

# DANUBE WATCH

THE MAGAZINE OF THE DANUBE RIVER / WWW.ICPDR.ORG / 2014 *SPECIAL*



**20** YEARS  
ICPDR

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# Dear readers,

I would like to extend my warm congratulations to the Danube countries on the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River in 1994. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes was signed two years earlier, in 1992, and served as a model for your Convention. UNECE is therefore proud of the enormous success of the Danube River Protection Convention, as the basin treaty bringing together the largest number of riparian states.

The Danube River Protection Convention is constantly referred to as an example of good practice in a wide range of sectors and themes. Efficiently served by the ICPDR, the Convention has a transboundary river basin management plan, for which I also congratulate the ICPDR. It also has the first-ever transboundary climate change adaptation strategy, and generously shares its experiences as part of a global network of basins working on climate change adaptation. UNECE supports that network, together with our partner, the International Network of Basin Organizations.

The ICPDR is also a world leader in work on the nexus between water and related sectors, having developed guidelines on sustainable hydropower together with the hydropower industry. There is a continuing flow of information and knowledge between the ICPDR and other joint bodies and interested countries from around the world under the umbrella of the UNECE Water Convention – on how to establish and develop joint bodies, on the benefits of transboundary water cooperation, on climate change and on much more. This flow of information benefits both our Conventions, as well as the many other stakeholders who participate in this work, and contributes to their development.

I look forward to continuing our excellent cooperation and the stimulating and productive exchanges of knowledge and experience.

*Mr. Michael MØLLER*

United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
Acting Executive Secretary of the United Nations  
Economic Commission for Europe



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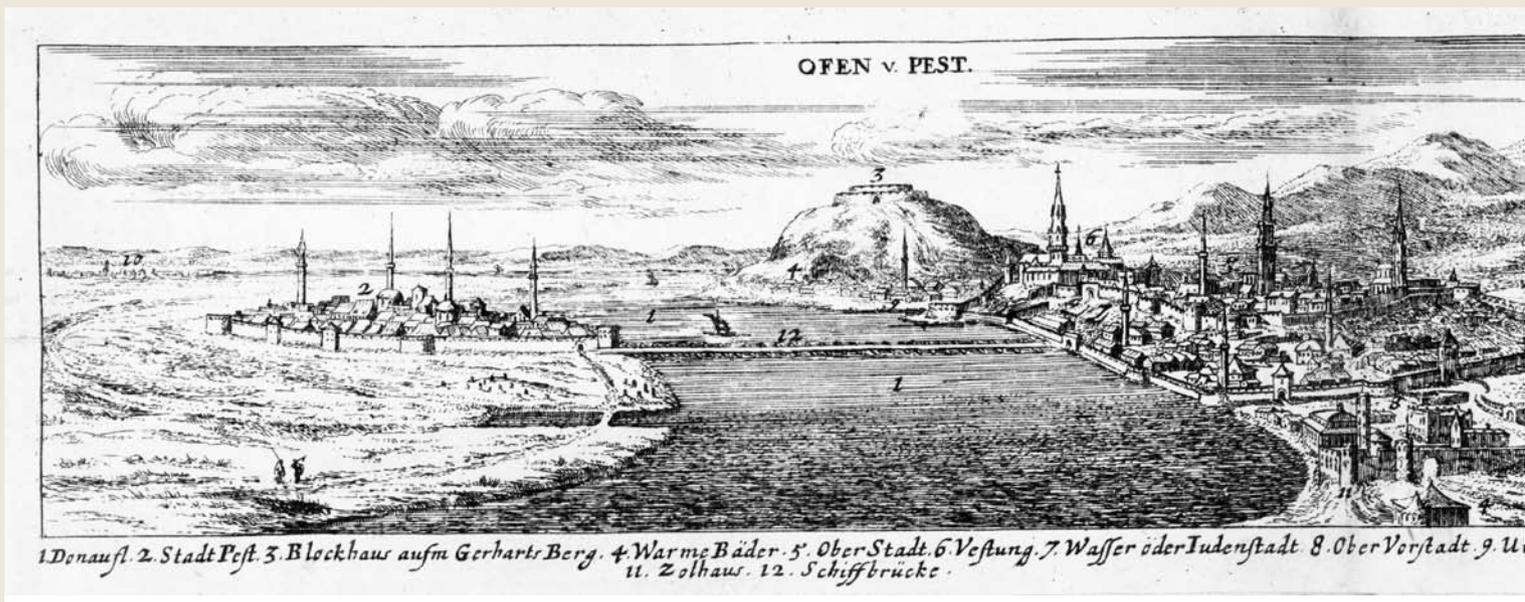
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# The flow of Danube cooperation: a history of shared responsibility

Water knows no borders, but is instead shared by diverse communities across political, religious and cultural lines. Regional cooperation – as demonstrated by the Danube countries over the last 20 years under the Danube River Protection Convention – is therefore vital to avoid conflict.



As a corridor, the Danube links the Black Sea with the heart of Europe. As a natural barrier, it has divided countries and nations. For millennia, the Danube oscillated between these two roles, pulling together and pushing apart, thereby shaping the history of dozens of nations. The most international river basin in the world has long called for transboundary cooperation. The ICPDR's 20 years of work for the Danube environment add a success story to a centuries' old effort to share responsibility for joint waters.

In 1994, the countries of the Danube River Basin established an integrated programme for the basin-wide control of water quality. However, by the time the Danube River

Protection Convention was signed, transboundary cooperation had already had a long history in the Danube Basin. Today, scholars of international law often identify the Danube Basin as the region where international organisations first evolved.

**Early river agreements.** The Danube Basin is at the centre of ancient fault lines between blocks of power – from the Roman Empire to struggles between the Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian Empires and between Capitalist West and Communist East. Water, however, doesn't recognize these borders; instead it is shared by a variety of political and administrative regimes and requires cooperation. As a result, water is a powerful force to promote transboundary

partnership, even – or perhaps especially – in areas prone to conflict.

As early as 1616, the Danube was a keystone in negotiating peace. An Austro-Turkish treaty signed in Belgrade that year granted Austrians the right to navigate the middle and lower Danube, at that time under the control of the Ottoman Empire. In 1774, the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca ended a war between Russia and Turkey, and allowed the Russians to use the lower Danube.

However it was the 1856 Treaty of Paris, settling the Crimean War, that created the first – and for many years the only – international body with significant powers on



For centuries, the Danube has divided people, as shown for example in this map of the cities Pest and Buda from 1664. For centuries, the Danube has also united people in their efforts to manage its waters jointly – allowing cities like Budapest to develop.

© S. Birken; scan by Paulus Swaen Old maps, swaen.com

the Danube River. The ‘European Commission of the Danube’, as it was called – made up of riverine countries as well as the major shipping powers such as Great Britain and France – was set up to guarantee freedom of commerce and navigation along the Danube River for all European countries. Cooperation under this commission continued until the middle of the 20th century.

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

trol of the river system into three administrations: the main Danube Commission, a bilateral Romania–USSR administration between Brăila and the Sulina channel, and a bilateral Romania–Yugoslavia administration at the Iron Gate.

**Bringing the basin together.** The Danube passes by numerous large cities – including four national capitals, Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest and Belgrade – receiving the waste of millions of individuals and their agriculture and industry, and by the 1980s water quality was a serious issue. Recognising the increasing degradation of water quality, the eight (at that time) countries along the Danube River signed the Declaration of the Danube Countries to Cooperate on Questions Concerning the Water Management of the Danube (Bucharest Declaration) in 1985.

The Bucharest Declaration reinforced the principle that the environmental quality of the river depends on the environment of the basin as a whole, and committed the countries to an integrated approach in water management, beginning with the establishment of a basin-wide unified monitoring network.

The East–West political division of the Cold War had cut the Danube Basin in two and severely constrained information sharing and transnational data exchange. In 1998, the fall of the Iron Curtain transformed geopolitical conditions on a global scale with new countries and new frontiers through Europe. However the breakup of the USSR made existing water quality problems worse, as new economies found few resources for environmental issues.

**Initial steps to river protection.** The Bucharest Declaration announced the Danube countries’ intentions to cooperate on water management, and by the early 1990s action to formalise that cooperation was already under way. In 1991, the countries created the Environmental Programme for the Danube River Basin (EPDRB) to support and reinforce national actions to restore and protect the river basin. Under the programme, the countries agreed to adopt the same monitoring system to assess environmental impact, address the issue of liability

for cross-border pollution, define rules for the protection of wetland habitats and to define guidelines to conserve areas of ecological importance or aesthetic value.

An interim Task Force was created to coordinate efforts, and members included the Danube countries of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine; the European Com-

## A MODEL FOR TRANSBOUNDARY AGREEMENTS

The UNECE Water Convention was adopted in Helsinki in 1992 and entered into force in 1996. To date it has been ratified by 56 countries and the European Community.

The Convention’s aim is to strengthen measures at local, national and transboundary levels to protect and ensure the quantity, quality and sustainable use of transboundary water resources – both surface waters and ground waters. The Convention takes a holistic approach, based on the understanding that water resources play an integral part in ecosystems as well as in human societies and economies.

Since the UNECE Water Convention came into force it has served as a model for transboundary cooperation arrangements and driven cooperation in the region. Many river basin agreements are based on the Convention, such as the Danube River Protection Convention, the agreements on Lake Peipsi and on the Sava, Meuse, Rhine and Scheldt Rivers, or further to the east the bilateral agreements between countries in Eastern Europe established since the 1990s, among them the Kazakh–Russian, Russian–Ukrainian and Moldovan–Ukrainian agreements. Building on the success achieved, the Parties to the Convention amended it in 2013 to open it up to non-UNECE countries, thereby making the Convention and its inter-governmental framework available to all regions of the world.



mission, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank, Nordic Investment Bank, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, World Bank as well as NGOs such as the World Conservation Union, World Wide Fund for Nature, Regional Environmental Centre and Barbara Guntlett Foundation. The Task Force's work was supported by a Programme Coordination Unit based in Vienna, Austria.

One of the major assignments of the Task Force was the development of the Strategic Action Plan in 1993 to take steps from the planning phase to implementation. The plan addressed major environmental threats with realistic actions and constraints to problem solving, and was updated regularly with input from consultation with decision-makers and stakeholders. Furthermore, it was the first time that public participation was required during the development of an international management plan, embracing the vital need for input at all levels in order for the plan to ensure that it has the support of the people who are affected by its implementation.

**A legal framework for Danube cooperation.** At the same time they were developing the Strategic Action Plan, the Danube countries were also developing the Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River (Danube River Protection Convention). The Convention was signed on 29 June, 1994 in Sofia, Bulgaria, by representatives from eleven of the Danube Basin States – Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine, as well as the European Community. Serbia, then in union with Montenegro, joined the adopted the Convention in 2003, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2005. After seceding from Serbia, Montenegro became the 15th contracting party of the ICPDR in 2008.

Signatories to the Convention have agreed to cooperate on fundamental water management issues, including the conservation, improvement and rational use of surface waters and groundwater; preventive measures to control hazards originating from accidents, floods, ice or hazardous substances; and measures to reduce the pollution loads entering the Black Sea from sources in the Danube River Basin.

**Leading the region for water management.** The ICPDR is now the largest international body of river basin management experts in Europe, with a mission to promote and coordinate sustainable water management for the benefit of all people of the Danube River Basin. Since its creation, the ICPDR has brought together representatives from the highest ministerial levels, technical experts and members of civil society and the scientific community to continuously improve the state of the Danube River Basin water bodies.

This commitment was reinforced in 2000, when all ICPDR contracting parties agreed to coordinate the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive in the Danube Basin through the ICPDR; and again in 2007, when this agreement was extended to the EU Floods Directive (see article, page 10).

The ongoing goal of the ICPDR will be to implement the Danube River Protection Convention and make it a living tool to coordinate sustainable and equitable water management, including conservation, improvement and rational use of waters for the benefit of the Danube River Basin countries and their people for the next twenty years, and the years to follow.

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



Following the signing of the Danube River Protection Convention, the UN Office Vienna became the centre for the administration of Danube protection efforts with the establishment of the ICPDR Secretariat there in 1998. © ICPDR/Mello

# ICPDR Presidency 2014: continuity, coherence and cooperation from the Black Forest to the Black Sea

For the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Danube River Protection Convention, the ICPDR Presidency returns to Sofia where the Danube lies at the heart of Bulgarian geography and history.



Credit: ICPDR/Schell

As for myself, I was born in the Danube River Basin. Though not on the banks of the Danube River itself, Sofia is situated in the catchment of its largest tributary in Bulgaria – the Iskar River.

My current responsibilities as Deputy Minister of Environment and Water include water management issues of policy making and implementation. The Bulgarian part of the Danube River covers nearly half of Bulgaria's territory but this is not the sole reason for having a clear national focus on the water management of this basin. For centuries the Danube has been the Bulgarian bond with Europe and the sense of belonging to the Danube family is alive and being further strengthened by ICPDR activities.

**Danube Watch: What will this anniversary year mean for the presidency?**

**Kostadinov:** First of all, 2014 is the 20th anniversary of the Danube River Protection Convention. In a human life, 20 years mark the end of childhood and the beginning of a responsible and productive period. Indeed, utilising the potential and vibrant energy of youth, we can now be more responsible when strategic issues are being considered and be more open-minded and forward looking in this process.

Taking stock from achievements so far and the processes leading to them, I believe that the Standing Working Group meeting this June in Sofia will outline priorities in view of the dynamic changes and ever increasing challenges to water management. I hope that with the support of the Troika with the former and future Presidents and of all Heads of Delegations we will have a more consolidated ICPDR family by the end of this year.

Atanas Kostadinov, Deputy Minister of the Environment and Water of Bulgaria, will serve as President of the ICPDR for the organisation's 20 year anniversary.  
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**Atanas Kostadinov, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water and ICPDR President for 2014, speaks about strengthening cooperation with the Black Sea Commission and how, at 20 years old, the ICPDR is out of its youth and taking its place as a mature player on the international stage.**

**Danube Watch: What is the Danube's role for Bulgaria?**

**Kostadinov:** Bulgaria is a country of rich history, astonishing heritage from Thracian and Roman times, a land where over 13 centuries ago ancient Bulgarians founded their state south of the Danube River. The Danube is not only part of our geography and history – the words “the blue Danube” feature in the second line of the national anthem and the river is an element of national identity.

**ATANAS KOSTADINOV, BULGARIAN DEPUTY MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND WATER AND ICPDR PRESIDENT FOR 2014**

Atanas Kostadinov was born in 1968.

He has a Master's degree in Philosophy and Sociology from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and a specialisation from Harvard University.

He served as Deputy Minister of Environment and Water from 2005 to 2009. After 2011 he managed consultant and investment companies.

Kostadinov speaks Bulgarian, English, Russian and German.

This year also marks a decade of Danube Day celebrations. This outreach initiative has contributed significantly to raising the ICPDR's profile and has gained a lot of support for the region among a wide range of stakeholders. In Bulgaria, Danube Day activities this year will have an additional boost by a clean up campaign along the Danube River.

The diversity of the Danube River Basin offers numerous possibilities for a wide range of activities on regional scale. The implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region is definitely a process with a lot of links to the ICPDR's core business. Streamlining these activities with a clear distinction of responsibilities in order to avoid overlaps can only be beneficial to both the Strategy and the ICPDR. A process of communication on this issue has already started and I hope to achieve progress during the Bulgarian Presidency of the ICPDR with the view of having a document on agreed responsibilities of these two framework structures.

**Danube Watch: Bulgaria is both a Danube and Black Sea country, and next year Bulgaria will also chair the Black Sea Commission. How will you strengthen the cooperation between the two commissions?**

**Kostadinov:** Contributing to the protection of the Black Sea is among the key objectives of the Danube River Protection Convention. This focus on the Black Sea in recent years is even more prominent given that with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU the Black Sea has become one of the European Union seas. There are signs of improvement in cooperation between the ICPDR and the Black Sea Commission and my ambition as ICPDR President from a Danube and Black Sea country is to see this cooperation strengthen and expand. And I am clearly speaking about two way communication, as naturally data on pollution loads from the Danube is important for Black Sea countries, but relevant information about impacts and measures from the Black Sea Commission is important for the Danube countries.

I would like to see a revived Danube-Black Sea Joint Technical Working Group, based on a work programme accepted by the two commissions and closer working relationships between the secretariats and at an expert

level. Bulgaria is going to strengthen its own participation in this group and promote cooperation between the two commissions during its Black Sea Commission chairmanship, including promoting new formats of collaboration involving both secretariats and the ICPDR President and the Black Sea Commission Chairman.

**Danube Watch: How has Bulgaria benefitted from the ICPDR, and what can other countries or regions learn from the work of the ICPDR?**

**Kostadinov:** To a certain extent, it is symbolic that in the anniversary year the Convention is back to Sofia. It was also under the first Bulgarian Presidency that the decision was taken for the ICPDR to serve as a platform for WFD coordination in the Danube River Basin. At the time, Bulgaria – as well as most of the current EU Member States which are parties to the Danube River Protection Convention – was not bound by EU legislation. However, this decision and its subsequent implementation has provided us with a unique experience and contributed greatly to the capacity building of our water administration. What is more, the experience developing the first Danube River Basin District Management Plan was useful for all four river basin districts in Bulgaria.

Valuable experience from ICPDR approaches to intersectoral cooperation and public participation have also been incorporated at the national level and in our international activities. Bulgaria has often brought the ICPDR's example to Black Sea Commission discussions, to the extent that these days in this setting it is not uncommon to receive the question: "How do you do this in the ICPDR?"

Last but not least, the ICPDR has helped Bulgaria, as well as all Danube countries, to build a Danubian culture – one of mutual respect, commitment and friendship.

**"For centuries the Danube has been the Bulgarian bond to Europe and the sense of belonging to the Danube family is alive and being further strengthened by ICPDR activities."**

**"Bulgaria has often brought the ICPDR's example to Black Sea Commission discussions, to the extent that these days in this setting it is not uncommon to receive the question: 'How do you do this in the ICPDR?'"**



Credit: ICPDR/Stugmiller

## Targets for all Danube countries to meet: implementing EU legislation

**The best way to protect and manage water is by close international cooperation between all the countries within the river basin – bringing together all interests upstream and downstream.**

Ministerial Meeting in 2010: The responsible ministers of the main Danube River Basin countries reinforce the role of the ICPDR as coordination body for the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive and the EU Floods Directive.

**Complex and holistic legislation introduced by the European Union ensures that all EU countries use a river basin approach for water management. The ICPDR serves as the coordination platform for this legislation in the Danube River Basin, in particular for the EU Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive.**

**EU Water Framework Directive – Directive 2000/60/EC** The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), which came into force in 2000, establishes a legal framework to protect and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems, prevent their deterioration, and ensure long-term, sustainable use of water resources. The Directive provides for an innovative approach for water management based on river basins, the natural geographical and hydrological units, and sets specific deadlines for EU Member States. The WFD addresses inland surface waters (rivers and lakes), transitional waters, coastal waters, groundwater and, under specific conditions, water dependent terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands.

While EU Member States are obliged to fulfil this Directive, at the time of its adop-

tion most Contracting Parties to the Danube River Protection Convention were not EU Member States. However, all Danube countries pledged their firm political commitment to support the implementation of the WFD in their countries. Furthermore, the countries agreed that implementation of the EU WFD was the ICPDR's highest priority and the ICPDR would provide a platform for the coordination of the Danube River Basin Management Plan required under the Directive.

**EU Floods Directive – Directive 2007/60/EC** The EU Floods Directive (EFD), which entered into force in 2007, aims to reduce and manage the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity. The Directive required Member States to carry out a preliminary assessment, which was completed for the Danube Basin in 2011. The Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Report for the Danube Basin, based on input from Danube countries, identifies areas of potential significant flood risk. For such areas, countries then needed to draw up flood risk maps by 2013 and establish flood risk management plans focused on prevention, protection and preparedness by 2015.

The basic principles of environmentally sound flood risk management had already been incorporated into the ICPDR Action Programme for Sustainable Flood Protection, adopted in 2004, which aimed to achieve a long-term approach to managing the risk of floods to protect human life and property, while at the same time encouraging conservation and the improvement of water-related ecosystems. Furthermore, flood action plans in the sub-basins were drawn up. With ICPDR acting as observer, the FLOODRISK project began in 2009 to develop uniform flood risk maps that would define flood hazards and vulnerability and form the methodological basis for targeting measures and reducing flood damage in the Danube Basin. Today, the ICPDR coordinates the implementation of the EFD in the Danube River Basin similar to the WFD. The first Danube River Basin Flood Risk Management Plan is under preparation and will be available at the end of 2015.

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



The **Danube River Protection Convention** was signed on 29 June 1994, in Sofia, Bulgaria, by eleven of the Danube riparian states – Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine – and the European Community. Today, all 14 countries in the Danube Basin have committed themselves to implementing the Convention and cooperate actively with the ICPDR. On this 20th anniversary of the Convention, the Danube countries share their views on working together to protect the most international river basin in the world. Credit for all photos in this article section: ICPDR/Mello

## Germany A shared responsibility to protect resources

Since water does not stop at national borders, an internationally coordinated approach is necessary to protect the future of the region.



“The ICPDR has fostered a network which enriches every individual and makes them feel a part of the ICPDR family.”



The Danube originates in Germany, and from its source in the Black Forest to the border with Austria, the Danube flows through Germany for 584 km. Around 7% of the entire Danube River Basin district, covering 56,184 km<sup>2</sup>, is in Germany, and this area is home to around 9.7 million people in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg.

As the land of the Danube’s source, Germany has a special responsibility to protect the Danube. Soon after the political division of Europe was overcome in the early 1990s, Germany was strongly in favour of a convention for the protection of the Danube. Signing the Danube River Protection Convention in 1994 in Sofia placed international cooperation on a firm legal foundation. The ICPDR was established on this basis and is the main partner and political driving force for all water management issues in the Danube region.

### Securing international coordination.

Water does not stop at national borders; therefore an internationally coordinated approach within a river basin has been an important part of the EU environment legislation since the entry into force of the EU Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive. In this respect the ICPDR has a two-fold function. Firstly, it serves as a platform to secure international coordination between Germany, other EU countries and, as far as possible, non-EU countries as well. One such coordination milestone was the first Danube River Basin Management Plan, adopted in 2009 in accordance with the Water Framework Directive. Secondly, the work of the ICPDR plays an important part in assisting non-EU countries with accession. When the ICPDR took up its work in 1998, Germany and Austria were the only two contracting parties belonging to the European Union. Today, nine of the fourteen countries in the Danube region are EU member states.

Furthermore, a range of ICPDR activities have provided impetus for discussions within Germany, while others have themselves benefited from initiatives at national level. Examples are ICPDR cooperation with water-related sectors such as navigation, hydropower and adaptation to climate change, or public relations projects such as Danube Day and the Danube Box which was developed for use in schools.

Not the least of the ICPDR’s achievements is its creation of an outstanding network of specialists which excels in more than just its expertise: in light of the shared history and culture of the countries in the Danube region and in the spirit of transparency and common vision that characterises its work, the ICPDR has fostered a network on a personal level too, a network which enriches every individual and makes them feel a part of the ICPDR family.

# Austria

## The “blue” Danube and the ICPDR

**Austria is not only the country where the ‘Blue Danube’ waltz originates from, adding a lively musical identity to the otherwise rather smooth river, it is also home to the ICPDR Secretariat. There are good reasons for both these facts.**

Nourished by numerous Alpine rivers, the Danube evolves from a medium-sized river to the mighty Danube that has shaped landscape and culture of Austria for centuries and inspired Johann Strauss to create his most famous waltz.

Austria is home to people who hold environmental protection in high regard, and typical for a rather small country by international measures, Austria is also a strong supporter of transnational cooperation. Therefore, it is no wonder that Austria has been among the strongest advocates for the ICPDR ever since it was established in 1994. Austria was the first country to provide a president, to provide civil servants as first staff members and today, Austria is still host to the ICPDR’s Secretariat.

– a protected floodplain area; the Thayatal National Park – an impressive protected area on the Thaya/Dyje River; and Neusiedler See (Fertő-tó) – also a UNESCO World Heritage Site consisting of a large, shallow lake, more than half of which is dominated by reeds.

**An obligation to the river.** Such a wealth of water-related resources comes with great responsibilities, and they touch on many different uses. More than 40% of Austria’s Danube Basin is used for agriculture, settlements and infrastructure, which has led to organic, nutrient and hazardous substance pollution. With all available valley floor space developed, there has been a marked impact on rivers, which along many stretches were straightened as early

as in the 19th century. Major river systems are also used for hydroelectric power generation (an important source of energy for the country), inland navigation and as receiving waters for effluents and drinking water supply.

Responsibility involves taking action to remediate impacts. Important efforts have been made and are still under way to reduce impacts on rivers further: Austria was one of the first EU countries in full compliance with the EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive, and Austria is a frontrunner in reconciling river ecology with hydropower generation, flood protection efforts and navigation.



Austrians take great pride in the quality of their water and many of the country’s best-known attractions are directly linked to its water resources. Think of the the Wachau River Valley – a UNESCO World Heritage Site and outstanding example of a fluvial and cultural landscape bordered by mountains; the Donau-Auen National Park

**“The ICPDR is also an efficient international mechanism to engage in a dialogue with stakeholders from different sectors to balance conflicting needs of the environment on one side and society and economy on the other.”**



The ICPDR provides a platform for coordinating efforts to improve the chemical and ecological quality of water bodies, and to manage flood risks sustainably in the Danube River Basin. In addition, the ICPDR is also an efficient international mechanism to engage in a dialogue with stakeholders from different sectors to balance conflicting needs of the environment on one side and society and the economy on the other.

Austria is strongly involved with the Danube and the ICPDR. As a country, it has both given to and taken from the river and the commission looking after its health. Austria wishes both the Danube River Basin and the ICPDR with all its contracting parties and people behind them as much prosperity in the future as it has had in the past 20 years since the signing of the convention.

# Czech Republic

## Creating a connection to the Danube Basin

Bringing the Danube into the minds and hearts of stakeholders throughout the basin creates lasting bonds for cross-border cooperation and gives us all a reason to take action.



Much has changed in the Morava River Sub-basin since the Danube River Protection Convention was signed in 1994. For the basin as a whole, we saw plans to sustainably use the waters of the Danube Basin become very real projects and actions to protect these resources. Additionally the Czech Republic went from being a non-member state to a Member of the EU. Linking these two the way the ICPDR has been successful in persuading EU member states and non-member states to achieve a common goal.

This cooperation across borders has been especially important for the Accident Emergency Warning System (AEWS), working to solve accidental problems on international border rivers. The Czech Republic implemented the system in 1997, and it has been very useful since then – with the software

**“No matter how far from the Danube we may live, once we are a part of the river basin we have to act accordingly.”**

platform has been updated and modernised several times and regular tests are run twice a year. Since establishing the AEWS, positive evaluations have shown that the system has greatly improved communication on an international level in cases of accidental pollution on border waters.

### **Highlighting the Danube's connection.**

One of the most impressive ICPDR actions was the Joint Danube Survey 2. The world's largest river research expedition at the time, it produced the most reliable information on water quality and pollution for the Danube and some of its tributaries – including the Morava. Having a national expert in the core team, a participating national team as well as laboratories sampling the Morava River brought us immensely useful experiences. In addition, it was an honour for the Czech Republic to be an

active participant in a project in which one methodology was used for research in the whole Danube region.

Furthermore, we can't overlook the success of the Danube Day celebrations, together with the release of the Czech version of the Danube Box. These actions have brought the Danube into the minds of the general public and made them feel connected with and responsible to all Danube region countries – which is very important in our case as the Danube does not pass directly through Czech territory. However, no matter how far from the Danube we may live, once we are a part of the river basin we have to act accordingly and it is good to know that there are partners to cooperate with in common interests and who face similar problems.

At the beginning of this journey there was the signature of the Convention hand in hand with many expectations, questions and definitely some doubts as to how it was going to work. Now 20 years later there are 15 cooperating stakeholders in the ICPDR preparing the second Danube River Basin Management Plan – how remarkable!

# Slovakia

## Bringing basin-wide experience together

The Danube River Protection Convention creates space for useful cooperation among nations where collaboration can lead to innovative ideas to manage water management issues.



"The participation of our experts in the activities of the ICPDR's expert groups to exchange lessons, knowledge and experiences and to discuss new solutions has improved our work at home and our work towards our common goal: the protection and development of the Danube River Basin."

and guarantee its sustainable use. In the 1970s, this plan was updated as the Guiding Water Management Plan, which was elaborated according to river sub-basins. The implementation of these plans led to the unprecedented development of water management in Slovakia from the 1950s to the end of the 20th century.



The Danube is a huge river with a giant catchment, and thus cooperation among nations in the basin has long been a necessity. However, there is a clear difference between finding partial solutions to problems and conceptual cooperation with a clearly defined goal. Put simply, the sustainable and equitable use of water, land and natural resources in the Danube River Basin is an ambitious goal, but worth the effort.

Slovakia's location and experiences in the Danube River Basin provide beneficial learning opportunities for other countries. In the south, the Danube, Morava and Tisza River Basin waters flow into the country, and all waters flow out of Slovakia to our neighbours. This gives us great caution, as we are aware that what-

ever we do – positive or negative – has consequences for our neighbours. Our principle is to cause no harm to others, and this basic tenet is firmly anchored in our interior legal acts and in bilateral and multilateral legal instruments such as the Danube River Protection Convention.

Slovakia experienced a disaster during the 1965 flood on the Danube River, which broke flood protection dykes in two places and flooded more than 940 km<sup>2</sup>. Lessons learned from the experience led to the radical reorganisation of river basin management in Slovakia. Since 1965, rivers have been managed according to the natural boundaries of catchments, independent of any administrative changes.

### Bringing experience to the river basin.

In addition, the Slovak Republic has long experience in water management planning which is beneficial to all countries in the region. As early as 1951, the government of the former Czechoslovakia adopted the State Water Management Plan, balancing the interests of economic growth with the need to protect water as a natural resource

Joining the Danube River Protection Convention and participating in the activities of the ICPDR has been extremely positive for Slovakia, because finding shared solutions to improving water management brings innovative ideas and dimensions on the widest scale. The participation of our experts in the activities of the ICPDR's expert groups to exchange lessons, knowledge and experiences and to discuss new solutions has improved our work at home and our work towards our common goal: the protection and development of the Danube River Basin.

The 20th anniversary of the signing of the Danube River Protection Convention is an excellent occasion to offer our sincere thanks to the ICPDR Permanent Secretariat for the day-to-day hard work in achieving the goals of the region. The Convention creates space for useful cooperation among nations, and we hope that the activities of the ICPDR will continue to be applied to the sustainable development of the Danube River Basin – for the benefit of all people living here.

# Hungary

## Bringing together upstream and downstream interests

From the early days of the Danube River Protection Convention, the countries have shown that sharing ideas and developing joint solutions is the way to balance varying needs and protect the natural resources of the basin for everyone.

For Hungary – a country that lies entirely within the Danube Basin and which shares its waters with seven neighbours – the Danube Protection Convention has been an important tool for water cooperation for twenty years.

By the end of the 1980s, it was clear that technical cooperation alone is not enough to make real progress – it must be backed by high level political support and commitment. To develop this transboundary

Participation Expert Group was created based on a suggestion from Hungary, we hosted the first Danube Stakeholder Conference and the Green Danube partnership was signed under the Hungarian presidency of the ICPDR. At the same time, we have learnt a lot from the process of creating and implementing the Danube River Protection convention. We have also upgraded our existing bilateral transboundary agreements to bring them in line with international water legislation developments.

share experiences and to increase synergies and efficiency. The EU Strategy for the Danube Region will draw on this Danube history and be an important tool for basin development in the future.

The past 20 years of the Convention have demonstrated the political, technical and institutional evolution of river basin cooperation, and the growing international interest in learning from this cooperation – such as the recognition of the International



cooperation, Hungary and Austria proposed concepts for a Danube Convention, which has been based on the UNECE Water Convention. Thanks to Wilhelm Kittinger from Austria, the “Father of the Convention”, and also the late Endre Almássy from Hungary, we are celebrating this document this year.

From the beginning, Hungary has eagerly supported the process by taking on leading roles in expert groups and actively participating in activities such as the Joint Danube Surveys and analytical quality control exercises. Working closely with stakeholders has been a priority for Hungary; the Public

**“The past 20 years of the Convention have demonstrated the political, technical and institutional evolution of river basin cooperation, and the growing international interest in learning from this cooperation – such as the recognition of the International RiverPrize – is evidence of its success.”**

**A role model for collaboration.** The ICPDR has had an important role as an implementation platform for relevant EU legislation as well as a cooperation bridge between EU and non EU Member States. Linking Danube activities to other frameworks helps to

RiverPrize – is evidence of its success. Sharing our experiences with others is vital, especially where understanding the necessity and benefits of transboundary cooperation requires further evidence. The good examples and rich experience of the ICPDR – such as in demonstrating how upstream and downstream interests can be brought together – adds to the ongoing global negotiations on future development goals.

The success of the Danube River Protection Convention is the result of actions by governmental officials, national and international experts, and stakeholders, and for this success we wish to thank all Danube Basin countries and last but not least the Secretariat of the ICPDR. We are looking forward to the next 20 years of cooperation.



# Slovenia

## Holistic solutions for development

The work of the Danube countries under the ICPDR provides a model of transboundary cooperation to guide actions for sustainable development in regions all around the world.



The integrated approach to water management in the process of preparing and implementing the Danube River Protection Convention is a real challenge. It involves bringing together countries with differing histories, languages and cultures as well as diverse sectors – such as transport, energy, flood management, pollution control or nature and the environment – to find sustainable solutions for water use on the same rivers. This is a lesson in hard work. This process – at the regional or national level, from the top down or bottom up – is the essence of the ICPDR’s approach, and to be a part of this process is true team building. Thanks to this process, the ICPDR has built a strong Danube family with a clear vision and plan. To be a member of the ICPDR is a great asset for cooperation in a shared river basin.

**Providing an applicable model for management.** The experiences of working in the ICPDR have been very useful for the Sava River Basin, in particular for the EU Stability Pact and the US activity to enhance cooperation in the region after the Dayton Agreement. In addition, the group which drafted the Framework Agreement for the Sava River Basin worked to create a similar balance between regional, subregional and national water management issues as seen in the work of the ICPDR. Thanks to the active cooperation of the Secretariats of the ICPDR and the International Sava River



Basin Commission, we have two significant results: the Sava River Basin Management Plan and the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River Basin. Participation from NGOs and stakeholders in the Sava River Basin has grown, and the Sava Youth Parliament and events organised under Sava Day held on 1 June help to draw attention to water management, navigation and the importance of cooperation in the Sava River Basin.

Slovenia held the ICPDR Presidency in 2010, and the first Danube River Basin Management Plan was adopted that year.

“The ICPDR has built a strong Danube family with a clear vision and plan. To be a member of the ICPDR is a great asset for cooperation in a shared river basin.”

In the same year, the European Commission launched the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. The Strategy, which aims to develop the economic potential of the region while working to restore water quality and manage environmental risks, benefitted from the ICPDR’s broad consultation process for sustainable transboundary projects with the Danube River Basin Management Plan. Furthermore, the Danube countries, under the ICPDR, recognised the importance of ecosystem goods and services for future development in the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Hydropower Development, for which Slovenia served as one of the three lead countries. Adopted in 2013, these principles will serve as a solid example of how find sustainable solutions for development in the shared ecoregion.

The integrated approach of the ICPDR’s work and its emphasis on regional cooperation serve as a lighthouse for other regions – such as the Adriatic-Ionian and the Alpine regions – as they look to the goals reached by the Danube River Protection Convention over the past 20 years and the achievements still to come.

# Croatia

## Working towards common goals

Working together under the Danube River Protection Convention shows that outstanding cooperation is possible when there is a clear vision of shared objectives.

Over the centuries, the Danube River and its tributaries have had great importance in the daily lives of citizens of the Republic of Croatia. Water is still – perhaps today more than ever – one of the inevitable and inexhaustible concerns for sustainable development and economic growth. Awareness of the importance of the Danube and the need to protect it, in spite of economic and development pressures, motivated the Republic of Croatia to be one of the earliest countries to sign the Danube River Protection Convention.

Croatian experts from the Ministry in charge of water management as well as from the Croatian water management agency Croatian Waters have participated in the ICPDR's Expert Groups and Task



Groups from the first meetings of these groups. In particular, activities related to the preparation of the Danube River Basin Management Plan were extremely important for the preparation of the first River Basin Management Plan for the Republic of Croatia.

**Responding to the basin's needs.** Preparations are now under way for a second six-

the Joint Declaration of the Ministers of the Danube and Black Sea countries, the Republic of Croatia proclaimed the Danube River Basin a sensitive area because of the eutrophication of the Danube Delta. As a result, the Croatian River Basin Management Plan calls for more advanced waste water treatment with nitrogen and phosphorus removal for all agglomerations larger than 10,000 population equivalents. These obligations will be fulfilled through the Implementation Plan for Water Utilities Directives, which contains agreed activities and deadlines for implementing two of the costliest EU water directives: the EU Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and the Drinking Water Directive.

In the past 20 years under the umbrella of the Danube River Protection Convention, much progress has been seen in linking the Contracting Parties on common issues such as flood defence and early warning systems. Furthermore, activities such as Danube Day celebrations and the Joint Danube Surveys have highlighted the role of public participation and promoted the work of the ICPDR on a national and international level.

Croatia has always seen the Danube River Protection Convention and the ICPDR as the platform where EU and non-EU countries work together to achieve a common goal: to ensure the good status of water in the basin, not just for today, but for future generations. Working together under the Convention clearly shows that outstanding cooperation is possible despite differences between countries when there is good will and a clear vision of common goals.



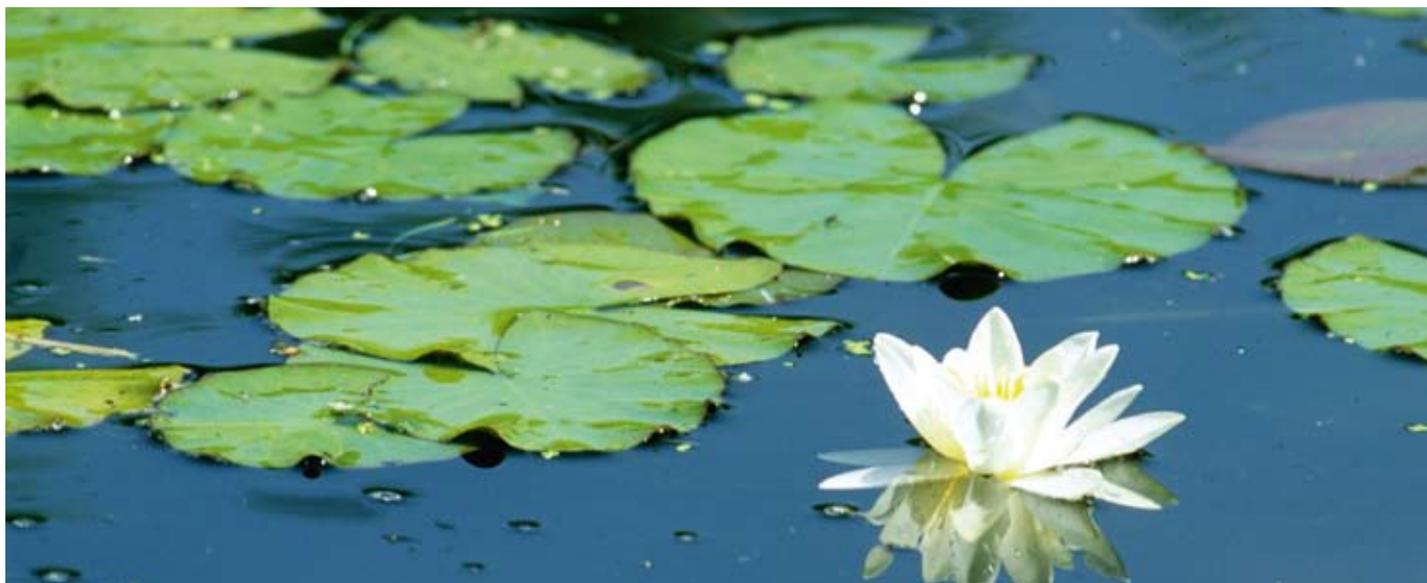
**“Croatia has always seen the Danube River Protection Convention and the ICPDR as the platform where EU and non-EU countries work together to achieve a common goal: to ensure the good status of water in the basin, not just for today, but for future generations.”**

year planning cycle of the Croatian River Basin Management Plan, which enables the implementation of very demanding water-related acquis, in particular the protection of water and water-dependent ecosystems including the Danube area. In compliance with the obligations of the Danube River Protection Convention and confirmed by

# Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Celebrating the basin's diversity

More than 83 million people of different cultures and languages call the Danube region their home, and for centuries they have been interconnected through the waters of the basin.



Bosnia and Herzegovina has no direct access to the Danube River, but it is part of the river's catchment area through major tributaries such as the Sava River. The Sava has the largest discharge of water to the Danube of any tributary, and over 40% of the Sava River sub-basin lies in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The joint management of the Sava River Basin by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia represents a good model for the Danube and exhibits successful strategies to implement the EU Water Framework Directive for the Danube and Europe. The Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin and the Protocol on the Navigation Regime, both signed in 2002, promote regional cooperation throughout the Sava River Basin on issues related to navigation, economic

development, comprehensive water management and environmental protection.

The cooperation between the ICPDR and the International Sava River Basin Commission has helped Sava countries tackle issues of crucial importance for transboundary development in the Sava River Basin. Examples of this are the 2008 Feasibility Study for Reconstruction and Development of Inland Navigation in the Sava River Basin, the 2009 Protocol on Water Pollution caused by Navigation, the 2010 Protocol on Flood Protection and the Sava River Basin Management Plan in 2012.

### Sharing ICPDR success with other basins.

One of the main characteristics of the Danube River Basin is its diversity. This diversity is not the region's weakness but, on the contrary, its advantage. The waters of the Danube region unite people from different languages, landscapes and cultures and the ICPDR is a positive, internationally recognised example of cooperation in a transboundary river system. Furthermore, the ICPDR demonstrates that countries cannot solve water issues alone; they need to cooperate with each other.

**"The waters of the Danube region unite people from different languages, landscapes and cultures and the ICPDR is a positive, internationally recognised example of cooperation in a transboundary river system."**

Bosnia and Herzegovina and the countries of the Danube have benefitted from this cooperation and have shown a sense of obligation to share our experiences with other river basins. A good example of this is the twinning arrangement with the Orange Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM) in Southern Africa, which provides the opportunity for both commissions to learn and profit from each other.

This is an illustration of the success of the Danube River Protection Convention in bringing partners together and of how it will continue to help countries achieve international cooperation in the conservation of our planet's natural heritage – which we have only borrowed from future generations.

# Serbia

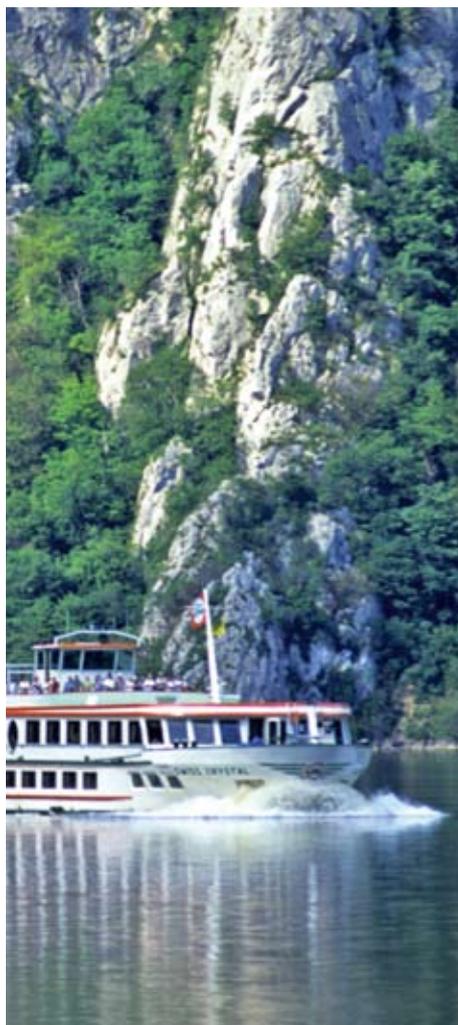
## Harmonising standards and practices

Efficient water management in a basin as large as the Danube requires the coordinated efforts of multiple countries; collaboration is necessary to develop the practices which will form the basis of this relationship.



International cooperation on water in the Danube River Basin is of particular importance for the Republic of Serbia for two main reasons. Firstly, the country is situated in the basin's middle and lower parts with over 90 percent of its territory in the basin. Furthermore, before entering Serbia water from the Danube River and its several tributaries passes through the territories of over ten countries – an area with a population of over 50 million people. Secondly, large installations, such as the Đerdap (Iron Gate) Hydropower and Navigation System and the Danube-Tisza-Danube Hydrosystem, both located in Serbia, have a considerable influence on the regime of this huge European watercourse. Therefore, proper water management in the Republic of Serbia calls for good cooperation with other countries in the basin, which is ensured through the ICPDR.

**Building on history.** The tradition of water management in Serbia goes back a long way, considering that significant water regulation as well as the construction of large hydrotechnical structures in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina began as early as the 18th century. An efficient water management was established after World War II, so high standards have been reached in numerous departments of the water sector: potable water supply, flood prevention, soil drainage, etc. Unfortunately, some water sector departments have



remained insufficiently developed, mainly because of the economic problems which emerged in the 1990s, and maintenance of the existing systems has been inadequate.

The Republic of Serbia (at the time, part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) became a member of the ICPDR in 2003. As efficient water management in such a big basin requires the coordinated efforts of multiple countries, it is necessary to collaborate on the development of planning documents that will form the basis of this relationship. Therefore, water management cooperation in the Danube River Basin has

“This highly successful cooperation has helped Serbian institutions and experts broaden their knowledge of European legislation concerning water, and has also enabled a smoother harmonisation process with the other Danube Basin countries’ standards and practices.”

been significant for the preparation and implementation of the Republic of Serbia’s European integration processes – this highly successful cooperation has helped Serbian institutions and experts broaden their knowledge of European legislation concerning water, and has also enabled a smoother harmonisation process with the other Danube Basin countries’ standards and practices. On the other hand, the knowledge and experience of Serbian water experts has contributed to the higher overall quality of water management in the Danube River Basin.

Finally, the experience gained through working on the ICPDR’s Danube River Basin Management Plan proved to be of great value when developing the Water Management Strategy in the Republic of Serbia and the National Management Plan of the Danube River Basin for the Republic of Serbia – both important water sector documents which are now in the final phases of development.

# Montenegro

## Protecting resources for all stakeholders

The ICPDR promotes policy agreements that set joint priorities and strategies to improve the waters of the Danube Basin for all stakeholders.



“Overcoming existing water management challenges can be possible if countries coordinate their efforts. For the past 20 years, the Danube River Protection Convention has proved this by helping countries in the region meet their shared goals.”

exploited. Increasing the country’s use of hydropower requires careful handling and should be viewed as only one element in a mixed energy supply scenario. Energy supply is no longer just an issue of exploitation, transformation and utilisation, but also involves consideration of the interdependence of the triple Es: Energy, Ecology and Economy. Finding this balance has been made easier by the ICPDR’s Guiding Principles on Sustainable Hydropower Development in the Danube Basin.

Adopted in 2013, the document builds on similar achievements in inland navigation, and aims to address problems of existing hydropower and especially to establish guidance for where and how to develop hydropower in the future.

Overcoming existing water management challenges can be possible if countries coordinate their efforts. For the past 20 years, the Danube River Protection Convention has proved this by helping countries in the region meet their shared goals and lay the groundwork for sustainable use of resources far into the next 20 years.



Considering that 95% of Montenegrin watercourses are formed within the country, it could be said that water is our biggest natural resource. Therefore, it’s our responsibility to protect and preserve these precious resources for future generations and for the Danube River Basin as a whole. The Danube River Protection Convention has helped Montenegro achieve water management goals since the Convention entered into force in Montenegro in 2008.

Floods potentially threaten 24,500 ha of farmland and urban areas in Montenegro, and this is particularly pronounced in areas surrounding Lake Skadar and the Bajana River, as well as areas around the Lim and Tara River Valleys. The central and northern parts of the country were badly

hit by large floods during the last century (1963 and 1979, and then again in 1999 and 2000). The need for flood protection measures is critical in areas near the larger rivers.

The EU Floods Directive builds on actions taken by the ICPDR some time ago. The ICPDR’s ‘Action Programme on Sustainable Flood Protection in the Danube River Basin’, adopted in 2004, works to achieve long-term and sustainable approaches for managing the risks of floods to protect human life and property, while encouraging conservation and improvement of water-related ecosystems. The 17 flood action plans for sub-basins of the Danube created under the framework of the ICPDR have helped Montenegro – and all Danube countries – set targets to reduce damage risks and flood levels.

**Providing guidance in order to create balance.** Hydropower is Montenegro’s most important energy source and the country is ranked high in terms of the availability of hydropower resources. However, only 17% of hydropower potential is being

# Romania

## A turning point in Danube water management cooperation

Twenty years of cooperation under the Danube River Protection Convention have brought significant achievements in integrated river basin management for the Danube countries – as well as for countries around the world.

Romania is the largest country within the Danube Basin and the place where the Danube ends its journey to the Black Sea. Before entering the sea, the Danube forms one of the largest wetlands in Europe, with outstanding natural beauty and a valuable wildlife sanctuary.

As a downstream country, water management in Romania has always been influenced by the activities developed in the upper basin of the Danube. So in 1985, Romania signed the Bucharest Declaration establishing the first framework for joint monitoring activities of Danube waters. After the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, new opportunities for cooperation emerged and the Danube River Protection Convention was signed on 29 June 1994.



The Convention's establishment was a turning point in Danube water management cooperation. In particular, projects such as the Monitoring Laboratory and Information Management, Accident Emergency Warning System and the Transnational Monitoring Network clearly contributed to building and strengthening

especially considering the effects of climate change – we need a basin-wide approach. This is why the activities developed under the ICPDR framework to implement the EU Flood Directive have been so valuable. These activities were reinforced during Romania's ICPDR Presidency in 2007 when the Danube Floodrisk Project, one of the main cooperation projects related to flood management, was launched. This project came to successful completion five years later, providing the first atlas of flood hazard and risk maps for the Danube River.

Some of the most exciting activities developed by the ICPDR over the last 20 years of cooperation have been the Joint Danube Surveys. We have had three such experiences and there is much to be proud of – both in terms of the knowledge acquired and ambitious level of the assessments undertaken. We look forward to the next Joint Danube Survey, which we hope will be performed jointly with a Black Sea Survey.

From 2011 there have been new opportunities to promote ICPDR cooperation within the European Union with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. One of the four pillars defining this strategy focuses on the environment, in particular water protection, water risk management and conservation of the aquatic environment. It is up to us to make the best use of this framework in order to achieve the ICPDR goals.

Looking back on 20 years of cooperation under the Convention, we can say that the political will, commitment, professionalism and determination of the country's experts and the ICPDR Secretariat have led us where we are today. We still have a lot to do, and issues such as sturgeon migration or floodplain restoration are already in various stages of development. Romania is very proud to be part of this cooperation and is determined to further contribute to the success of Danube River Protection Convention.



**“Looking back on 20 years of cooperation under the Convention, we can say that the political will, commitment, professionalism and determination of the country's experts and the ICPDR Secretariat have led us where we are today.”**

the institutional capacity of Danube countries in order to ensure cooperation. This is one of the reasons why the ICPDR is a worldwide model for water management.

**Working together on joint challenges.** Flood control is a very important concern for Romania, however to tackle this issue –

# Bulgaria

## Building mutually beneficial relationships

The Danube River Protection Convention was signed in Bulgaria in 1994, and the country holds the presidency for this anniversary year. Throughout the years of collaboration under the ICPDR, Bulgaria and other countries in the region have found win-win solutions to shared challenges.



People have lived on the banks of the Danube for centuries, and notable traces of early civilisations in Bulgaria include the Neolithic people of the Vinca culture, who created the oldest known examples of proto-writing. Today, the Bulgarian share of the Danube River Basin is home to over 3.5 million people, nearly half of the country's total population.

The Danube River Protection Convention, signed in Sofia on 29 June 1994, presented the opportunity for Bulgaria to reinforce its responsibility to manage joint waters together with the other Danube Basin countries. This responsibility was built on long experience in water management and driven by the diverse hydrological conditions of Bulgaria.

### Balancing needs with natural treasures.

Despite a total of 300 rivers flowing through Bulgaria, water resources in the country are scarce. However, the Bulgarian part of the Danube River Basin is rich in ground waters and possesses considerable operational capacity assessed to be worth a total of 70 cubic metres per second. These waters are the most important water supply source for north-eastern Bulgaria. And protecting the waters of the region secures them not just for the people who depend on them, but for wildlife as well.



The section of the Danube shared between Bulgaria and Romania is the richest in biodiversity. It is the last part of the river free of dams or other river partition facilities to prevent the unconstrained development of ecosystems. For the same reason, it is only at this lower section of the river where four sturgeon species can still be found – although highly endangered – and where they can still reproduce.

The Danube is the largest river in Bulgaria with a length of 470 kilometres, and forms the border with Romania. However, the Danube is not a barrier; in fact it has helped to foster cooperation and integration

“The Danube is not a barrier; in fact it has helped to foster cooperation and integration – not just through the ICPDR.”

– not just through the ICPDR. In 2007, Bulgaria and Romania joined the European Union, harmonising water management through the ICPDR.

Bulgaria was a founding member of the ICPDR and a host to its creation. Over the past 20 years, the country has shown itself to be a reliable partner to all countries, demonstrating responsibility for the Danube River and the Black Sea. And this relationship between Bulgaria and its partners within the ICPDR family has been mutually advantageous. Bulgaria has been able to put its experiences in the ICPDR to good use for its journey towards European integration. Most importantly, however, working together under the Danube River Protection Convention has benefitted the water bodies and all of the people of the Danube River Basin. Bulgaria congratulates everyone behind this effort and looks forward to supporting them for years to come.

# Moldova

## Mobilising cross-border cooperation

The ICPDR serves as a platform for cooperation and coordination, and through the Danube River Protection Convention ensures that waters within the Danube River Basin are managed sustainably and equitably.



“The best way to protect and manage water is by close international cooperation between all the countries within the natural geographical and hydrological unit of the river basin – bringing together all interests upstream and downstream.”

Delta Supporting Sustainable Development of the Region’. As a result of this Joint Declaration, the ICPDR secured funds from the UN Environment and Security Initiative to implement a trilateral Moldova-Romania-Ukraine project called Joint Environmental Monitoring, Assessment and Exchange of Information for Integrated Management of the Danube Delta Region. The aim of the project is to improve cross-border cooperation in the Danube Delta and to build capacities for introducing a river basin approach for the management of natural resources in the Danube Delta region.

Water does not stop at administrative or political boundaries, so the best way to protect and manage water is by close international cooperation between all the countries within the natural geographical and hydrological unit of the river basin – bringing together all interests upstream and downstream – and the creation of a Management Plan for the Danube Delta Sub-basin will ensure that we can safeguard our water resources and promote healthy and sustainable river systems for future generations.

While Moldova has only 1.6% of the Danube Basin, the challenges which we face are the same for the whole Danube community and we continue to rely on the experience accumulated in the region through the Danube River Protection Convention for the last 20 years.



In 2000, together with all of the parties to the Danube River Protection Convention, Moldova made the political commitment to implement the EU Water Framework Directive. Thus, under the auspices of the ICPDR, Moldovan experts actively contributed to the development of the Danube River Basin Management Plan adopted at the Ministerial Meeting in February 2010. Guided by ICPDR Technical Experts, Moldovan experts have contributed and will continue to contribute to the preparation of the updated Danube Basin Analysis Report and the Second Danube River Basin Management Plan by providing relevant national data. However for Moldova, contributions have certainly been mutual.

Within the last 20 years, the ICPDR has substantially contributed towards meeting the Moldovan obligations under the Danube River Protection Convention. The ICPDR has provided permanent technical support allowing Moldovan experts and governmental and NGO institutions to gain the advanced knowledge, skills and experience needed to implement the Convention at national level. Thanks to the ICPDR’s efforts to secure funds from the Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) programme, the State Hydro-meteorological Service’s water and soil quality laboratories were equipped with analytical equipment for both national and transnational monitoring and the Communication Centre was equipped with the necessary satellite, hardware and software for the Accident Emergency Warning System in Moldova.

**Encouraging joint management of shared regions.** Under the framework of the ICPDR, the Heads of Delegations from Moldova, Romania and Ukraine signed a Joint Declaration in 2007: ‘Towards a River Basin Management Plan for the Danube

# Ukraine

## Opportunities to exchange knowledge and experiences

Continuing cooperation allows expert groups to share advanced training and methodologies and ultimately improve the capacity of water management organisations.



For two decades a vast space at the heart of Europe has been sustained by a legal instrument initiated by eleven countries – including Ukraine. Although only 5% of the territory of Ukraine is in the Danube Basin and this area is home to 3% of the country's total population, cooperation within ICPDR takes an important place in the priorities of the country.

Under the framework of the ICPDR, Ukraine was able to make a meaningful contribution to the development of the Danube River Basin Analysis (2004) and Danube River Basin Management Plan (2010). During the Ukrainian Presidency of the ICPDR in 2011, substantial progress was achieved in the Danube Delta, the Tisza and the Prut sub-basin initiatives. The Ministerial Meeting in April 2011, held in Uzhgorod, Ukraine, brought together the ministers and high level representatives of the five Tisza

River states as well as the European Commission and international environmental organisations to endorse the implementation of the Integrated Tisza River Basin Management Plan. These plans served as pilot projects of the EU Water Framework Directive in Ukraine, which came to be an opportunity to share know-how for other river basins in Ukraine. At present, the national management plan for the Tisza River Basin is a model for the Pivdenny Bug River.

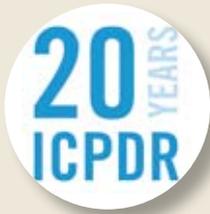
In addition, the continuous and active membership of Ukrainian national experts in ICPDR expert groups has allowed for the advanced training, upgrading of methodologies and capacity building of relevant organisations. As a result, Ukraine now has a number of specialists who work on elaborating river basin management plans for other Ukrainian river basins and initiating the development of new standards and methodologies.

**Adding to cultural heritage.** Among the many good traditions that have been developed in the ICPDR community is the celebration of the Danube Day, which has had a meaningful impact in Ukraine. Starting from the 70 people who gathered high in the Carpathian Mountains in 2008, it has emerged as a popular and much awaited

**“Ukraine is in the unique position of being both an upstream and downstream country. It is therefore clear that joint efforts taken to protect these shared water resources is a practical step towards the integration of Ukraine in the European family of the countries.”**

event for specialists, children and the public at large – last year more than 17,000 people were involved in Danube Day celebrations. Many activities for the Tisza Basin were initiated during Danube Day – such as the installation of memorial plates at the source of the Tisza by the five Tisza countries, river clean-ups for domestic waste and the Danube Day Fish flag, which is still travelling from one Danube country to another.

Last but not the least is the issue of European integration. Ukraine is in the unique position of being both an upstream country of the Danube Basin (as the source of the Tisza and Prut Rivers) and a downstream country (at the mouth of the Danube Delta). It is therefore clear that joint efforts taken to protect these shared water resources is a practical step towards the integration of Ukraine in the European family of the countries.



# The ICPDR and its observers: inspiring wider interaction with stakeholders

The ICPDR has shown that public participation in decision making is central to gaining broader support for its work towards healthier water bodies. The input of stakeholders – such as the ICPDR’s network of 22 observer organisations, representing the full spectrum of interests – is vital to developing management strategies that really work.

Environmental protection is a community responsibility, and the active involvement of the public was one of the core principles of sustainable

water management acknowledged by the Danube River Protection Convention when it was signed in 1994. To date, 22 organisations hold obser-

ver status – representing private industry and intergovernmental organisations – and through this status, cooperate actively with the

ICPDR. On the occasion of the anniversary of the Convention, some of these important partners share their views on this valuable cooperation.



“On behalf of the **Black Sea Commission**, I extend cordial congratulations on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Danube River Protection Convention. Since then, we have remained strategic partners in developing cooperation in the Danube and Black Sea region and beyond. We are confident that the experience of our successful cooperation will inspire us to continue an open dialogue on all issues of concern and that our relations will be further enriched by new ideas and initiatives.”

.....  
*Halil Ibrabim Sur,*  
Executive Director, Black Sea  
Commission Permanent Secretariat



“For the **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)** Danube-Carpathian Programme, the ICPDR has provided an excellent platform for constructive discussions between NGOs and authorities on issues of high importance to WWF such as sturgeon conservation, floodplain restoration or an integrated approach to water infrastructure planning.”

.....  
*Irene Lucius,*  
Head of Policy and Green Economy  
of the Danube-Carpathian Programme

“For the **International Association for Danube Research (IAD)**, founded in 1956, the ICPDR has been the key partner to achieving major environmental targets based on an efficient exchange of knowledge and an open dialogue ever since its establishment in 1994. The role of IAD as an observer has also facilitated our transition to a modern network of scientists dedicated to work collaboratively on the current and future challenges we face in the Danube River Basin.”

.....  
*Thomas Hein,*  
President of IAD



“**viadonau** has enjoyed a long-standing and intense cooperation with the ICPDR. The PLATINA Manual on Good Practices in Sustainable Waterway Planning, the Danube Survey, the Stakeholder Forum of the Bad Deutsch-Altenburg Pilot Project and Danube Day are among the many joint activities that have characterised a partnership which extends far beyond the observer role. For projects in the Danube region as well, the ICPDR has always been a constructive partner.”

.....  
*Hans-Peter Hasenbichler,*  
Managing Director of viadonau



“As an organisation active in the development and promotion of sustainable tourism in the Danube region, the **Danube Competence Center** has greatly benefited from the work of the ICPDR. The ICPDR’s commitment to the sustainable management of the Danube River Basin makes our missions possible – protecting and managing the Danube River for the prosperity of its communities and generations to come.”

.....  
*Boris Camernik,*  
 Managing Director of  
 Danube Competence Center

the issues we deal with are interlinked, such as climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem and forest management, sustainable agriculture or production of renewable energy.”

.....  
*Harald Egerer,*  
 Head of UNEP Vienna, Secretary of the  
 Carpathian Convention

“As the Sava River Basin is a Danube sub-basin, cooperation with the ICPDR is of considerable importance. Based on the 2008 Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation and coordination between ICPDR and the **International Sava River Basin Commission**, the relationship of our two organisations extends well beyond mutual observership. The key result of the cooperation is certainly coordination of activities to ensure complementarity of outcomes and efficient work by the member countries’ administrations in the framework of the two commissions.”

.....  
*Dejan Komatina,*  
 Executive Secretary of International  
 Sava River Basin Commission

“The ICPDR has supported the establishment of **DANUBEPARKS** from the very beginning: in 2007, an ICPDR conference prepared the framework for the formation of the Danube River Network of Protected Areas. Since this time, fruitful cooperation has contributed significantly to make the Danube-wide approach of Protected Areas visible. DANUBEPARKS is very much looking forward to continuing the implementation of joint initiatives for our Danube natural heritage!”

.....  
*Georg Frank,*  
 Project Manager DANUBEPARKS



“The **Carpathian Convention** has cooperated closely with the ICPDR since the Carpathian Convention was adopted in 2001. Cooperation is vital in the Danube–Carpathian region, as mountains and rivers are a common heritage to protect and a key resource for sustainable development. As water flows from mountain peaks through rivers and streams to the sea,



“Since 2008 **Österreichisches Kuratorium für Fischerei und Gewässerschutz** has represented the European Anglers Alliance in the ICPDR, and this cooperation has been very successful for us in many areas: damage from navigation waves was included in PLATINA. Awareness has increased for the damage caused by hydropower, which has also been included in the new guidelines. And, last but not least, the Danube sturgeons have been adopted as a symbol for the preservation of all fish. There is a lot of work still to do, and we are looking forward to contributing.”

.....  
*Helmut Belanyecz,*  
 European Anglers Alliance





“For more than ten years, **Global Water Partnership Central and Eastern Europe (GWP CEE)** has been proud to be an active observer to the ICPDR. The ICPDR is a role model for international water cooperation and our common activities have greatly helped the GWP CEE network to advance the sustainable management of water resources in the Danube River Basin.”

.....  
*Martina Zupan,*  
 Regional Chair of GWP CEE



“The **Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)** joins the Danube countries in celebrating the 20th anniversary of the ICPDR and applauds the results achieved. Over the years, REC has actively cooperated with the ICPDR on a wide range of environmental and water management issues, and contributed to the involvement of stakeholders and the public in the process. This has allowed us to contribute to making a difference for the benefit of the Danube region and its people. We look forward to continue working together to address new challenges.”

.....  
*Marta Szigeti Bonifert,*  
 Executive Director, REC

“The **International Association of Water Supply Companies** in the Danube River Catchment Area (IAWD) is an active partner to the ICPDR, securing vital cooperation among water utilities in the Danube Region. Developing the Danube Water Programme together with the World Bank enables us to continue these efforts for the future. We would like to congratulate the ICPDR on its 20th anniversary and we look forward to continuing to work together in the years to come.”

.....  
*Walter Kling,*  
 IAWD Secretary General



Cooperation and exchange with people from different countries within the ICPDR is an important way for the **Danube Environmental Forum (DEF)** to contribute to ecosystem and water protection. Common ICPDR issues such as wetland restoration, improving hydro-morphology and the survival of sturgeon species are milestones in achieving our objectives.”

.....  
*Gerhard Nagl,*  
 Speaker of DEF



The continuing dialogue with stakeholders has been an important element of the success of integrated river basin management in the Danube River Basin. For their dedicated participation in the ICPDR’s work, we thank the partners above, as well as the other ICPDR observers:

- Central Dredging Association (CEDA)
- Danube Commission (DC)
- Danube Tourist Commission (DIE DONAU)
- European Barge Union (EBU)
- European Water Association (EWA)
- Friends of Nature International (NFI)
- International Hydrological Programme of UNESCO (IHP/Danube)
- RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands
- VGB PowerTech e.V. (VGB)

# Milestones on the road to progress

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Danube River Protection Convention, is a shining example of successful transboundary water management. Since the Convention was signed, the Danube countries have continued to work towards the goal of sustainable and equitable water management for the benefit of the Danube River Basin countries and its people.

**1996:** The Trans-National Monitoring Network started operation. Its main objective is to provide a structured and well-balanced view of pollution and long-term trends in water quality and pollution loads in the major rivers in the Danube River Basin.

**1998:** The Danube River Protection Convention entered into force and the ICPDR Permanent Secretariat started operation.

**2001 (2007; 2013):** The first Joint Danube Survey launched in 2001 to produce comparable and reliable information on water quality and pollution from a single source and on parameters not covered by regular monitoring. Joint Danube Survey 2 was carried out in 2007 and the Joint Danube Survey 3 in 2013. With sampling at nearly 100 sites on the Danube River throughout ten countries, the JDS3 was the world's biggest river research expedition.

**2004:** The first Danube Day was held on 29 June. Danube Day celebrations honour the Danube and the rivers that flow into it, paying tribute to the vital role they play in people's lives. Danube Day also demonstrates the importance of transboundary cooperation in water management and inspires the public to get involved. Since 2004, the annual Danube Day has developed into the biggest river festival in the world.

1995

1996

1997

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1999

2000

2001

2002

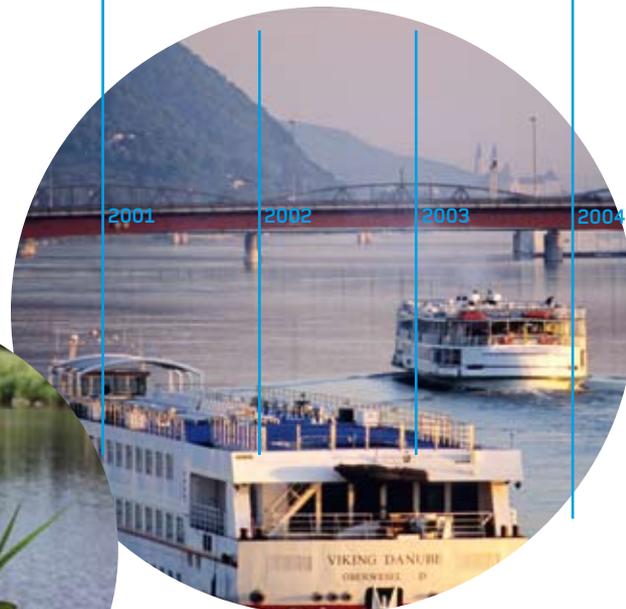
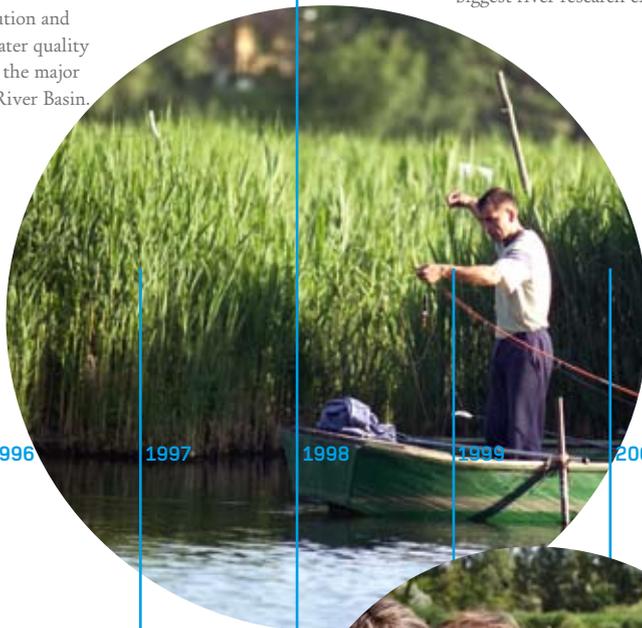
2003

2004

**1997:** The Accident Emergency Warning System began operation. It is activated whenever there is a risk of transboundary water pollution or threshold danger levels of certain hazardous substances are exceeded, and sends out warning messages to countries downstream to help authorities put environmental protection and public safety measures into action.

**2000:** The ICPDR became the coordination body for implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive and ten years later of the EU Floods Directive (see article page 8).

**2004:** Ministers for water resource management in the Danube Basin signed a 'Danube Declaration' committing to future actions to achieve progress under the Convention. This coincided with the completion of the Danube Basin Analysis in 2004, an essential building block for the EU Water Framework Directive. Also known as the Roof Report 2004, the report included the first comprehensive analysis of the entire river basin and its characteristics, pressures and impacts, an economic analysis and a register of protected areas.



**2007:** The ICPDR's outstanding achievement in river restoration and management was recognised with the award of the International Thiess Riverprize – the most significant and valuable prize in the field worldwide, worth AU \$300,000 (approximately EUR 179,000).



**2009:** The first Danube River Basin Management Plan was produced. The plan for the basin demonstrated an innovative approach to basin-wide issues by addressing pressures and impacts in the region in a Joint Programme of Measures. It identified four significant water management issues: organic pollution, nutrient pollution, hazardous substances pollution and hydromorphological alterations, as well as transboundary groundwater issues. The Danube River Basin Management Plan and its Joint Programme of Measures serves as a road map to guide actions to meet the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive in 2015 and beyond.

**2014:** The ICPDR looks into a bright future – for this year, the development of a draft second Danube River Basin Management Plan and first DRB Flood Risk Management Plan are pursued.

2005      2006      2007      2008      2009      2010      2011      2012      2013

**2005:** Cooperation with business has been an important part of the ICPDR's work since development of the Green Danube Partnership between the ICPDR, the Coca-Cola Company and its largest European bottler Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company.

In **2006**, this partnership developed the Danube Box, a comprehensive teaching kit giving schoolchildren a greater understanding of the river basin, the threats facing the river and the need to preserve water resources. To date, eight language versions have been produced and it has inspired similar projects for the Black Sea region.

**2008:** Cooperation between the environment and navigation sectors – led by the ICPDR, the Danube Commission on Navigation and the International Commission for the Sava River Basin – resulted in the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Danube River Basin. The statement serves as a basis for ensuring that environmental concerns are included in projects to improve navigation – without conflict.

**2013:** Major progress was made on issues that call for inter-sectoral approaches and policies, culminating in the publication of a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Guiding Principles for Sustainable Hydropower Development for the Danube Basin.



# Get active for a living Danube!



[www.danubeday.org](http://www.danubeday.org)

This 29 June, 2014 will mark the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Danube River Protection Convention – but it will also be the 10th anniversary of Danube Day. Since 2004, Danube Day has grown into the biggest river festival in the world, drawing ten thousands of visitors to more than 350 individual events. This year's Danube Day will be dedicated to landscape and biodiversity – you are invited to 'Get active for a living Danube'.