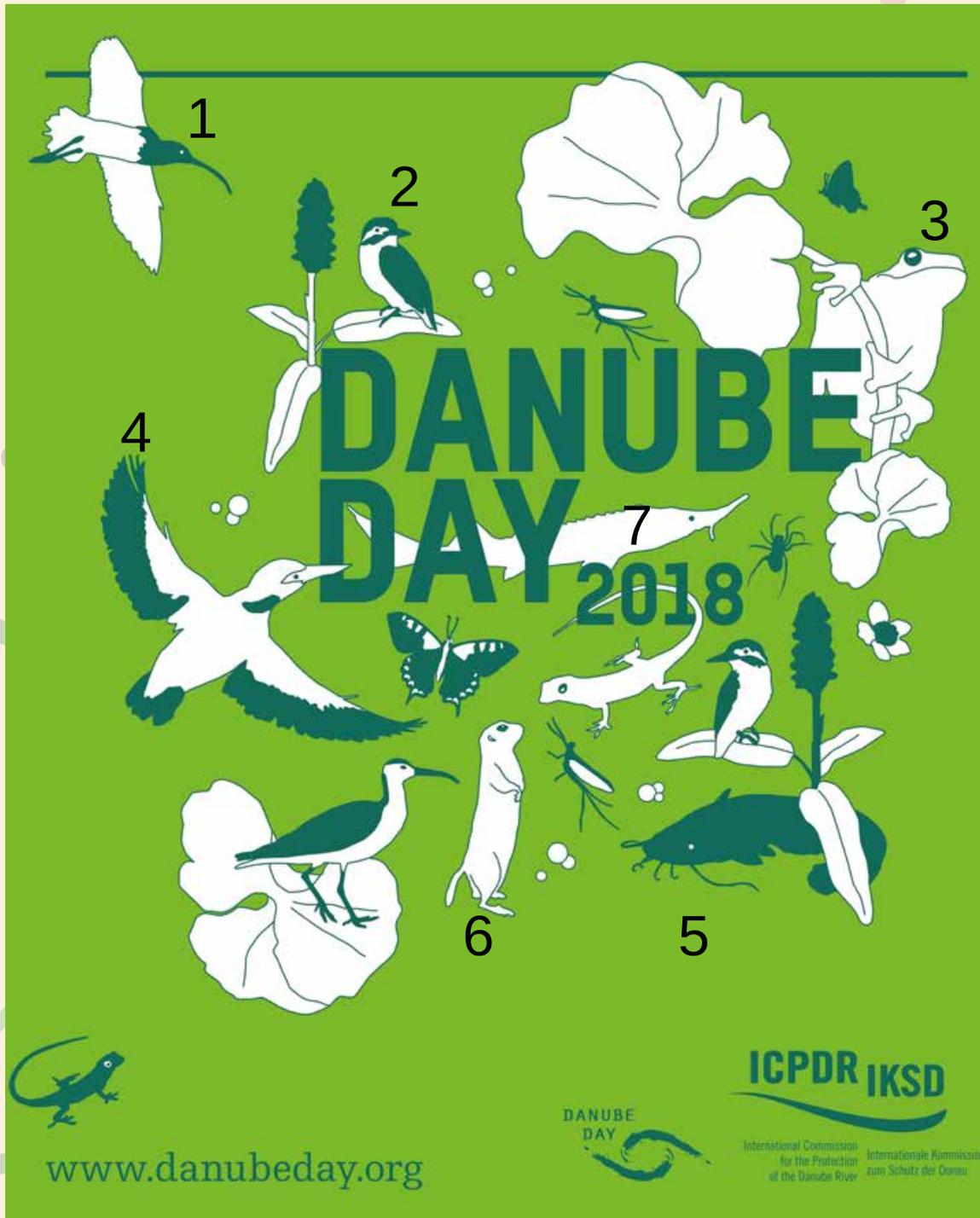
Jump forward to Danube Day 2018, the 15th annual celebration of the Danube River Basin and we see an immense, basin-wide celebration involving close to 450 partner organisations that are responsible for well over 200 actions and events in 14 countries. Rather than being just a one day festival, it has now become an annual summer season in some countries where Danube Day can stretch over three months. Back in 2004, we talked about thousands celebrating the first Danube Day; now we measure attendance in the tens of thousands! The 2018 event was among the best-attended Danube Days to date, with around 30,000 people directly taking part and getting active for a healthier Danube.

Danube Day prides itself on being the biggest river party in the world. Government, NGOs and corporate partners work hard to ensure a spread of events across the entire Danube Basin. We were therefore particularly pleased to welcome Montenegro back into the fold in 2018 after a four year gap. Crno jezero (Black Lake) in the Durmitor National Park was the stunning location for a family festival and eco-art activity organised by the Montenegrin Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Zabljak Tourist Organisation.

The ICPDR celebrated the 15 Danube Days in 2018 with an exhibition and press event at the UN Rotunda at the Vienna International Centre. If the next 15 years can deliver the same level of cross-sector, cross-border cooperation and public support, we will be well on our way to securing a sustainable future for the Danube Basin.

# Can you name the fauna of the Danube River Basin?

Look at the image below and try to identify the name of the numbered species (answers are given below).



1. **Eurasian or common curlew** - once considered common, recent research indicates that there are fewer than originally thought. 2. **Plover** - a variety of different species of Plovers inhabit the Danube river region and some are considered critically endangered. 3. **European Tree Frog** - tree frogs were once used as barometers because they croak before it rains. 4. **Common kingfisher** - these colourful birds boast blue areas on their wings, tails and heads, and can be found throughout Europe, northern Africa, and large parts of Asia. 5. **Wels catfish** - these bottom feeders normally grow to about 1.5-2 meters and weigh 15-20 kg, but the largest can grow more than 2 meters long and weigh over 100 kg. 6. **European ground squirrel or European souslik** - these squirrels use lookouts to watch for danger, and warn other squirrels with a shrill alarm. 7. **Sturgeon** - Several species of sturgeon inhabit the Danube river basin, and all are considered threatened or endangered species. Some species of sturgeon native to the Danube are thought to be extinct. To learn more about the sturgeon, visit our website at ICPDR.org.

An underwater photograph showing a diver in the foreground on the right, reaching towards a large, dark, rectangular object in the center. Another diver is visible in the background on the left. The water is clear and blue.

# Project Baseline

Preserving our unknown underwater world

Project Baseline empowers passionate people to observe and record change within the world's aquatic environments in a way that fosters public awareness and supports political action.

© GUE

Project Baseline is a global, aquatic conservation initiative run by the non-profit organisation Global Underwater Explorers (GUE). Founded in the US in 1999 by a group of underwater cave divers committed to protecting underwater environments, Project Baseline was adopted as the GUE's central aquatic conservation initiative in 2009 and is supported by a global network of an estimated 480 diving and non-diving volunteers. The primary purpose of the project is to establish environmental baselines by creating a visual legacy of underwater conditions around the world; not only in shallow coastal areas and deep-water environments in oceans, but also in freshwater environments that include lakes, rivers, springs, and flooded caves.

The underwater world is in peril, yet the causes of degradation and the consequences for underwater ecosystems re-

main largely or entirely unseen. Using their network of volunteers, Project Baseline is working to document which waters are in pristine condition and which waters need help to be returned to a clean and healthy condition. The initiative is designed to allow aquatic environments to be monitored over a longer period of time, providing a comprehensive understanding of the changes happening to them, both now and in perpetuity. Researchers are analysing trends and assessing threats so that effective local and focused conservation measures can be implemented.

Equally central to the mission of Project Baseline, is establishing the meaningful and sustainable protection of the aquatic world by connecting the project's researchers with the very people that live alongside, work on and enjoy the waters. Since 2009, the project has initiated over 100 volunteer-run projects, including glob-

al expeditions. It is currently operating in 38 countries and still growing. Drawing from a strong history in water advocacy, Project Baseline supports a network of volunteer teams which continue to bring the underwater world to the surface, one picture, one video and one sample at a time.

Project Baseline initiatives have been undertaken at a number of locations in the Danube River Basin, including popular diving spots on Lake Attersee in Austria, and Lake Gulaska in Slovakia. Initiatives in the Danube River Basin seek to document changing visibility and plant life cycles, both seasonally and over the longer term.

Project Baseline manages a spatial database that is accessible to anyone who is interested: <http://projectbaseline.org/database/>



©Frontline Photography



**Project Baseline**  
 a global underwater explorers initiative



Top: Robert Carmichael,  
 Middle: Jarrod Jablonski, Bottom:  
 Sampling in Fiji, 2017 © Amanda  
 White, Right: Dr. Todd Kincaid

© Sampling in Fiji, 2017 ©Amanda White

# Just a perfect day – the blooming of the Tisza

The Tisza Mayfly (*Palingenia longicauda*)

The sunset is amazing. As the strong early-summer sunbeams start to fade into the scarlet-gold tranquillity of the water, a small boat appears from the cover of a willow bush with some curiously silent people on board. The swarm has just started, casting a spell on the drifting visitors, leading them to believe that this will be the last sunset they will ever experience.

And what if this is not just magic? What if this is really the end? Have I been living my life knowing that it could end so soon? Have I finished everything I ever wanted to do and prepared my good-byes? These are all questions that arise as the floating travellers admire the tiny fairy-like living things, the objects of their interest. Because, for these tiny creatures, this magnificent sunset is the first and the very last they will ever know...

“Tiszavirág” (meaning Tisza flower) is the Hungarian word for the Tisza Mayfly, also known as the long-tailed, or giant mayfly. The *Palingenia longicauda* is an aquatic insect, which is the largest mayfly of the Ephemeroptera order in Europe. Mayfly entities are spectacular with their mature sizes of 8-12 cm from head to tail and wingspan of 6-7 cm. However, these agile, long winged creatures are more famous for the last, and only day, of their fragile lives. Aristotle was in awe of mayflies, calling them “ephemeral”.

The life cycle of this species is extraordinary. After three years of living and developing as larvae in the muddy riverbed of the Tisza (digging into the underwater walls, usually creating U-shaped, 15 cm

deep tunnels), they all hatch simultaneously with just one purpose: reproduction. After remaining hidden underwater for the majority of their lives, they shed their skins on a perfect, early summer day and turn into flying imagoes (male mayflies turn into sub-imagoes first, before shedding their skins for a second time). In the evening, the mature mayflies start a “bridal dance” above the water that lasts several hours.

This wonderful phenomenon is known as “the Blooming of the Tisza” with the Tisza mayflies swarming above the water surface, frequently touching it and triggering millions of miniature waves like tiny rain-

drops. It occurs, when the meteorological circumstances (temperature, water level, wind, lighting conditions, etc.) are just right for these insects to start fulfilling their main purpose in life. Usually occurring in early to mid-June, the whole event lasts just 3-4 days.

However, for the individual mayfly, the story starts and ends on the same day. They do not even have any organs with which to feed themselves or digest food. They are born with the sole purpose of finding a mate to fulfil their destiny. Directly after



mating, male individuals die and fall back down into the water. Females continue to fly for a while until they are exhausted, seeking the location where they themselves emerged from the water, so that they can finally lay their eggs. These eggs are the future of the mayfly population and sink to the bottom of the water, where they start their three years of hiding after hatching into larvae after 45 days.

Tisza mayflies are not only beautiful creatures, but also an important key species in the Tisza ecological system. As bio-indicators, their existence is proof of clean, unpolluted water. They are also extremely sensitive to anthropogenic effects on river morphology, such as the unnatural cover-

ing of riverbeds, rising water levels and man-made structures. After fortunately surviving the most severe episode of pollution of the Tisza in 2000 (basically thanks to the low water level during winter), the Tisza Mayfly has become the symbol of protection for a healthy Tisza River.

The species plays a significant role in the aquatic food web. The mayfly larvae, or nymph, is an important food for waterborne secondary consumers, but the main importance of the mayfly in the food chain is provided by their dead bodies drifting on the river, offering tons of nutrients for birds and fish. In the past, fishermen used to collect the insects (both



living larvae and dead insects) to use as fishing bait and farmers used the dead insects as fertiliser. Because of the overuse of waters, the species almost vanished from most European rivers in the 20th century, except on the Tisza.



Since 1993, the Tisza Mayfly and its habitats have been protected by law in Hungary. Harming them is an offence that can be punished with heavy fines. Although any water pollution could still decimate their populations, even on the Tisza, this important river species is slowly beginning to appear once again in other rivers, including the Rába, Körös, Bega and Prut. This is due to effective integrated protection measures and sound river basin management.

As the evening turns into night, the wondering boat-guests are left in total silence

with their thoughts. Subsistence and reproduction, breeding and decay, birth and death: all in a single day... "The Tisza is a graveyard when it is in bloom" goes the Hungarian song. The river sweeps away the lifeless mayflies, as well as any questions in people's mind. Sometimes they just wish they could be a mayfly: lightweight, instinctive ephemera which are able to fulfil their purpose in life. They look back on their memories while hearing the sounds of fish feasting. Yes, indeed; it was such a perfect day!



Is an outstanding example of international cooperation within the framework of the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme. The project aims inter alia to produce the updated Integrated Tisza River Basin Management Plan. Focusing on water management issues, jointly with the five Tisza-basin countries (involving 17 project partners), one of the project's main objectives is among others to preserve conditions, which are crucial for the protection and conservation of Tisza Mayfly populations. The insect is the main communicational symbol of JOINTISZA.

**Balázs Németh** is an environmental engineer. He works at the ICPDR Permanent Secretariat as Technical JOINTISZA Project Staff.

**Read more about the project:**  
<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/jointisza>



# Celebrating 70 years of the Danube Convention

On 28 and 29 June 2018, the Palace of Serbia in Belgrade played host to a Ministerial Conference to mark the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Convention for Navigation on the Danube, also known as the Belgrade Convention.



Following a reception to celebrate the 90th Session of the Danube Commission on the evening of Thursday 28 June, the main event began in earnest on Friday 29th with the Serbian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, Zorana Mihajlovic, reiterating that the objectives of the Danube Commission – cooperation, connectivity and the free movement of goods and people – are as important for the region and Europe today as they were 70 years ago. Without connectivity there can be no economic development or new investments; greater exchange means better lives. The Deputy Prime Minister continued with a reminder that the event was not just a celebration of a common history, but also an opportunity to focus on the future.

The conference was attended by around 120 participants, including diplomatic representatives and managers from the transport administrations of the Commission's eleven Member states, observer countries, the European Commission, and other important international organisations, including the ICPSDR, with which the Danube Commission cooperates.

The objectives of this year's conference included the strengthening of all forms of cooperation, accelerating development of common standards for navigation on the Danube, increasing safety and security, and the implementation of infrastructure projects in accordance with European plans for transferring traffic from road and rail to more environmentally friendly transportation on the waterways.

## A brief history of the Danube conference

*Postwar discussions about the Danube River were begun by the United States in 1945 when President Truman proposed at the Potsdam Conference that freedom of navigation should be assured on Europe's inland waterways.*

The first Danube Conference was held in Belgrade on 30 July 1948 in the wake of World War II. Its purpose was to develop a new international body that would be responsible for the development and control of the Danube. This first conference resulted in several agreements, with the foreign ministers from the occupying forces of Britain, France, the USSR and the United States stipulating that:

Navigation on the Danube shall be free and open for the nationals, vessels of commerce and goods of all states, on a footing of equality in regard to port and navigation charges and conditions for merchant shipping. The foregoing shall not apply to traffic between ports of the same state.

The Danube Convention in Belgrade led to the establishment of the Danube Commission on 18 August 1948. The main objective of the Commission is, as it was then, to provide and develop free navigation on the Danube for commercial vessels flying the flag of all states in accordance with the interests and sovereign rights of the Member States of the Belgrade Convention. The Commission has also been successful in achieving its original objective of strengthening and developing economic and cultural relations, both between the Member States themselves and with other countries.

A separate commission, the International Danube Commission, or IDC, was formally organised after 1918 and is authorised to control commerce and improvements upriver beyond the Danube Delta.

The Danube Commission established in 1948 consisted of seven countries that

bordered the river and replaced previous commissions that had also included representatives of non-riparian powers. Today, the Member States of the Danube Commission are Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Germany, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine and Croatia. The Commission has had its seat in Budapest since 1954 and the Commission's official languages are German, Russian and French.

One of the Danube Commission's primary objectives is the creation of a unified navigation system for inland waterways throughout Europe and the Danube's integration into a European wide transport corridor with a unified European navigation system. The Commission actively cooperates with other international bodies involved in the different aspects of inland waterway transport to facilitate this integration. Cooperation partners include the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine, the European Commission and the ICPDR.

All stakeholders in the Commission actively support the investments necessary for the development of river infrastructure, including ports, fleet modernisation, digitalisation, education, improvement of administrative procedures, and the development and the application of intelligent transport systems. In doing so, the environmental benefits of inland waterway transport and the fight against climate change are ensured, thus preserving the Danube as one of Europe's most important lifelines.

Read more about the the Danube Convention:  
[www.danubecommission.org](http://www.danubecommission.org)



# Seventh Meeting of the Parties to the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin takes place in Bled

The seventh Meeting of the Parties to the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin (FASRB) was held on June 7 2018 in Bled, Slovenia. The meeting was attended by representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia, along with representatives from international organisations and institutions including UNECE, UNESCO, UNDP, the Danube Commission, ICPDR, World Bank, IOW, GWP-CEE and EURONATUR, and the President of the Sava Youth Parliament.



The key objective of the meeting was to review the status of implementation of the FASRB, as well as the key challenges ahead. Issues discussed included cooperation in the fields of river basin management, flood risk management, rehabilitation of navigation and the exchange of basin-relevant information. Particular attention was given to issues of sustainable development, along with the guidance provided for further cooperation within the framework of the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC).

In the field of sustainable water management, all parties reaffirmed their commitment to continuing the implementation of the Programme of Measures from the 1st Sava River Basin Management Plan and acknowledged efforts already made in the 2nd cycle of river basin management planning. Satisfaction was expressed concerning progress concerning the establishment of the Flood Forecasting and Warning System for the Sava River Basin and the development of a joint Flood Risk Management Plan.

## What is FASRB?

*The Meeting of the Parties is held at least once every two years with the aim of reviewing the work and actions of the Sava Commission. Decisions are made based on the proposals and recommendations of the Commission.*

The Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin (FASRB) was signed on 3 December 2002 and came into force on 29 December 2004. It was the first international agreement between the countries in the basin and the signatory states are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia. The objective of the agreement is the establishment of an international navigation regime, sustainable water manage-

ment, protection from the harmful effects of water and conservation measures to protect the region's ecosystems. The meeting also saw all Parties reconfirm their commitment to the development of sustainable, environmentally friendly navigation on the Sava River and its navigable tributaries in accordance with the "Joint Statement on Guiding Principles on the Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin". The importance of enhanced navigation as a means of stimulating further economic and social development in the region was also stressed.

Other important issues addressed at the meeting included:

- the potential for the development of synergies between the processes of implementation of the FASRB and EU strategies for the Danube and Adriatic-Ionian regions;
- the consequences of climate change and the need for effective adaptation measures in accordance with the guidelines of the Paris Agreement;
- the potential benefits of using FASRB

best practices for the implementation of EU strategies;

- the use of effective tools for public participation and stakeholder involvement, in particular the Sava Youth Parliament;
- progress made for information exchange through the further enhancement and upgrade of information systems such as Sava GIS and Sava HIS.

An exhibition was held during the meeting showing over 350 photographs chosen from the photo competition "Sava River Basin – Nature for Waters" conducted by the Sava Commission as part of Sava River Day 2018. The photos emphasised the richness of nature, biodiversity and the lives of people in the Sava River basin.

At the end of the meeting, all parties to the FASRB adopted a joint Declaration. The Meeting of the Parties to the FASRB takes place every two years and the next, and eighth, meeting will be held in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2020.

ment, protection from the harmful effects of water and conservation measures to protect the region's ecosystems.

The International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC or Sava Commission) is based in Zagreb and is the international body charged with the implementation of FASRB. The Meeting of the Parties to the FASRB is seen as an important opportuni-

ty to strengthen the role of the Sava Commission in the development of regional cooperation among the Sava countries and to recognise their joint interests and support them in achieving their goals.

Read more about the FASRB at:  
<http://www.savacommission.org/>



# Volunteers for People in Distress – the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW)

The THW (Bundesanstalt Technisches Hilfswerk) is a governmental civil protection organisation controlled by the German Federal Government. 99% of its almost 80,000 members are volunteers. As the cornerstone of civil protection in Germany, it also provides support and assistance in the case of natural disasters and accidents throughout the rest of the world. To date it has been deployed in more than 130 countries, with voluntary experts committing themselves to more than one million hours per year to providing worldwide civil protection.

THW, in its current form, was founded in 1950, shortly after the end of WWII. Its main original purpose was civil defence in the event of war, but this has changed over the decades and today it provides assistance and relief for a wide spectrum of disasters, not only in Germany but throughout the world. THW also supports other governmental and non-governmental organisations and other statutory authorities, including fire brigades and police forces.

Activities range from local accidents through to industrial disasters, flooding, earthquakes, hurricanes and Tsunamis. Deployments in recent years include the floods in Germany in 2013, the storm in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia in 2014, and the floods in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2014. Major THW operations in 2015 included assistance in Nepal after the earthquakes and its long-term contribution to the programme of assistance for refugees in Germany.



## Cooperation with the European Union

*The aim of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism is to coordinate the operations of civil protection services during large-scale disasters and serious emergencies. Such emergencies can be natural disasters or technological catastrophes, terrorist acts or marine pollution, occurring both within and outside the European Union.*

The Mechanism was established in 2001 and further developed in 2007. THW has been a major cooperation partner for this vital disaster management instrument since the very beginning, providing assistance over a wide range of activities.

A number of experts and units from THW are registered for operations abroad with the European Commission and can, in the event of a disaster, be requested by the EU. Acting on behalf of the Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid of the European Commission (ECHO), THW has also repeatedly implemented projects in countries outside the EU; for example, in regions of Indonesia destroyed by the Tsunami in 2004, and in Lebanon in 2006.

THW Rapid-Deployment-Units, known as “modules” are assembled according to EU-standards and facilitate the coordination of international operational units. THW also has designated experts

and units that are capable of operating within the framework of the Mechanism. In recent years, it has assumed an important role in the training of EU-experts for organised large-scale EU-exercises (e.g. EULUX 2007, ALBIS 2008) and has continuously contributed to the further development and organisation of European cooperation in the field of civil protection.

The hub of the EU Mechanism is the Monitoring and Information Center (MIC), which is attached to the European Commission Environment Directorate-General. Requests for help from countries in distress arrive at the center and are passed on to the participating states. Further elements of the Mechanism are the “Joint Information and Communication System” (CECIS), a database of the operational teams, experts, “modules” and the “Technical Assistance Support Teams” (TAST). A database with medical resources, an education programme, as well as tools for the deployment of search and coordination teams is also available.



© All fotos/THW Michael Mattes

Altogether, 31 states take part in the EU Mechanism: the member states of the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The Mechanism dates back to from a decision of the European Council on 23 October 2001. On 8 November 2007, it was replaced by an amendment. It is accompanied by a financial instrument (according to a decision of the Council of 5 March 2007), which finances different projects in the field of disaster management, such as training, large-scale exercises and the deployment of expert teams.

## THW People

There are approximately 80,000 active unpaid volunteers in the THW who are motivated by their conviction to help people in need. This commitment to the THW offers a sense of belonging to a community, a challenging hobby and a source of new experiences and challenges. Men and women from all walks of life are active within the THW, both young and old, regardless of their nationality, and with both technical and non-technical backgrounds. In fact, anyone who wants to join THW can.

## THW Local Sections

There are many local sections of the THW in cities and rural districts across Germany, each possessing its own premises and the necessary technical equipment. THW members work together to structure the operation of their local section, where they receive their basic technical training and regularly training exercises for their operations. They are a closely-knit community who rely on one another. Members of these local sections meet regularly on weekday evenings and at weekends, thereby making it possible to combine their voluntary commitment to THW with their jobs.

Children and young people are also welcome at THW. Each local section has at least one youth group where children and young people from the age of six to seventeen are introduced to civil protection. This

includes technical training and leisure-time activities, and also offers the opportunity to take part in international exchange programmes with partner countries.

## Training at THW

THW volunteers are trained to deal with a wide range of situations. Many THW training courses are certified externally and most skills acquired are also useful for their professional or leisure-time activities. Members benefit from basic technical training courses, with a wide range of specialisations available, including skills in the fields of search and rescue, electricity and drinking water supply, logistics and command and communication. The range of training also includes non-technical qualifications for administrative work, as well as for catering, press and PR activities. Training, equipment and any necessary protective clothing are provided by the THW free of charge, and there is no membership fee.

## THW Operations

When a local section is summoned to an operation, an alert is sent out to its members. Emergencies are unpredictable and provisions are therefore made with the members' employers in case they are required during normal working hours. Ac-

tivities also take place in the evenings and at weekends. German law ensures that THW operatives do not suffer any professional disadvantages due to their voluntary commitments. They are also insured and continue to receive

their salaries (which are refunded to the employer by the THW), even during extended periods of service.

## Cooperation at a local level

THW activities are not just restricted to regional and national catastrophes. This year, the regional group in Neuburg an der Donau in Bavaria took part in the Danube Day celebrations. Volunteers collected rubbish from riverbanks along the Danube and two islands. The THW and the Red Cross provided staff to support the activities and also boats to take the volunteers to the riverbanks and islands and transport all the rubbish collected.

It is especially important for local water administration agencies to be able to call on the THW, even in times when there is no crisis. Such activities are a golden opportunity for local communities to get to know THW members and the services and cooperation that they are able to offer.

**Thore Gauda** coordinates the communication and public relation work in the field of water and soil protection for the Bavarian State Ministry of Environment and Consumer Protection. He is also a member of the Public Participation Expert Group of the ICPDR.

# Pure Water for Generations – an interview with Pascal Roesler

Last summer Pascal Roesler, a former businessman from Munich who is now director of the non-profit group “Pure Water for Generations”, paddled almost the whole length of the Danube until its estuary in the Black Sea. His journey of 2,467 km and 63 days on the water was for a good cause – to raise both money and awareness for our most precious of resources: water. We caught up with him recently to see how things have changed for him in the last twelve months and what he has been up to recently.

## PEOPLE OF THE DANUBE

In the interview series “People of the Danube”, Danube Watch presents personal portraits of individuals who are passionate about the Danube Basin and its waters.

**Danube Watch:** *What progress do you think has been made since the start of your epic journey one year ago?*

When I completed my journey on the stand-up paddle board from Munich to the Black Sea on July 20, 2017, I was simply thinking about one stroke of the paddle at a time. I wanted to feel the river, meet the people of the Danube and just live for the moment. I wanted to completely absorb myself in the process of a journey along this amazing river.

Along the way I became even more aware of the importance

of our water and how the cycle of water and the cycle of life are actually one and the same. I wanted everyone to share my experiences. Luckily, I was accompanied by a camera team on 20 of the 63 days and we therefore decided to make a film of the journey. I am very grateful for that and on February 8, 2018, the film's premiere, entitled 2467km - A Journey to the Black Sea, took place in Munich in front of 370 guests. People keep tell-

ing me just how awesome they find the movie and this gives me a great deal of positive energy.

Some schools became aware of my project and in July 2018 we had water days at two schools in Bavaria - one on the Tegernsee and the other on the Danube - with a total of 250 young people. First we showed

up paddle boards. 15 stand-up paddlers cleared plastic from a 5 kilometer stretch of the river, collecting 13 large rubbish sacks full of plastic and other waste. The local press and Bavarian television even reported it and over 50,000 people saw the article online. Who would have thought this possible a year ago?



Last but not least, the idea for a tour of the River Salzach came about as a result of the film tour. The Salzach begins its journey at an altitude of 2,300 meters in the Kitzbuehl Alps in Tirol and flows for 225 kilometers before flow-

ing into the River Inn, which in turn then flows through Passau and into the Danube. We started the Salzach tour this month on September 2 and ended on September 9, 2018, accompanied by 35 fellow stand-up paddlers.

the film and then we went to the water and paddled together on stand-up paddle boards. Many more such water days are planned for schools in Germany in 2019. Another great project was born out of the inspiration of the film. A friend of mine André Wacke, who is also an avid stand-up paddler, was inspired by the film and organised a beach-cleaning event at his home on the River Loisach with stand-

**Danube Watch:** *As soon as you became familiar with the work of the ICPDR, you immediately offered to cooperate with us. What do you find inspiring about our work?*



What inspired me from my very first meeting with the ICPDR at the UN in Vienna on July 31, 2017 was your enthusiasm and respect for the Danube across all national borders. I felt the importance of seeing things from a broader perspective. The Danube is a perfect example of this as it makes its way through ten countries, and shares a basin with 14 countries paying absolutely no heed to borders. To observe this philosophy in your daily work is something very special and shows how important it is to consider the overall picture: in other words, the 2,857 river kilometres from Donaueschingen in the Black Forest to Sulina on the Black Sea.

None of these projects or events were planned; they were all the result of me making the first spontaneous stroke of the paddle. That's why it's so important to just start – take the first step and then follow your intuition!

**Danube Watch:** *What are your aims and plans for the future? For example, what do you hoped to have achieved in twenty five years time from now?*

During my 63 days on the Danube, I had a great deal of time to think about things. I have a vision, more of a dream: I want to help to make the Danube water drinkable within 25 years. By drinkable I mean that it's possible to take a few sips of water from the Danube without it being harmful

to your health. This may be a very utopian vision, but one I still allow myself to dream.

In the end, it is up to all of us to find a way of becoming more aware of our daily actions, to consume less and live a life in harmony with nature. My experience in my working life has clearly shown me that having a wide-ranging vision is the most important thing if change is to happen. I don't yet know yet what the road ahead will bring.

Only one thing is certain: if we conduct ourselves in the same way as the Danube: living in harmony with the flow and the currents, then I am sure that we are on the right track.

I would like to share a personal afterthought with Danube Watch readers. After my voyage, my mother told me that my grandfather had made a river trip on the Danube in 1969 with the city council of Dillingen (Bavaria on the Danube where I grew up).

The journey was filmed and shown in Dillingen in the same year. After a long search, we have now found the film reels and in



the next few weeks I will watch the movie with my family and friends. My grandfather's journey almost 50 years after my own journey. *Panta rhei!*\*

*"Aloha"*

\*everything flows



**Foldout to find out about Danube Day Celebrations 2018**

Fourteen countries marked the 15<sup>th</sup> Danube Day: a superb celebration of the many ways that rivers enrich our lives.

# DANUBE DAY 2018: GET ACTIVE FOR A HEALTHIER DANUBE!

The ICPDR would like to thank everyone involved in Danube Day 2018. Read about events and organisers at [www.danubeday.org](http://www.danubeday.org).

## GERMANY 1

Bavarians got active with riverbank clean-ups, a mass river swim and floodplain forest tours. Environment Minister Marcel Huber signed a declaration creating a 'people-free' Danube island. In Baden-Württemberg, the International Danube Festival opened with a parade of 650 flags representing Danube diversity. Visitors explored interactive models, learning about flooding and river revitalisation.



## THE CZECH REPUBLIC 2

Prague joined in the festivities with a Water Research Institute Open Day. Fun activities and films educated school groups about river conservation and regional cooperation. Mosty u Jablunkova's annual party in Moravia-Silesia saw children take on challenges to win Danube Day goodies.



## AUSTRIA 3

Danube fun filled Vienna's City Park (Stadtspark), where 1,000 children, including a delegation from Romania, enjoyed eco challenges, fascinating facts, creatures, crafts and competitions. Hosted by TV star, Robert Steiner, it showcased Danube diversity and nurtured young people's enthusiasm to protect the river. An exhibition to mark 24 years of basin-wide cooperation was held in the Rotunda at the Vienna International Centre. © BMNT/Paul Gruber

## SLOVAKIA 4

3,500 people enjoyed three family festivals. Highlights included TV celebrity Thomas Puskaier's ECO H2O Tour, which explained water conservation in an entertaining way. An exhilarating day at Gabčíkovo included free cruises, rescue demos, virtual kayaking, a foam show and a Circus of the Giants! New for 2018, the Waterworks Museum featured magic physics, mini aquariums and art workshops. © Ministry of Environment



## HUNGARY 5

Community and professional events reached out to tens of thousands of people. In Érsekcsanád, Hungarians and Serbs shared music and their friendly rivalry in sport and fish soup cooking, and heard river management speeches by the ICPDR and state officials. Győr's water-based fun was a hit at the Győrkiócs youth festival, while the Danube Children's Festival found a new home at Budapest Zoo. An international conference also discussed ways to combat plastic pollution. © General Directorate of Water Management

## SLOVENIA 6

11,000 people took action for a sustainable future. At the Bled Water Festival, expert panels and participants from eight countries tackled barriers to sustainable water management and children were awarded prizes for innovative projects. Sustainable tourism was debated at the Sava Youth Parliament. While, in the 'My river' contest, volunteers cleared a mighty 80 tons of waste! © Jaka Valjavec

## CROATIA 7

In Ilok, community action led by Hrvatske vode, local groups and Coca-Cola HBC resulted in the clearing of 2km of riverbanks. A workshop on protecting Danube resources took place near Osijek. The Green Osijek Eco Festival at Zlatna Greda celebrated both Danube Day and the anniversary of the Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve.

## BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA 8

Ekotim celebrated by hosting the national Art Master awards and organising a school trip to the Bosna spring. Visitors learnt about conserving water resources and maintaining wildlife diversity; the visit fostered a desire to protect rivers and the Danube Basin in general. © Ekotim

## SERBIA 9

Three months of celebration began in Belgrade and spread to Bela Crkva, Stara Palanka, Veliko Gradište, Bačka Palanka, Novi Sad, Pancevo and Čuprija! Enthusiasm for rivers was nurtured through workshops, boat trips and regattas. The Zemun Quay trail saw children navigate between fun activities, learning about rivers along the way. Drawing solidarity symbols onto stones, they threw them into the water to send 'water-mail' downstream.



# DANUBE DAY



## MONTENEGRO 10

Montenegro joined the celebrations in 2018, with a festival at the breathtakingly beautiful Crno jezero in Durmitor National Park. Run by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and Zabljak Tourist Organisation, families enjoyed boating, orienteering, woodland art and eco workshops.

## BULGARIA 12

Festivities covered all seven Danube provinces, motivating 2500 visitors to cycle, cook, fish, get creative and clear rubbish from the Danube. In Belene, WWF enlisted locals to take action for sturgeon conservation. In Rousse, 200 musicians performed Danube pieces at the State Opera House; and in Sofia, experts discussed climate change and trends in water resources.

## UKRAINE 14

Always colourful and innovative, Zakarpattya's event introduced a pirate's regatta and eco-knights quest to combat plastic pollution! These new heroes inspired children in Kvasovo to craft fabulous boats from plastic waste, complete the knights' eco-challenge and take to the stage to persuade people to reduce plastic waste. Highlights included the knights' duel; canoe trip accompanied by plastic boats; and knighting of the children for services to rivers! Elsewhere, WWF championed sturgeon conservation in Vylkove.  
© Ostap Tsapulych

## ROMANIA 11

60 actions saw thousands get active across all 11 Water Basin Administrations. Minister Ioan Denes was joined by 100 specialists and stakeholders for a main event in Orşova. A parallel children's festival educated future river stewards on how to ensure waters are fit to drink and safe for wildlife. While, Galati's 4-day extravaganza featured a spectacular light show, parade and flashmob.  
© WMS Calarasi

## MOLDOVA 13

On the banks of the Danube-Prut confluence in Djurdjulesti, folk teams entertained 1,000 residents and government and embassy officials to celebrate the region's rich traditions and a sustainable future. Hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment, water resource projects were presented including the newly-designated Lower Prut UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.  
© Dumitru Drumea

## | Suzie Holt

(suzie@wyldwooded.co.uk) lives in the 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.



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