

DANUBE WATCH

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6 THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION

Focusing on areas as diverse as easing navigability, improving water quality, strengthening security and building prosperity, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region is also laying the foundation for long-term, sustainable cooperation. The environmental effects of this cooperation will influence neighbouring regions – how will this be possible with existing funds?

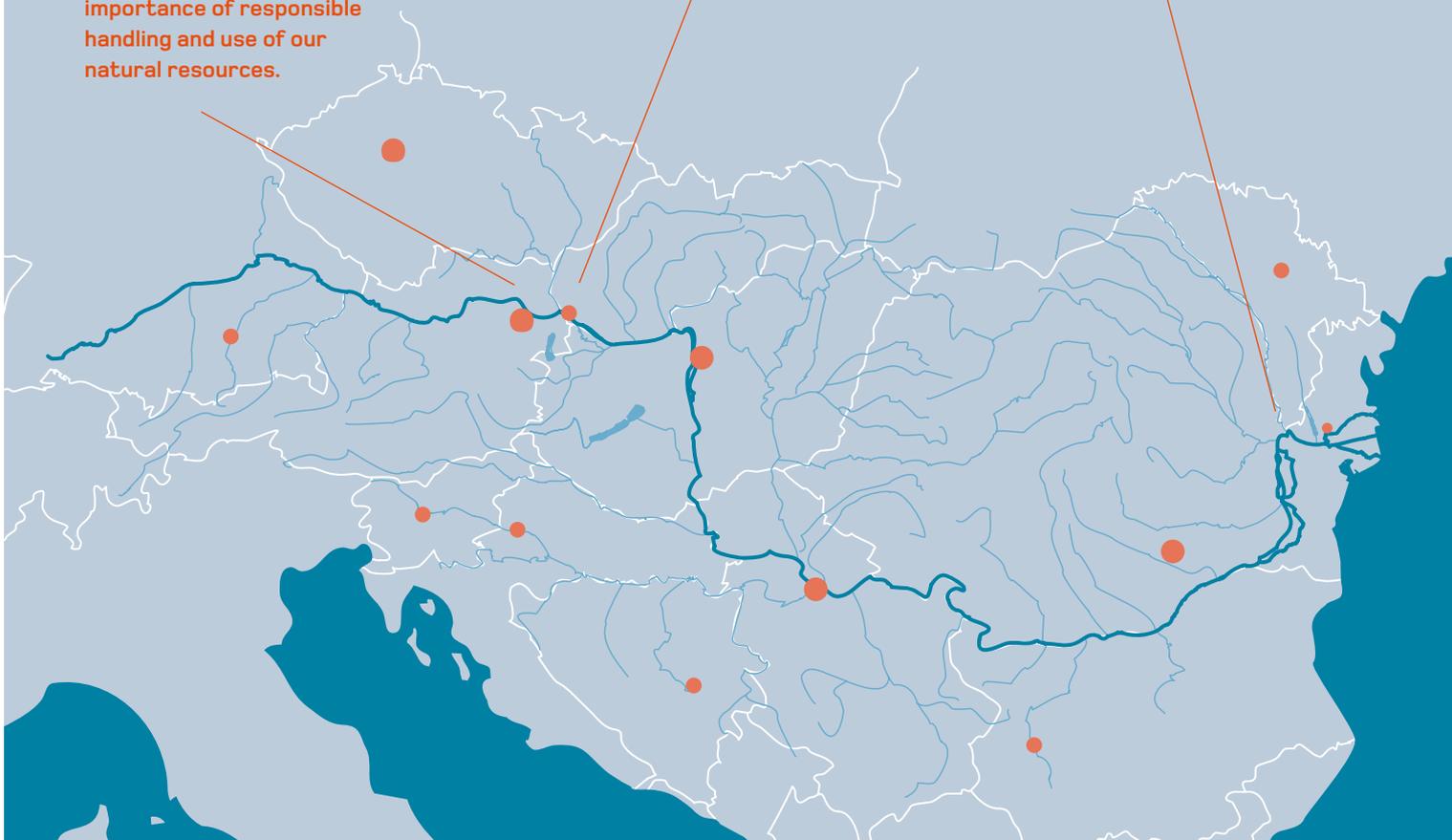
22 DANUBE DAY 2011: ACTION ON THE RIVERS AND ONLINE!

- 3 Letter to readers
- 4 News & events
- 6 One Danube, one strategy
- 8 Encouraging immediate action from all players
- 10 Who finances the EU Strategy for the Danube Region?
- 12 An environmental bridge between the Danube and the Black Sea
- 14 Cooperation on a grand scale
- 16 The Danube River: classroom for a day
- 18 Cooperation is easy sailing for the Joint Danube Delta Survey
- 20 The Danube meets China's Yellow River
- 21 Working together to share knowledge
- 22 Danube Day 2011: action on the rivers and online!
- 26 Filling the gap between science and policy

21
Senec, Slovakia
Eight Danube countries participated in a specialised course to learn methods of analysing biological quality elements that would be compliant with the EU Water Framework Directive.

18
Giurgiulesti, Moldova
On 26 September, two ships – the 'Cyclone' and the 'Roua' – carrying 23 researchers from Moldova, Romania and Ukraine set sail for the first joint survey of the Danube Delta.

16
Donau-Auen National Park, Austria
Over 400 Austrian teenagers participated in the annual Danube Challenge to raise awareness among children and teenagers of the importance of responsible handling and use of our natural resources.





Credit: ICPDR/ Stigsmüller

Dear readers,

Some 20 years ago, the world was undergoing rapid change. The fall of the Iron Curtain transformed geopolitical conditions on a global scale. New technologies started to accelerate the exchange of information. And societies all over Europe became increasingly aware of the need for protecting the environment. As always in times of change, opportunities emerged.

The sustainable way we manage nature today might not be the most obvious difference from the 1980s, but it could well turn into the most lasting one. It was in 1992 that the Earth Summit in Rio and the resulting Agenda 21 opened the way for environmental protection. Rapidly, it moved from the grass roots of citizen groups and local NGOs to the highest level of policy. A mere two years later, the signing of the Danube River Protection Convention was one of many multilateral treaties through which countries committed to a more responsible approach to nature.

In 1998, the ICPDR started its work, and it was during my presidency in 2010 that the adoption of the Danube River Basin Management Plan created another milestone in the history of environmental policy in Europe.

The past 20 years were an era in which environmental protection penetrated all levels of society from the bottom to the top. Recently, the ICPDR was recognised as a key player by the UN Global Environmental Facility at a conference celebrating its 20th anniversary. Acknowledgements such as this show how far environmental protection

has come since the time in which environmentalism was limited to occupying flood plain forests to protect them from destruction.

Now, 20 years on, environmental management is moving back from the political top to the base of all policy: to the people, to all of society. Through the Danube Declaration of 2010, the ICPDR recognised the need for integrated and inter-sectoral management of water. Environmental policy can never stand alone, it needs to be harmonised with needs from socio-cultural and economic conditions. Such integrated policies are implemented on the ground: in businesses, in municipalities, at schools. Healthy rivers as the substrate for any human development – this is the vision of the ICPDR. It is a similar vision that drives the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

The Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP) is an environmental pillar on which the sustainable future in the Danube River Basin (DRB) – the Danube Strategy - should be built. The Strategy pursues the same integrated approach, links water quality with navigation, education with biodiversity, agriculture with climate change. The ‘Danube Strategy’ is building on more than 20 years of hard work on all levels of society. It is this strategy that this issue of Danube Watch is dedicated to. I hope you enjoy it!

Mitja Brancelj, Director of the Institute for Water of the Republic of Slovenia, ICPDR President 2010 and a participant at the first Rio Summit.

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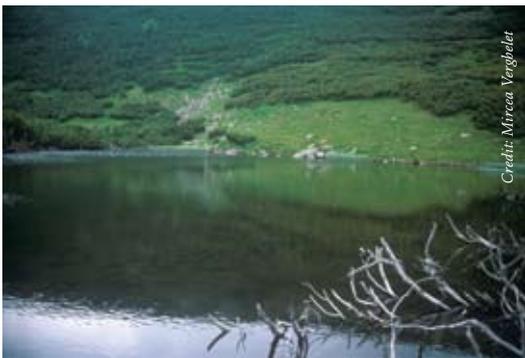
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20 YEARS OF GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

The 6th GEF Biennial International Waters Conference, held in Dubrovnik, marked the 20th anniversary of the UN's Global Environment Facility and focussed on transboundary water results. The aim of the conference was to facilitate cross-sectoral learning and experience sharing. Sub-themes included environmental finance, featuring a corporate responsibility roundtable that involved the Green Danube Partnership with the Coca-Cola network. The ICPDR was represented by President Mykola Melenvskyi, future president Wolfgang Stalzer, Executive Secretary Philip Weller, as well as other participants in the ICPDR/Tisza GEF project.

Learn more about the Global Environment Facility here: www.thegef.org



ONE MILLION EURO GRANT FOR ROMANIAN PROJECT

A Romanian environmental protection initiative supported by ICPDR partner Coca-Cola Hellenic received a one million euro grant from the European Union. The funding, awarded to the NGO Tasuleasa Social, will be used to develop a management plan for the Calimani National Park. Key elements of the plan will include biodiversity protection, development of institutional structures and educational programmes. The implementation will span 27 months and involve the Ministry of Environment and Forests with several other partners.

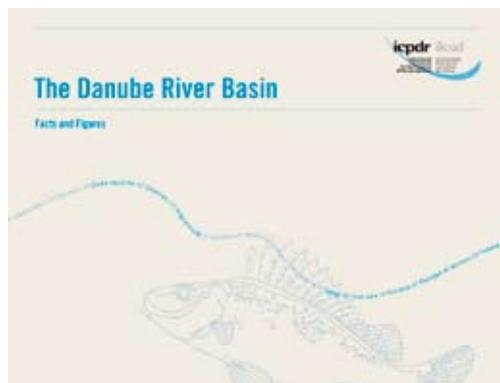
Learn more about the Calimani National Park here: www.calimani.ro



GORAN GUGIĆ AWARDED WITH EURONATUR PRIZE 2011

The Croatian conservationist Goran Gugić received the EuroNatur Award 2011. As manager of Lonjsko Polje Nature Park in the Sava floodplains, Goran Gugić has created a model of how cultural landscapes in Europe can be efficiently protected. However, Gugić's activities are not limited to the national level; his work contributed considerably to the development of a trans-border biosphere reserve along the Mura-Drava-Danube Rivers, which were formalised in March this year.

Learn more about the Nature Park here: www.pp-lonjsko-polje.hr

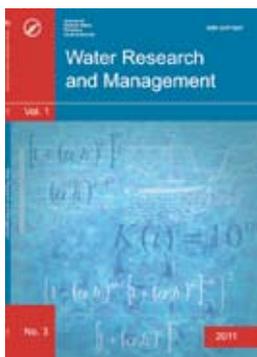


FACTS AND FIGURES ON THE DANUBE RIVER BASIN

With 19 countries, more than 80 million people and a wealth of landscapes, cultures and ecosystems the Danube River Basin is characterised by rich diversity. To give an overview, the ICPDR has now published a new brochure: 'The Danube River Basin - Facts and Figures' condensing information from a range of subjects in a comprehensible and accessible format. Even though the focus lies on environmental aspects, it also demonstrates social, cultural and economic sides of the basin. The brochure is distributed through the contracting parties of the ICPDR and its secretariat.

Download the new brochure here:

www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/facts_and_figures_brochure.htm



NEW JOURNAL 'WATER RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT'

The Serbian Water Pollution and Control Society launched a new scientific journal, called 'Water Research and Management'. Milan A. Dimkić, editor-in-chief of the peer-review publication, describes the objective as being: "to respond to the general need for such a publication and to benefit Serbia, the region and the extended international community". The journal will be published four times a year and each issue will contain eight research articles. Igor Liska of the ICPDR Secretariat is a member of the editorial board.

Learn more about the new journal here: www.wrmjournal.com



LORD OF THE DANUBE: FILM ON THE GREAT STURGEON BY WWF

The WWF Danube Carpathian Program has released a film on sturgeons called 'Lords of the Danube'. The documentary focuses on the conservation of this fish, and dedicates a lot of attention to the people involved with its protection. Five out of six sturgeon species are threatened and on the brink of extinction. The film tells the viewers about the value of sturgeons, cultural stories about them, and the fact that, despite threats, there is hope to save their dwindling numbers. The film can be viewed in two parts on YouTube, the long version is just over 20 minutes, and a five-minute version is also available.

See 'Lords of the Danube' on YouTube:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kc75EZKD4nE&



NEW BOOK ON THE BAVARIAN-AUSTRIAN PART OF THE DANUBE

A new book was published on the Bavarian and neighbouring Austrian part of the Danube, 'Das bayerisch-österreichische Donauengtal' presents the nature and culture of one of the most scenic stretches of this river. Published by COM Verlag, the book is packed with high-quality photographs and short articles putting a spotlight on specific subjects. These range from bridges to hydropower, from art initiatives to architecture, from flood protection to local fisheries. 176 pages, €28.50.

Learn more about this book here: www.com-pr.de/verlag/



The Danube Strategy puts the region on track to protect the environment, connect the Danube countries, build prosperity and strengthen the Danube region.

One Danube, one strategy

The EU's new approach for the Danube region aims to increase the sustainable development of the region while protecting natural resources, landscapes and cultural heritage – but it's doing so by strengthening cohesion and reducing regional differences.

The Danube stretches from the Black Forest to the Black Sea, linking 14 countries and 81 million people across Europe. However, the region faces many challenges, such as lack of road and rail connections, uncoordinated efforts in education, research and innovation as well as environmental problems. The EU Strategy for the Danube Region provides an opportunity for countries to respond cooperatively to global challenges like these – as well as energy demands, security and the effects of climate change – which require a coordinated cross-border approach.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region uses a 'macro-regional' framework to produce more effective coordination to address issues. This approach, successfully pioneered in the Baltic region, doesn't create new laws or institutions, but strengthens links between policies and a wide range of shareholders.

Fourteen countries working as one. The Strategy brings together nine Member States – Germany (Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria), Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania – and six non-Member States – Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova and Ukraine.

According to Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, countries should focus on the interests of the region, rather than those of their own states: "The success of the Danube Region Strategy depends on whether everybody can consider the Strategy as their own, and whether we can set such ambitious and realistic objectives that are considered equally important, by everyone," says Hahn.

Focusing on the Strategy. The Strategy contains an action plan based on four pillars: connecting the region, protecting the environment, building prosperity and strengthening the Danube region. Based on these



Credit: ICPDR/Mello

four pillars, the Strategy focuses on eleven priority areas. At least two countries will be responsible for each priority area; every Member State will work on at least one priority area, and non-Member States will play an active role.

For all priority areas, steering groups have been established to discuss the challenges in the priority areas, agree achievable targets and identify viable projects in the Danube region. The steering groups are managed by the priority area Coordinators and include representatives of all Danube countries active in the particular priority area field. In addition, all priority areas have adopted specific targets. These targets further focus the work of the priority area, or in some cases are new targets have been added by the steering groups.

A ten-year timeline. There isn't a single deadline tying the Danube Strategy together. Instead, the objective of the Strategy is to lay the foundation for long-term cooperation. While individual schedules will be maintained for all of the projects contained in the action plan, results from the Strategy itself will play out on a longer scale: "Ten years is the timeframe in which people living in the Danube region should experience specific changes, if the Strategy is to be implemented appropriately," says Hahn.

THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION

Connecting the region

Priority Area 1:

Improve mobility and multimodality
Inland waterways – coordinated by Austria and Romania
Rail, road and air – coordinated by Slovenia and Serbia

Priority Area 2:

Encourage more sustainable energy
Coordinated by Hungary and the Czech Republic

Priority Area 3:

Promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts
Coordinated by Bulgaria and Romania

Protecting the environment

Priority Area 4:

Restore and maintain the quality of waters
Coordinated by Hungary and Slovakia

Priority Area 5:

Manage environmental risks
Coordinated by Hungary and Romania

Priority Area 6:

Preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils
Coordinated by Germany (Bavaria) and Croatia

Building prosperity

Priority Area 7:

Develop the knowledge society (research, education and ICT)
Coordinated by Slovakia and Serbia

Priority Area 8:

Support the competitiveness of enterprises
Coordinated by Germany (Baden-Württemberg) and Croatia

Strengthening the Danube region

Priority Area 9:

Invest in people and skills
Coordinated by Austria and Moldova

Priority Area 10:

Step up institutional capacity and cooperation
Coordinated by Austria and Slovenia

Priority Area 11:

Work together to promote security and tackle organised and serious crime
Coordinated by Germany (Bavaria) and Bulgaria

For now, the Danube Strategy is already proving that for countries to take on global challenges, they must enter a higher level of cooperation.

For more information about some of the current projects that will help achieve the Strategy's goals, turn to the back cover fold-out.

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

Encouraging immediate action from all players

Coordinators have begun preparing for the Strategy's implementation, identifying the measures that are urgently needed to revive the region and to explore its full economic potential. Getting all stakeholders involved – especially private players – will be the key to the Strategy's success.

To steer through the Danube Strategy, countries in the region need to ensure that all stakeholders are involved, especially private players.

I think it is up to private stakeholders to push and to make proposals for realisation, or to do it themselves.



The Success of the Strategy requires joining forces in strategic as well as operational implementation. A Public Private Community Partnership could be a useful model, where both the national and regional government and private players work together, with the focus shifted towards achieving targets as well as creating profit. Erhard Busek, Coordinator of the South-Easter Cooperative Initiative and Chairman of the Institute for Danube Region and Central Europe, speaks to Danube Watch about the need to bring all players together, and to get them to take immediate action.

Danube Watch: You often emphasise that you as an 'elder statesman' can be more open and critical than active politicians. Do you see aspects of the EU Danube Strategy where active politicians are not critical enough?

Busek: Concerning the EU Danube Strategy, the majority of politicians are not active enough. So far they have to be pushed, because it is an outstanding opportunity for the region. Especially in regards to the economic situation, but also in for ecological issues it is necessary to do more than is currently happening.



Credit: Silvia Ruffaelli

INSTITUTE FOR THE DANUBE REGION AND CENTRAL EUROPE

The Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM) was founded in Austria in 1953 as the 'Research Institute for Issues of the Danube Region'. Today, the IDM serves as a research institute and think tank for government agencies and institutions in the fields of politics, education, culture and business. IDM carries out research projects dealing with current political, sociological, economic, cultural and ethnic issues of the Danube region and Central Europe. Results are distributed through educational activities and events, as well as through publications.

As a gateway and facilitator institution, IDM supports the work of embassies, trade missions, cultural institutes and national tourist offices of the countries of the Danube region and Central and Southeast Europe.

Danube Watch: How would you compare the relevance of public players (national, regional and municipal governments) versus private ones (NGOs, companies, etc.) in the Danube Strategy?

Busek: Public and private players have a very different role and responsibility. I think it is up to private stakeholders to push and to make proposals for realisation, or to do it themselves. The responsibility of the public player is to assure better cooperation and to set time limits in which things can be done.

Danube Watch: Which milestones would you define to monitor the success of the strategy over the next one or two years?

Busek: If some projects are started and the framework of a strategy can be recognised for the next one or two years, then it is a great success.

Danube Watch: Which policy should succeed the Danube Strategy? Should it be linked up with other regional development papers?

Busek: The Danube Strategy is a part of European Strategy. I believe that it should be also linked with the Carpathian and with the Adriatic Strategy also as with the Black Sea Area.

Danube Watch: Europe, 2020. What will be different due to the Danube Strategy?

Busek: Europe 2020 should be a time where a closer regional cooperation is in existence for the Danube. The aim should be for the Danube to play the same role at the Rheine River in terms of European integration. The aim there was to overcome the river as a line of division. The same should happen for the Danube.

ERHARD BUSEK

Erhard Busek is the Coordinator of the South-Eastern Cooperative Initiative, a project created in 1996 to enhance stability in Southeastern Europe through the development of economic and environmental cooperation. He is also the Chairman of the Institute for Danube Region and Central Europe.

Mr. Busek served as Deputy Mayor of the City of Vienna, Austria, from 1978 to 1987. He was appointed Austrian Minister for Science and Research in 1989, and from 1991 to 1995 served as Vice-Chancellor of Austria. From 2000 to 2001, he was Special Representative of the Austrian Government for the Enlargement of the European Union. From January 2002 he was Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, a position he held until the handover of the mandate of the Stability Pact to the Regional Cooperation Council. Mr. Busek holds a law degree from the University of Vienna.

Concerning the EU Danube Strategy, the majority of politicians are not active enough. So far they have to be pushed, because it is an outstanding opportunity for the region.

Financing the Danube Strategy will require a wider cooperation between stakeholders and a more efficient use of existing funding.



Who finances the EU Strategy for the Danube Region?

Although the Strategy does not come with extra EU financing, a considerable amount of funding is already available to the region through various EU programmes. The most efficient use of these existing funds will require cooperation.



On 24 June 2011 the EU Strategy for the Danube Region was endorsed by the EU Council. It includes an action plan with concrete actions and projects and at the same time the well-known three NOs: no new funds, no new structures, no new legislation. This clearly means that existing funds and structures have to be used. But how is this possible?

No new structures does not mean there is no governance: under the EU Council, a high level group of Member States follows up on the progress of the action plan, while the actual implementation of the 11 priority areas of the Strategy is coordinated by institutions of the Danube Region countries. These are reporting to the European Commission, which in turn reports to the high level group.

Coordinating existing sources. No new funding does not mean there is no money: as a consequence of no funding, projects and actions of the 11 priority areas have to be financed by available financing sources. These are national and regional structural funds programmes (so called convergence, competitiveness and territorial cooperation), other EU programmes and initiatives, as well as national funds. International, public and private financing institutions complete the list of potential sources. It is indeed a very heterogeneous funding context for the Strategy, with several governance structures, financing mechanisms, criteria and timetables. To help coordinators and project promoters gaining an overview, the Strategy portal www.danube-region.eu includes a comprehensive list of funding opportunities.

“The platform is already proving to be a useful tool for exchanging ideas and information,” says Adriana Kiss-Davies, desk officer at EU Commission, DG Regional Policy.

Nonetheless, a one-stop shop for financing Strategy projects does not exist and is not planned. Even though this would make projects promoters’ lives easier, it is simply not feasible: can you imagine one institution being responsible for assessing and financing projects in all themes for all Danube Region countries? How could it possibly cover health care, competitiveness, biodiversity, SMEs, organised crime prevention and so on. all at the same time? It would go far beyond the European Union competences and certainly be against the ambition to bring public and private funding together.

“The strategy is of course much wider than cooperation programmes, in terms of objectives, scope and geographical coverage,” says David Sweet, policy adviser to the Director-General, EU Commission, DG Regional Policy.

A new form of cooperation. Only an open governance structure, such as the one of the Strategy, can possibly aspire to align actions of all national, regional and local stakeholders across the Danube Region, towards the same identified priorities.

“More generally, the macro-regional strategies of the Baltic Sea and the Danube Region are new and innovative approaches for regional policy,” says Dirk Ahner, Director General, DG Regional Policy, European Commission. “Looking to the future, they could serve as good examples of how to address challenges and opportunities in an integrated, crosscutting way, focusing on strategic priorities for a specific region and making best use of a series of different policies and resources.”

Bringing programming in line with the Strategy. Current structural funds and sectoral programmes (2007–2013 programming) have not been developed according to the Strategy, but they are already financing many projects in line with the Strategy, like other financing institutions. At the same time, a stronger role for macro-regional strategies has been foreseen for the up-coming programming (2014–2020).

“The approval of the Strategy at the end of the current programming period is a ‘challenge’, since most of the available amounts are already committed,” says Petra Szavics, Ministry of Environment and Forests of Romania, and Mr Peter Bakonyi, VITUKI Non-profit Ltd, Hungary, priority area coordinators. “At the same time, if we look at it from the perspective of the next programming period, the Strategy comes as an ‘opportunity’, just in time, to be addressed in programme

planning.”

Sharing expertise. Of course, there is certainly a clear need to explore effective mechanisms and processes to align the heterogeneous funding of the current programming period. To do this, expertise on funds in a multi-national context is needed. This is why, INTERACT has been involved: we have this expertise, the overview of territorial cooperation and networks management is our daily business. Since March 2011, our work is supported by a think tank of Danube Region financing institutions and priority area coordinators, called Labgroup. We are convinced that its work is contributing to filling in the gap between decision-making on projects by priority area coordinators, on the one side, and financing decisions by funding bodies, on the other.

These are some interesting key points made at the Labgroup:

1. The Strategy is not about additional funding, it is about more cooperation: it makes enhanced cooperation possible, among institutional and non-institutional stakeholders at national, regional and local level, across the whole Danube Region.

2. The Strategy still relies on existing funding opportunities: rules, criteria, procedures and decision-making for financing do not change because of the Strategy.

3. The Strategy means strengthened and new networks: priority area coordinators, the projects and actions they promote, make existing networks stronger or build up new networks.

4. The Strategy means more visibility for concrete project achievements: for its success, the Strategy needs concrete projects results, to be made visible to the Danube Region citizens and decision-makers.

5. The Strategy is about more efficient use of funding: different ways can be found to align several funding sources: a project can be financed by several funding sources along a consecutive time line, for example. Or an action can be composed by different projects running in parallel, all contributing to a common goal. Or even new financing instruments, governed by one cooperation structure, but financed by several funds, can be created. There are already good examples considered by the Labgroup and the priority area coordinators.

The Strategy is an opportunity for the Danube Region to grow faster together. To make it happen, we have first to believe in it.

Mauro Novello is the coordinator of the INTERACT Point Vienna.

“Looking to the future, [the macro-regional strategies of the Baltic Sea and the Danube Region] could serve as good examples of how to address challenges and opportunities in an integrated, crosscutting way, focusing on strategic priorities for a specific region and making best use of a series of different policies and resources,” says Dirk Ahner, Director General, DG Regional Policy, European Commission.

An environmental bridge between the Danube and the Black Sea

The EU Strategy for the Danube region brings together 14 countries to preserve biodiversity and protect nature. However the environmental effects of this cooperation will influence neighbouring regions, include the waters of the Black Sea.

LÁSZLÓ BORBÉLY

László Borbély became the Minister of Environment and Forests in 2009. He presided over the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in 2010, and since 2011 has served as the co-chair of the European Environmental and Health Ministerial Board.

As a Member of the Romanian Parliament from 2000, László Borbély was President of the External Affairs Commission of the Chamber of Deputies. Between 2004 and 2007 he was Delegated Minister the Ministry of Transports, Constructions and Tourism and in the period 2007–2008 was Minister of Development, Public Works and Housing. From 1996 until 2000 he was a State Secretary in the Ministry of Public Works and Spatial Planning.

Minister Borbély holds a BA and a PhD in Economic Sciences.

The Danube Strategy provides an opportunity to strengthen links between the Danube and the Black Sea Basins.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region will help the region flourish and develop the economic potential of the Danube River – all the while working to restore water quality and manage environmental risks. László Borbély, Minister of Environment and Forests, speaks to Danube Watch about balancing environmental issues in the Strategy, and how the EU Strategy for the Danube Region will influence work in the Black Sea.

Danube Watch: Are environmental issues sufficiently considered in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)?

Borbély: Generally the EUSDR promotes a sustainable development approach, a balance between development and environmental protection as well as the necessity to apply the environmental *acquis communautaire* in

line with EU 2020 vision and European Sustainable Development Strategy. This means that economic and infrastructural developments shall go hand in hand with environmental protection, environmental concerns shall be integrated in different policies and only projects consistent with the environmental legislation shall be promoted.

This philosophy can be followed in specific priority areas as well, for example the support of sustainable growth, increase in the use of renewable energies, modernisation of the transport sector with the aim of making it more environmentally friendly, promotion of 'green' tourism, etc.

It is really important that final targets and implementation also reflect the integration of environmental concerns.

Danube Watch: Where do you expect the greatest benefits through the Danube Strategy?

Borbély: In my opinion, the greatest benefits of the Danube Strategy are related to the integrated water resources management in the region. And when I say this I am not only thinking of the more effective implementation of the Danube River Basin Management Plan, which will contribute to a better aquatic environment, but also to the improvement of the drinking water supply, to a more sustainable water use and to a better management of the environmental risks related to water. Romania is a downstream country; we are expecting visible results from the activities implemented in the upstream part of the basin, but we are also determined to bring our contribution in order to improve the environmental conditions, especially in the Danube Delta and the Black Sea area.

Danube Watch: How will Romania tie the country into the strategy?

Borbély: Romania, as the co-initiator of the Strategy with Austria, has the objective to remain the main driving force of the implementation, and together take a leading role for the Strategy to become a success. At the moment it is really important to promote relevant projects, to find suitable funding sources for them, to demonstrate to the wider public the added value of the Strategy as well as to maintain the political commitment linked to the EUSDR. Furthermore it is necessary to assure the involvement of key actors and stakeholders. Internally, together with all institutions involved, we are acting towards this.

As for the benefits, the strategy is a good opportunity for us to strengthen and enhance cooperation with the more developed parts of the region, as well as with non-Member States, through transnational and cross-border cooperation projects, and to increase our absorption capacity.

Danube Watch: How does Romania help bridge the Danube Region and the Black Sea Region?

Borbély: As the largest country in the Danube River Basin, Romania has a very important role in the implementation of the Danube River Protection Convention, particularly related to the improvement and the protection of the marine environment of the Black Sea. As a Black Sea country, we are interested in the more active involvement of the Black Sea Riparian countries in the protection of the sea. This will require an intensified work within the basins of the rivers discharging into the sea. In this respect, we have always promoted the necessity to take up similar commitment and responsibility at the Black Sea Commission level as on the level of the Danube Basin, promoting also a better cooperation between ICPDR and Black Sea Commission.

When Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU, the Black Sea became an EU sea. Now our efforts are focused on the accession of the EU as Party to the Black Sea Convention and to the implementation of the EU Marine Strategy. We are confident that the implementation of EUSDR will contribute to an increased connection between the Danube River and Black Sea, by making an institutional link between the sea and its basin, and will provide a framework to develop joint projects. In this spirit, together with Bulgaria, we have undertaken the responsibility to implement the action under Priority 4: to further strengthen integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and maritime spatial planning (MSP) practices on the western shores of the Black Sea.

However, we have to always remember that the Danube is only one of the rivers that are discharging their waters into the Black Sea, and without a proper involvement from the eastern part of the sea basin we will not reach the goal of the Marine Strategy.

Danube Watch: Europe, 2020. What will be different due to the Danube Strategy?

Borbély: The Danube Strategy overlaps with and clearly supports the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, thus it is an additional tool to contribute to its objectives – to a smart, sustainable, inclusive growth. A series of strategy actions shall make an important contribution to achieving broader Europe 2020 goals. This is also reflected in the Declaration of the Bucharest Danube Summit from 8 November, 2010 when eight Member States committed “towards making the Strategy an effective instrument which will contribute to the successful implementation of Europe 2020 Strategy”.

Romania is a downstream country; we are expecting visible results from the activities implemented in the upstream part of the basin, but we are also determined to bring our contribution in order to improve the environmental conditions, especially in the Danube Delta and the Black Sea area.

We have to always remember that the Danube is only one of the rivers that are discharging their waters into the Black Sea, and without a proper involvement from the eastern part of the sea basin we will not reach the goal of the Marine Strategy.

Cooperation on a grand scale

Focusing on areas as diverse as easing navigability, improving water quality, strengthening security and building prosperity, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region is also laying the foundation for long-term, sustainable cooperation.

The Danube Strategy will ensure that all countries in the region – both EU Member States and non-Member States alike – benefit from work done toward shared goals.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region is bringing an ambitious dimension to cooperation in the region. While working together to strengthen the Danube Region, countries are also strengthening links across borders and between a wide range of stakeholders. Here, Colin Wolfe, Head of Unit for European Transnational and Interregional Co-operation within the DG Regional Policy at the European Commission, speaks about the future of the Danube Region, and what this will mean to non-EU countries.

Danube Watch: How will EU countries outside of the Danube Region benefit from the Strategy?

Woolfe: There are many features that make the Danube Basin vital for Europe. A region with 115 million European citizens from eight Member States, with the second longest river in Europe (only after the Volga), it represents a priority area with crucial growth and innovation potential, which is a key trading route, has strong cultural heritage and is also very rich in bio-diversity.

Neighbouring countries will benefit from work in all the priority areas – better connections, better environmental conditions, greater prosperity and more concern for safety and security.

Danube Watch: How are non-EU countries involved in the EU Danube Strategy?

Woolfe: In line with EU enlargement and neighbourhood policies, the EU Strategy for the Danube Regions supports the inclusion and participation of neighbouring countries. The non-member states concerned are four enlargement countries (Croatia – which has now received final agreement for the accession – Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro) and two neighbourhood countries (Moldova and Ukraine).

Up to now, I think they are well involved in the Strategy. They have been actively participating in the



consultation phase, submitting positions and proposing actions/projects. Nowadays they are fully involved in their implementation and they participate on an equal basis with Member States in the governance structure of the Strategy. Most of them have been nominated priority area coordinators, and they actively participate in meetings and events held in the framework of the Strategy.

In terms of funding, they can benefit from the external EU funding instruments. I would also underline that in the new regulatory framework of EU cohesion policy for 2014–2020, the Commission proposes better coherence and synergies between the transnational programmes and cross-border and sea-basin programmes under the new European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA).

Danube Watch: Are there weaknesses in the way the strategy deals with non-EU countries?

Woolfe: The participation in the Strategy needs a great deal of involvement by political and administrative structures of the countries. There needs to be sufficient human and financial resources to participate in the governance structure. This also applies to the



Credit: ICPDR/Mello

COLIN WOLFE

Colin Wolfe is Head of Unit for European Transnational and Interregional Co-operation within the DG Regional Policy, European Commission. He is responsible for cooperation programmes throughout Europe as well as development and implementation work for the EU strategies for the Baltic Sea Region and the Danube Region.

Mr Wolfe joined the EC in 1989. He worked for what is now the DG Budget, and the DG Employment, and he also spent considerable time with the DG Enlargement. In 2001 he became Head of Unit in EuropeAid, the EU Development aid service, covering the Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia. In 2003 he moved to DG Regional Policy to become Head of Unit for the Czech Republic & Slovakia to oversee their accession. He took his current job in 2006. He holds a MA degree from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

internal coordination of administrative levels and stakeholders.

Another important issue is the question of funding available for projects. Membership brings greater EU funding and improves capacity to effectively participate in concrete projects. However, non-EU countries – especially the ones on the way to EU accession – are seeing their participation in the EU Danube Strategy as a very good opportunity in terms of learning and exchange of experiences on EU cooperation networks, EU programmes and funding, etc.

Danube Watch: How can other regional EU strategies learn from the Danube Strategy?

Wolfe: Other geographical areas of the EU have shown their interest in this new approach and working

method that is being tested by the current strategies under way in the Baltic Sea and the Danube.

The Commission encourages the countries to cooperate on common issues, and follows with interest these developments. However, the added value of EU led macro regional strategies still has to be assessed. Therefore the Council has asked the Commission to prepare a wide and comprehensive evaluation by June 2013.

With regard to the lessons to be learnt from the ongoing strategies, the first Commission report on the application of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (June 2011) gives some useful information on the advantages and drawbacks of such an approach. It acknowledges considerable progress on many fields, but draws attention on issues such as permanent political administrative commitment and funds alignment. An equivalent report for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region is due by the end of next year.

Danube Watch: Europe, 2020. What will be different due to the Danube Strategy?

Wolfe: The macro regional concept is to be seen closely in connection with the idea of territorial cohesion. This approach provides the EU with an innovative policy instrument which is an excellent example of efforts to achieve common EU objectives and more effective coordination of territorial and sectoral policies based on shared territorial challenges.

Whilst adapting broad EU growth objectives for a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy to the local context, macro regional strategies are a central territorial cohesion instrument to attaining the objectives set out in Europe 2020.

There are some clear examples in the Action Plan of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region. Smarter Europe is reflected in the actions to promote better use of innovation potential across the macro region, as well as in the opening up of access to high speed information networks and the improved linkages between higher education institutions. Sustainable growth is reflected in the reconciliation of the Danube River system in terms of environmental asset, risk protection (e.g. flood prevention) and navigation, and also the improved interconnection and optimisation of transport and especially energy networks. Inclusive growth is supported through the actions to promote inclusion of minorities, better linkage of employment opportunities, and promotion of region-wide access to better jobs. A horizontal and more integrated approach to policy development is being recognised as crucial as a way of meeting more ambitious objectives with less available resources and by way of multi-level governance.

“Neighbouring countries will benefit from work in all the priority areas – better connections, better environmental conditions, greater prosperity and more concern for safety and security.”

“The participation in the Strategy needs a great deal of involvement by political and administrative structures of the countries. There needs to be sufficient human and financial resources to participate in the governance structure.”

The Danube River: classroom for a day!

A unique programme is raising awareness among young people for the need to protect our precious natural resources by bringing the classroom to the riverside

Right: Teenagers at the Milser Au in Tirol learn about plant life in one of the last alluvial forests along the Inn. Center: Danube Challenge participants Juliana and Markus are joined by Susanne Lontzen of Coca-Cola Hellenic and Susanne Brandstetter of the Austrian Ministry for Environment.



In June 2011, over 400 Austrian teenagers participated in the annual Danube Challenge. The Austrian Ministry of Environment and Coca-Cola Hellenic Austria invited school groups from across the country to participate in an action-filled day in the National Park Donau-Auen and in the Milser Au.

Since 2007 the Danube Challenge has worked to raise awareness among children and teenagers of the importance of responsible handling and use of our natural resources. A special emphasis is placed on the Danube and its associated rivers and streams, as well as on the indigenous plants and animals that inhabit the diverse eco-systems of the Danube River Basin.

This year, the first stop of the Danube Challenge took place on 22 June in the National Park Donau-Auen (Lower Austria). Each participating class visited eight



fun and fact-filled stations. At every station the youths received an introduction into a specific Danube-related topic and then had to collectively complete a given task: they had to rap, find their way through a spider web maze, recognise and follow animal tracks, make a pantomime of different green jobs, design a poster out of natural materials, build a home for insects and much more! Upon successful completion of the assignment, each class was awarded a certain amount of points. The class with the highest score – and jubilant winner of a giant ‘pirate treasure’ filled with goodies – was the class 4a from the Krems Junior High School (BRG Krems) from Lower Austria.

Bringing the classroom to nature. On 27 June, the Milser Au (Tirol) hosted the second stop of the Danube Challenge. Here students from western Austria were able to spend an action-filled day at the Inn, one of the Danube’s largest tributaries. The Milser Au is one of the last alluvial forests along the Inn and houses an abundance of animal and plant life. Thus, one aim of the Danube Challenge was to let the teenagers experience the unique eco-system of alluvial forests. Another focus was placed on the fish of the Inn – whereas this river once boasted 31 different species, now only 17 remain, of which 11 are considered endangered. With the help of numerous live fish, the



Credit: Bruckner

kids were not only introduced to these problems but also given the opportunity of a hands-on experience. After visiting seven challenging stations, the students of the Schruns-Dorf Junior High School (HS Schruns-Dorf) from Vorarlberg managed to collect the most points and proudly accepted their prize: a treasure chest filled with goodies!

Green jobs as 'dream jobs'. Pupils from the fifth grade up can apply for a spot in the Danube Challenge through the 'Trinkpass' – a folder that helps them document their daily water consumption, teaches about the importance of an adequate water intake and highlights a different ecological topic each year. This year's topic was 'green jobs' and each teenager was invited to create a business card for their dream 'green job'. Out of the 22,000 students who participated, the 16 classes with the most creative and original designs were chosen to take part in one of the stops of the Danube Challenge.

The rising number of schools participating indicates an increased interest in the topic of water. "The success of the Danube Challenge proves that Austria's youth knows how valuable the natural resource water is and that it's absolutely necessary that we protect it," says Niki Berlakovich, Austrian Minister of Environment.

Now, in its fifth year, the Danube Challenge has become not just a staple of the school calendar. "The Danube Challenge is one of the flagship projects of the Austrian Ministry of Environment in the field of raising awareness amongst young people", says Susanne Brandstetter, Communication Officer for Water in the Ministry of Environment and Project Manager of Danube Challenge. "Every year hundreds of young people have the chance to spend an action-packed day at the Danube or in the catchment area. This day is a highlight every year - with lots of fun, knowledge and action", says Brandstetter.



Credit: Bruckner

The winning team from Schruns-Dorf Junior High School in Vorarlberg celebrate their victory in the Danube Challenge.

Teaching future decision makers. A large part of the Danube Challenge's appeal lies on its unique approach to education. "The Danube Challenge creates a sense of enthusiasm that wouldn't come about in a classroom because it takes place out in nature. In addition, the teenagers get a new awareness for water as a habitat as a 'side effect'," says Susanne Lontzen, Public Affairs & Communications Director at Coca-Cola Hellenic Austria. "Each year, the Danube Challenge shows how important it is to offer age-appropriate initiatives for youths. They are the decision makers of tomorrow and will be responsible for our environment in the future. This is why we see it as part of our social responsibility to impart knowledge about the environment and resources to them," says Lontzen.

To support this cause, and in line with the European Year of Volunteering, employees of Coca-Cola Hellenic participated in the Danube Challenge, guiding the teenagers through the stations and supporting them in their quest for knowledge and fun.

This successful combination of environmental education with action and fun makes the Danube Challenge a true success for all involved, whether teachers and students or initiators and partners. And surely, all are looking forward to next year's edition!

Stephan Bruck, at AQA GmbH, has been responsible for the concept, coordination and realisation of the Danube Challenge and the "Trinkpass" since their inception.

"Each year, the Danube Challenge shows how important it is to offer age-appropriate initiatives for youths. They are the decision makers of tomorrow and will be responsible for our environment in the future," says Susanne Lontzen, Public Affairs & Communications Director at Coca-Cola Hellenic Austria.



Cooperation is easy sailing for the Joint Danube Delta Survey

A recently completed survey of the Danube Delta region will significantly improve knowledge about water quality, the environment, current management of water resources and human activities in the region.

Chemical and biological samples were taken from different sampling points at the station cross sections, and screened for priority pollutants and hazardous substances selected by the EU Water Framework Directive.

On 26 September, two ships – the ‘Cyclone’ and the ‘Roua’ – carrying 23 researchers from Moldova, Romania and Ukraine set sail for the first joint survey of the Danube Delta. For ten days, researchers took and analysed water samples taken from waters covering the area from the mouth of the Prut River to the Black Sea, including the main branches, channels and inner lakes of the Danube Delta.

Next to hydromorphological assessments, chemical and biological samples were taken from different sampling points at the station cross sections. Samples were screened for priority pollutants and hazardous substances selected by the EU Water Framework Directive. The original data collected by the survey will help fill knowledge gaps and is a step towards a homogenous data set for the Danube Delta Sub-basin

based on a single sample procedure and laboratory analysis of specific elements.

Bringing people together. The Joint Danube Delta Survey is just one element of an overall project with the objective of “improving cross-border cooperation in the Danube Delta and building capacities for introducing a river basin approach to the management of natural resources in the Danube Delta Sub-basin”.

The project is implemented by the ICPDR in the framework of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) in cooperation with UNEP, UNECE and regional partners, including representatives of the three countries sharing the Danube Delta Sub-basin: Moldova, Romania and Ukraine. The project is managed at the regional level by the Centre for Re-



Credit: Lysenko/Centre for Regional Studies

gional Studies in Odessa, Ukraine.

The project has also been working to promote public awareness of issues in the region. The monitoring exercise attracted media attention, and public information events were organised in all three countries as part of the survey.

The Joint Danube Surveys as models of success.

The project was modelled on the success of the two Joint Danube Surveys, and lessons learned from those surveys were used as the basis for the Joint Danube Delta Survey.

“The main organisation issues and the format for the cruise manual and monitoring programme, as well as the operational schemes from the second Joint Danube Survey, were used to prepare the Joint Danube Delta Survey,” says Oleg Dyakov, Senior Researcher at the Centre for Regional Studies.

The Joint Danube Delta Survey marks an important step towards harmo-

nising the monitoring systems of the three countries. “The first joint Romanian – Moldavian – Ukrainian Danube Delta Survey has been completed successfully, which, taken into consideration the complexity of the organisational issues in the transboundary region, was a pleasant surprise,” says Marian Tudor, Senior Researcher at the Danube Delta Institute.

Laying the foundation for a future sub-basin plan.

Preliminary results from the survey, completed on 5 October, will be presented and discussed at a working meeting in early December 2011, where the participants will meet again to discuss the results and plan the next steps. The meeting will also focus on work already under way on a Danube Delta Analysis Report, based on requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive.

The final results will serve as an important and necessary step to develop a River Basin Management Plan for the Danube Delta Sub-basin under the provisions of the Joint Declaration of the Heads of Delegations “Towards a River Basin Management Plan for the Danube Delta supporting sustainable development of the region.”

To ensure the active involvement of the public and stakeholders, public consultations on the overall project are planned within the region in Kahul (Moldova), Tulcea (Romania) and Izmail (Ukraine).



Credit: Lysenko/Centre for Regional Studies

Furthermore, a summary of the analysis report, a collection of maps and electronic versions of the report will be available to increase the report’s impact among the public and decision-makers.

Building cross-border cooperation. Though final results are still to come, it’s clear that the project’s aim to improve cross-border cooperation in the Danube Delta has succeeded: “The most important result of the survey is the practice obtained in collaboration of specialists from many countries, and the organisation of surface water study at the international level,” says Victoria Luchinova, Engineer-Coordinator at the Surface Water Quality Monitoring Centre, Republic of Moldova. “The exchange of information between specialists and the harmonisation of working methods is very important.”

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

The first joint survey of the Danube Delta was undertaken by 23 researchers from Moldova, Romania and Ukraine. The project has been implemented by the ICPDR in the framework of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) in cooperation with UNEP, UNECE and regional partners, including representatives of the three countries sharing the Danube Delta Sub-basin: Moldova, Romania and Ukraine.

The Danube meets China's Yellow River

Experts from the EU and China are working tougher to establish integrated river basin management practices in the Yellow River Basin.

Separated by language, culture and thousands of kilometres, the Danube and Yellow Rivers hardly seem to have much in common. But together these two river basins are learning from their differences and exploring their similarities to take on the challenge of integrated river basin management.



Credit: Stalzer

EU-CHINA RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

The EU-China River Basin Management Programme is designed to share advances in integrated water management and protection gained over the 25 years of implementation of EU water policy and legislation, brought together in the EU Water Framework Directive. The Programme aims to contribute to China's goal of providing "sustainable management and use of China's water resources that are compatible with socio-economic development and natural global change."

The EU study mission to the Yellow River Basin focused on China's experience in water quantity and quality, soil and water conservation and water governance.

On the invitation of the Ministry of Water Resources of China, an EU Study Mission to the Yellow River took place on 6–16 April. The Mission included representatives from nine EU countries, and was supported by the EU China River Basin Management Programme. The mission focused on water quantity, water quality, soil and water conservation and water governance.

Balancing water needs with the environment. With rapid urbanisation, continued expansion of agriculture and the effects of climate change, the demand on water resources compromises environmental objectives. However, efforts by the Yellow River Conservancy

Commission have ensured the continuous flow of the river, while securing the basis for a healthy river. This achievement is possible thanks to the introduction of a water allocation system across the nine provinces in the basin in 1999. In particular, a water rights transfer scheme, put in place in Ningxia, has allowed greater water use for industrial development in exchange for more efficient agriculture irrigation.

In the future, cooperation between China and the EU on water quantity issues may focus on prediction and management of drought situations, particularly regarding the effects of climate change. In addition, exchanging knowledge and experience on flood control measures, comparing the implementation of the EU Flood Directive and the Chinese Flood Control Law, would be mutually beneficial.

Making water quality a priority. For both rivers, it is necessary to extend standards and monitoring to cover a wider range of physio-chemical parameters, including groundwater and surface waters, to get a fuller picture of the river basin. Such a monitoring and management system would be a critical step to greater water resource protection.

For China's Yellow River, major advances have occurred in domestic wastewater treatment, as well as landscape-scale sediment management and control. However, research on new wastewater treatment methods that support effluent reuse and the recovery of important organic matter – such as phosphorus – would benefit China and the EU.

Reducing sediment loads. China's integrated and comprehensive management plan for sediments has reduced sediment loads by 20% or approximately 450 million tonnes. This has been achieved through the construction of thousands of small sediment dams, large-scale reforestation and soil protection in areas of the Loess Plateau. This has not only prevented further desertification, but has also created new farmland in the soil trapped by dams.

Further cooperation may focus on understanding sediment contamination and its impact on ecosystem functions. From the European side, cooperation could be linked to existing EU research networks such as SEDNET.

Sustaining EU-China cooperation is a major objective given the shared environmental challenges and the opportunities to develop joint solutions. With continued collaboration, river basin managers could bring these two distant rivers even closer together.

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

Wolfgang Stalzer was a member of the European Experts on the EU-China Mission to the Yellow River.

Working together to share knowledge

Eight Danube countries participated in a specialised course to learn methods of analysing biological quality elements that would be compliant with the EU Water Framework Directive. Sharing this information ensures that all countries across the basin can reach the goals of the directive.

The Danube River Basin Management Plan is a milestone toward meeting the goals of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). However, coordinating a variety of countries across the basin is a challenge and serious gaps exist in the data, hindering progress. Recently, several Danube countries came together to fill in some of those gaps.

A specially focused course on WFD-complaint methods for analysis of biological quality elements was organised for non-EU countries to address gaps in the assessment of the ecological status. The course was held under the framework of the ICPDR and was supported by an EU grant.

The three-day course was organised by the Slovak Water Management Society of the Water Research Institute of Bratislava, and was held on 26–28 September in the small town of Senec, 25 kilometres from Bratislava.



Credit: Water Research Institute, Slovak National Water Reference Laboratory

Experts in the field. Participating trainees came from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine, with two experts on water flora from each country. Trainers Peter Pfister and Karin Pall from Austria, Gorazd Urbanic from Slovenia and Dana Fidlerova from Slovakia presented the intercalibration process of biological methods for the European level. The experts have all been involved in developing WFD-compliant methods at the national level.

In the classroom and by the riverbank. The course programme was divided into two parts. First the theory was presented, with general information on phytobenthos, including sampling, preparing samples, basic taxonomy, evaluating data and methods of assessing different types of rivers in Austria, Slovenia and Slovakia based on phytobenthos. Presenters also shared knowledge on macrophytes, including surveying, estimating biomass, preparing samples, basic taxonomy as well as the development of national methods for assessing different types of rivers based on macrophytes.

For the second part of the programme, the field survey, two types of rivers were selected. The first, Kamenny potok, is a small mountain river in the Carpathian eco-region. The second, Cierna voda, is a middle-sized lowland river in the Pannonian eco-region. Participants took samples of both communities and tried to identify as many species as possible from the sampling stretches.

The rest of the course focused on assessing the field survey data. Participants calculated the relevant national indices and evaluated the results based on Austrian, Slovenian and Slovakian methods of phytobenthos and macrophytes. This comparison allowed for a small intercalibration of the three national methods. At the end of the course, participants and trainers discussed way to apply the approaches and methods learned.

Jarmila Makovinska is the head of the Slovak National Water Reference Laboratory at the Water Research Institute in Bratislava.

Participants took samples from two rivers, Kamenny potok and Cierna voda, and tried to identify as many species as possible from the sampling stretches.



Danube Day 2011: action on the rivers and online!

Mix together 14 countries, nearly 83 million people, 30 major rivers and countless tributaries. Throw in a huge dollop of energy, enthusiasm and creativity and a few dozen buckets of fish soup. The result... Danube Day 2011!



We got active on the water, in the air, on the earth... and with the odd firework or two! (Clockwise from top left) Government, civil society and business joined forces. Czech Art Masters celebrate their win with a river safari thanks to the Union for the Morava River. Austria's Transport Minister, Environment Ministry Secretary General and City Environment Councillor joined in at the Employees Volunteers Day at Donau Auen. Presenting awards at Slovenia's Art Master final: Secretary of the Sava Commission, Water Director in the Ministry of the Environment, Director of the Institute for Waters, Minister of Education and Sport, Managing Director of Coca-Cola HBC Slovenia and ICPDR





Danube fever struck on 29 June 29 with the 8th annual Danube Day. It was an immense occasion: 721 partners and 440 schools got involved in 210 events. Overseen by the ICPDR, festivities stretched along the Danube Rivers in 14 countries, six capitals and hundreds of towns.

Danube Day fluttered in the wind on the ‘Danube United’ flag, was carried in the words of ministers as they opened festivities, was brought to life in the exertion of volunteers clearing rubbish and in the spirit of those working on a better future. It was set into stone in a Tisza tribute and provided inspiration through photographs in Slovenia. Its influence grew in the hearts and minds of children striving to be ‘Art Masters’ and could be heard in the laughter of thousands as they joined in Danube Day fun.

Spreading the message deeper and wider. Actions maximised outreach and impact, deepening people’s connection with rivers and ensuring long-lasting influence. Just one ‘Danube Day’ was insufficient to contain all the events, enthusiasm and energy. In Budapest, they celebrated ‘Danube Month’ and some countries hosted a summer of activities. Serbian events stretched from June to September: 100 events were planned by 300 organisations in 25 locations!

Actions with repeated exposure were effective, such as the blue ‘Danube Trams’ in June. Impossible to miss, they featured logos and environmental messages. Passing the Parliament, MPs were among the 200,000 passengers that saw them everyday. In the Delta, clean-up actions were publicised to thousands in Ukraine. Every Danube district and 200 organisations marked the day in Romania, and over 30 events were held in seven Bulgarian provinces. With many now in their eighth year, events reinforced communities’ Danube identity.

On the rivers and online. 2011 saw more websites, YouTube postings and Facebook pages than ever before. Encouraging ongoing engagement, they created a dialogue and involved people. Austria used technology to ensure benefits long after 29 June and, in doing so, reached tens of thousands. By scanning the Vienna guide to the best Danube spots with a phone, you can gain details on each one. The new website is a one-stop shop for year-round events. Navigate the river in an online game, post photos or join in on Facebook. On Serbia’s site, you were the judge, voting for your favourite ‘Art Master’. Other sites were set up in Hungary, Croatia and Bulgaria; the latter saw WWF DCP and Coca-Cola launch ‘Danube+’, a new way to learn about the river. “The momentum we can see today will be lasting and will benefit future Danube Days as well as other activities of the ICPDR,” said Philip Weller, Executive Secretary of the ICPDR.

Engaging future decision-makers. Youth adventure came via the 5th ‘Danube Challenge’. Some 400 Austrians competed in tests of nerve and skill while gaining new awareness and enthusiasm for the water environment, which could not have been realised through the classroom.

“The Danube Challenge uniquely combines adventure, experience and knowledge with the important issue of water,” said Nikolaus

Executive Secretary. The 3rd Danube Gastronomy Festival in Sulina was organised by the Save the Danube and Delta Association. The ‘Danube United’ flag is a symbol of strong regional cooperation: 2011 saw it pass from Romania to Hungary. Class 4a from BRG Krems (Lower Austria) and pupils from Schruns-Dorf High School (Vorarlberg) rose to the ‘Danube Challenge’. MOME University, WWF Hungary, the ICPDR and Coca-Cola collaborated on the Danube Trams campaign in Budapest.



Berlakovich, Austrian Minister for the Environment. “This project is one of the most successful youth targeted actions undertaken by my Department.” For more information on the Danube Challenge, see article page 16.

Danube solidarity flows through the air. We looked to the skies as international harmony was celebrated in the air. At 4:00pm, blue balloons, each carrying a child’s wish, filled the sky in five countries. The first ‘Danube Dreams’ release encouraged people to look beyond national boundaries and consider the multitude of people living in the Basin. Some 700 Ulm residents in Germany, along with crowds in Croatia, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria, watched as the balloons floated away across the Basin.

Making a difference on the land. More than 600 young Ukrainians collected rubbish in Izmail in actions led by NGOs. At Lake Srebarna, Bulgarians cleared litter from the UNESCO site, while 1600m up in the Carpathian Mountains where the Tisza emerges from the land, the five Tisza countries marked their outstanding regional collaboration by unveiling plaques. In Belgrade, the river came to the land: a blue swathe was painted onto the tarmac at the Republic Directorate for Water and Coca-Cola event.

Introducing the Danube Strategy. The day provided a forum to welcome and debate implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube River. Pupils from Gheorghe Munteanu Murgoci College informed the Romanian public about the Strategy, and at the Budapest ‘Young Citizens Danube Network Conference’, the Strategy guided the debate while teenagers discussed it with officials at the ‘Izmail Youth Ecoforum’.

Fostering inquiry, learning and consideration. Festivals in Baden Württemberg and Győr brought ecology to life: 1500 people had the chance to pond-dip, analyse water and use microscopes. At Gabčíkovo, people toured Slovakia’s largest hydropower plant and wetlands. Raising basin-wide awareness featured at the Ministry’s celebration, where children (including guests from Kolontar) collected stamps in a Danube passport.

Serbia held the fifth ‘Student Eco Camp’ and launched its adaptation of the ‘Danube Box’ education kit. Czech versions were distributed and teachers from seven countries shared experiences at the first ‘International Danube Box Workshop’ in Hungary. Their Danube Box competition, involving 400 schools, went international for the first time.

Celebrating Danube cultures. Maintaining culture was central: from craftspeople utilising reeds to the sound of traditional music. In Bavaria, we became Romans on the ‘Regina’ galley. In Sulina, visitors marvelled at wildlife in restored areas and tempted their taste-buds at Romania’s ‘Festival of Danube Gastronomy’. Fish delicacies were on show and top chefs won grants for their communities. In Ukraine, 300 enjoyed the ‘Tisza – Younger Sister of the Danube Festival’, packed with contests and green actions. Young talent took centre-stage: “Let the Danube live forever!” sang the ‘Tisza Has Talent’ winners.

The ICPDR would like to thank the organisations involved in Danube Day 2011. For full details of events and partners, please visit: www.danubeday.org.

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

THE 8TH DANUBE ART MASTER COMPETITION

From 14 Danube countries, 16,000 children entered the basin-wide contest for Danube Day. This artistic extravaganza allowed children to express how they felt about their river. From Germany to Bulgaria, Montenegro to Moldova, their messages of environmental consciousness, basin-wide friendship or a simple recognition of the beauty of rivers were inspirational.

Overseen by new coordinators, Global Water Partnership, 14,000 drawings and nearly 1000 sculptures were made. The huge response was the result in large part of Austria’s successful Environment Ministry and Coca-Cola ‘Trinkpass’ action. Young Moravians went Art Master crazy with 720 entrants from a record 54 Czech schools. Creativity bloomed in Slovenia, where three national contests challenged children to become art masters, water detectives and photo journalists. In Ukraine, the Prut, Tisza and Delta regions held a joint competition for the first time. National winners from each country now go on to the international final in Budapest to find out who will be crowned ‘International Danube Art Master for 2011’.



CZ: Art Master Water Sprite.



MD: Mariana Terteia and Daniela Plosnita from Orhei won with 'Once Upon a Time... The Lily from the Story'.



"We congratulate the children who have shown, with considerable imagination and creativity, that the treasures of nature must be protected against abuse and destruction," said Brigitta Brunner, Oberpfalz District President at Germany's Art Master final.

Winning pieces in Bosnia, Moldova and Montenegro embodied the environment: trees, flowers, meadows and foothills. In Slovakia, beaches were decorated with intricate fish mosaics, watermills built beside streams and model boats tentatively pushed onto rivers to see if they'd float. Croatians formed SOS messages from pebbles and fashioned reeds into wild boar and fishermen. Vera Rapp came first out of 253 entrants in Hungary; her angel comprised natural materials contrasted with the devil made from litter. Bulgarian imagination created sea monsters, bulrush people and giant dragonflies. In Slovenia, rapper, Zlatko, joined Education Minister, Igor Luksic, in awarding the prizes on Sava Day.

HU: 'Joint Angel and Devil' by Vera Rapp came first out of 253 entrants in Hungary; BG: 'Monster Nessy from the Danube River' by Anna-Maria Tsaneva, Ivet Valentinova, Sofi Toncheva and Gabriela Ivanova from Marten on the Danube; SK: 'Water Mill' by Nikoleta Kolmosová and Sarah Mirre; BG: 'Sailboat' by Miroslav Ilianov from Probuda Community Hall, Joglav Village.



Touch of River, Ivana Bek and Sandra Rašić, Danube Art Master 2011 Croatia.



Credit: Lebmann

Filling the gap between science and policy

An analysis of existing regional observation systems helps strengthen information management systems for the Danube and Black Sea regions and ensures that all stakeholders have access to the vital data they need.

“Without sharing environmental data, science can be difficult, sound decisions can be problematic, and envisioning a sustainable development can be complicated,” says Gregory Giuliani, Work Package Leader for Spatial Data Infrastructure for the enviroGRIDS project.

The unique ecosystem of the North-Western Shelf of the Black Sea is burdened by excessive loads of nutrients and hazardous substances from the coastal

INSPIRE

The EU directive on Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Union (INSPIRE) came into force on 15 May 2007 and will be implemented in various stages, with full implementation required by 2019. The INSPIRE directive aims to create an EU spatial data infrastructure. This will enable the sharing of environmental spatial information among public sector organisations and better facilitate public access to spatial information across Europe.

The Group on Earth Observations is coordinating efforts to build a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), to provide decision-support tools to a wide variety of users. As with the internet, GEOSS will be a global and flexible network of content providers allowing decision makers to access an extraordinary range of information at their desk.

countries and the rivers that enter it – including the Danube. The enviroGRIDS project aims to improve the information management systems for the Danube and the Black Sea and to build capacity for a highly developed Danube/Black Sea observation and assessment system. Coordinated by the University of Geneva and UNEP, the main aim of the project is to assess water resources in the past, present and future, according to different development scenarios. The enviroGRIDS project will also develop datasets that are compatible

with the EU directive on Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Union (INSPIRE).

The Black Sea Commission (BSC) and the ICPDR, together with 30 national and international project partners, recently completed a gap analysis of existing regional observation systems. This gap analysis identifies areas where efforts are most needed to reinforce existing observation systems in this region.

Gathering data from partners. For the first stage of the analysis, an online questionnaire for gap analysis was developed to get information from project partners, to the best of their knowledge, about available datasets and observation systems at different scales, from local and national to regional and global. In total, information was received about 162 datasets and 30 observations systems covering the Black Sea catchment.

The analysis of the identified datasets and observation systems against the project requirements revealed spatial and temporal gaps in data coverage, gaps in observation systems, and problems with data accessibility, compatibility and interoperability.



Room for improvement. The gap analysis makes recommendations to improve data acquisition networks in each region and country. The recommendations derived from the gap analysis should complement the existing geographical information systems of the ICPDR and BSC.

The analysis pointed to the need to identify national observation systems, services and responsible agencies in all countries of the Black Sea catchment to develop recommendations on filling data gaps at country level. Further, it will be necessary to publish information on available datasets at the enviroGRIDS portal and at the uniform resource management geoportal enviroGRIDS

Catalogue, which will be the entry-point to discover data and metadata within enviroGRIDS.

“There is an increasing need for modelling the hydrology of watersheds at high temporal and spatial resolutions,” says Nicolas Ray, enviroGRIDS project manager. “This requires new innovative workflows, and distributed computing – such as Grid computing – is a promising solution for scalable geoprocessing.”

Ensuring compatibility for everyone. The second phase of the analysis focused on analysing the compatibility of the datasets and observation systems with INSPIRE and GEO standards of interoperability, improving the initial analysis and formulating recommendations for improving data acquisition networks in each country and region.

“The large amount of data and information exist at different scales: local, national, regional and global. Increasing the effectiveness of its usage for decision-makers support is one of the priority tasks, which can’t be achieved without applying interoperability standards for data storage and exchange, such as INSPIRE, GEOSS, OGC,” says Volodymyr Myroshnychenko, enviroGRIDS Project Expert from BSC.

Sharing data freely and openly. Results from this phase of analysis point to the need for the open exchange of data, metadata and products. Shared data, metadata and products should be made available with minimum time delay and with no cost or no more than the cost of reproduction to encouraged research and education.

The enviroGRIDS uniform resource management geoportal should be used to register informational services, data or metadata of partner organisations and bring them into the GEOSS framework.

“Filling the gap between science and policy is already technically feasible and will become reality as soon as mental barriers will be removed,” says Anthony Lehmann, enviroGRIDS project initiator and coordinator.

For more information, visit: www.envirogrids.net/

Dan Adrian Teodor is the GIS Expert and enviroGRIDS Project Staff at the ICPDR Secretariat.

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The enviroGRIDS workshop ‘Bringing GEOSS Services into Practice’ was held in Bucharest in May 2010.

The Danube Strategy in action across the basin

CONNECTING THE REGION

One pillar of the Danube Strategy is to connect energy networks, and to develop road and rail transport corridors in the region.

NEWADA

The Network of Danube Waterway Administrations (NEWADA) aims to increase the efficiency of the Danube as a vital European corridor by intensifying cooperation between waterway administrations to promote inland navigation as a cost-effective and environmentally friendly mode of transport.

Partners: Led by via donau, partners include agencies from eight Danube countries: Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Ukraine.

WANDA

The project 'Waste management for inland Navigation on the Danube' (WANDA) was created in order to ensure the protection of the Danube and its ecosystem from pollution. The aim of WANDA is to find common solutions for a sustainable, environmentally sound and cross-border coordinated approach to ship waste management for cargo vessels along the Danube.

Partners: Within WANDA, nine partners representing national authorities, infrastructure operators as well as research institutes from the entire Danube Region are working together towards a better future for the Danube. The coordination is carried out by via donau.

Vidin–Calafat Danube Bridge

Construction of this bridge is significant not only for the development of the Pan-European Transport Corridor IV but also for the entire South-East European Transport Axis and the Trans-European Transport network. It will provide opportunities for combined transport and for transferring certain volumes of traffic from road to rail.

The project includes the design and construction of a combined (road and railway) bridge and construction of the adjoining road and railway infrastructure which covers: a new railway freight station and new railway line, reconstruction of the existing passenger station and construction of seven new two-level road junctions.

Partners: Bulgaria and Romania

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

The Danube Strategy brings together efforts to restore and maintain water quality, preserve biodiversity, and manage environmental risks within the region.

Danube Floodrisk Project

The Danube Floodrisk project focuses on the most cost-effective measures for flood risk reduction: risk assessment, risk mapping, involvement of stakeholders and risk reduction by adequate spatial planning. The project will improve the environment, the economy and living conditions in the Danube Floodplains.

Partners: Led by the Ministry of Environment, Romania, partners include 19 institutions from Danube countries, central public bodies, universities, research institutes, NGOs and operational agencies.

CC-WaterS

The main objective of the CC-WaterS project is to ensure sustainable and safe future water supply, which is influenced by climate and landuse changes. Capitalising on existing knowledge and data from EU-funded scientific projects and eliminating parallel investigations, CC-WaterS will make information applicable for concrete solutions, develop tools and instruments for public water supply and implement safeguarding measures.

Partners: Led by the Municipality of the City of Vienna (Municipal Department 31 – Waterworks) the project brings together 18 partners from nine countries.

DMCSEE

The Drought Management Centre for South East Europe project (DMCSEE) will coordinate development and application of drought risk management tools and policies with the goal of improving preparedness and reducing drought impacts. It will introduce and continue to provide now missing regional information on the drought situation.

Partners: The project brings together agencies representing 14 countries.



The EU's new approach for the Danube region uses a 'macro-regional' framework to coordinate efforts between eight Member States – Germany (Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria), Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania – and six non-Member States – Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova and Ukraine. The EU Strategy for the Danube Region provides an opportunity for these countries to respond cooperatively to global challenges.

BUILDING PROSPERITY

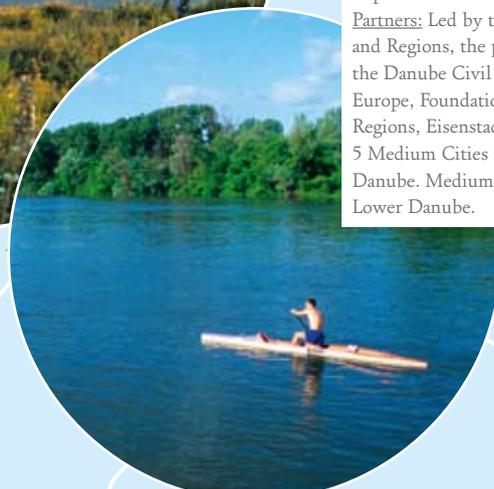
One of the Danube Strategy's objectives is to achieve a sustainable increase in the region's economy and competitiveness, and to establish a flourishing, developing and attractive region.

SEECEL

As lifelong entrepreneurial learning is a crucial element for the promotion of knowledge based, competitive and socially cohesive societies in Europe, the primary objective of the South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (SEECEL) project is to contribute to the development of entrepreneurial literacy as a key component of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

SEECEL's main aims are to develop entrepreneurship as a key competence; to promote entrepreneurship in education within non-business disciplines; and to analyse enterprise-driven training and disseminate good policies and practices.

Partners: The project brings together eight South Eastern European countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.



The Strategy contains an action plan based on four pillars: connecting the region, protecting the environment, building prosperity and strengthening the Danube region. Based on these four pillars, the Strategy further focuses on eleven priority areas. While the Strategy focuses on laying the foundation for long-term cooperation, work is already under way on projects that will help achieve the Strategy's goals. (Credit for all pictures: Mello)

STRENGTHENING THE DANUBE REGION

The Danube Strategy aims to strengthen the comprehensive security of the Danube Region, including working together to tackle organised crime, stepping up institutional capacity and cooperation and investing in people and skills.

EdTWIN

Schooling, vocation and language are the three main areas of the Education Twinning for European Citizenship in the Central Europe Region project (EdTWIN), which provides the opportunity for students and educators of the CENTROPE Region to learn the language and get to gain direct insight into the culture of their neighbouring countries. Students, aged 6 to 19, and educators will participate in projects focusing on personal encounters to build cross-border cooperation.

Partners: Students and educators from Vienna, Southern Moravia, the region of Bratislava and the Hungarian Comitát Győr/Moson/Sopron.

Meet Your Neighbour European Parliamentarian

This project aims to link the national assembly of the Republic of Serbia and its MPs with the European Parliament and the MEPs, as well as civil society of Serbia and Danube region countries (Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria) in a constructive and tailor-made dialogue on enhancement of cross border cooperation. The project will strengthen capacities of the Parliament and Committee for EU integration for the EU accession process and raise awareness of the EU accession process.

Partners: The project will bring together officials from seven Danube countries.

Road show on the Danube Strategy

The project 'Democracy, Self Government and Citizens Participation in the Danube Region: Road Show on the Danube Strategy in Medium Cities' aims to raise awareness of the Danube Strategy within medium-sized cities and rural areas. A special focus will be given to municipal affairs, the cultural sector and civil society. The project will link these areas to the work of the Danube Strategy, but also share collect relevant information from the field to shape the Strategy's implementation.

Partners: Led by the Council of Danube Cities and Regions, the project brings together the Danube Civil Society Forum, Foster Europe, Foundation for strong European Regions, Eisenstadt together with 5 Medium Cities from the Lower Danube. Medium Cities from the Lower Danube.

ICPDR MEETINGS	For final dates, please consult the ICPDR calendar, available at www.icpdr.org .
6-7/12/2011	IZMAIL, UKRAINE DANUBE DELTA MEETING
13-14/12/2011	VIENNA, AUSTRIA ICPDR ORDINARY MEETING
21-22/2/2012	TIMIDOARA, ROMANIA FIRST ICPDR WORKSHOP ON HYDROPOWER AND THE ENVIRONMENT
14/3/2012	LINZ, AUSTRIA NUTRIENT TASK GROUP MEETING
15-16/3/2012	LINZ, AUSTRIA PRESSURES AND MEASURES EXPERT GROUP MEETING
15-16/3/2012	SOFIA, BULGARIA GROUNDWATER TASK GROUP MEETING
29-30/3/2012	MUNICH, GERMANY FLOOD PROTECTION EXPERT GROUP MEETING
29-30/3/2012	MUNICH, GERMANY ICPDR WORKSHOP ON CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION
2-3/4/2012	MUNICH, GERMANY MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT EXPERT GROUP MEETING
3-4/4/2012	LOCATION TO BE DETERMINED INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEM EXPERT GROUP MEETING
19-20/4/2012	SALZBURG, AUSTRIA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION EXPERT GROUP MEETING
24-25/4/2012	ZAGREB, CROATIA ACCIDENT PREVENTION AND CONTROL EXPERT GROUP MEETING
10-11/5/2012	VIENNA, AUSTRIA RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT EXPERT GROUP MEETING
5/2012	LOCATION TO BE DETERMINED ECONOMICS TASK GROUP MEETING
DW 1/12	UPCOMING ISSUE

ICPDR Presidency of Austria 2012
Man on the river: a cruise of inspiration
Trends in the work between environment and business