

# Shared waters – joint responsibilities

## ICPDR Annual Report 2024







## Message from the President

The year 2024 marked another significant chapter in the life of the ICPDR, as we advanced key priorities that will shape the Danube River Basin for years to come. It was truly an honour to serve as President of the ICPDR in this milestone year, representing Slovakia, building on three decades of cooperation, and celebrating 30 years of the ICPDR together with our ICPDR Family. We also celebrated 20 years of outreach through Danube Day and Danube Art Master. The anniversary was launched in Bratislava with an open-air exhibition and went on to be showcased in Budapest and Ljubljana.

Preparations for the Joint Danube Survey 5 (JDS5) accelerated in 2024, bringing together scientific experts, communications specialists, and national teams in anticipation of the survey's upcoming launch in 2025. This basin-wide effort reflects the ICPDR's core strength: collaboration across borders, sectors, and disciplines.

In addition to preparing for JDS5, 2024 saw active engagement across all ICPDR Expert Groups and a deepening of public and youth participation. The Danube Youth Council became an official observer to the ICPDR, and our communications activities continued to evolve through partnerships and new initiatives like the upcoming ICPDR–Erste Group volunteer programme.

I wish to thank all Contracting Parties, Expert Groups, Observers, and the Secretariat for their dedication and cooperation throughout the year. Together, we are building on a 30-year legacy to shape a cleaner, healthier, and safer Danube for the decades to come.



**Vladimír Novák**

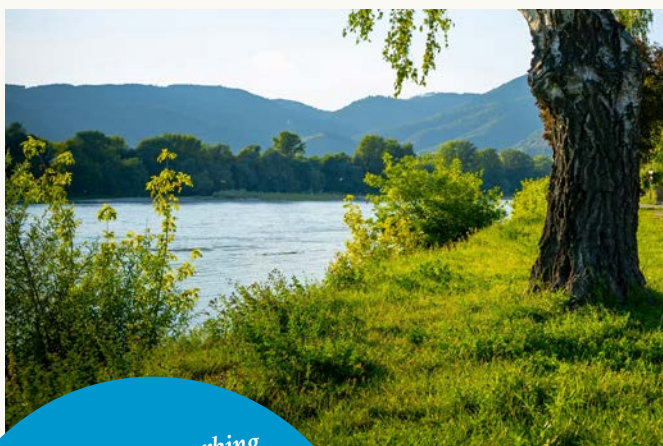
ICPDR President 2024  
Slovakia

# ICPDR highlights in 2024

The following highlights are just a few from the multitude of initiatives undertaken by the ICPDR in the Danube River Basin (DRB) in 2024:

## 30 Years of the Danube River Protection Convention

2024 marked **30 years** since the signing of the **Danube River Protection Convention**, a landmark agreement that continues to serve as the legal and institutional backbone of the ICPDR's work.



»When I began working with the ICPDR 19 years ago, it felt like joining a big family united by a common vision and shared goals. This was, and continues to be, incredibly inspiring.«

Heide Jekel  
Germany's Head of Delegation  
to the ICPDR

## Celebrating 20 Years of Danube Day

First launched in 2004, **Danube Day** marked its **20<sup>th</sup> anniversary** in 2024 with renewed public engagement and basin-wide activities that once again highlighted our shared responsibility for the Danube River Basin. To mark this milestone – together with its flagship youth engagement initiative, the Danube Art Master – an anniversary exhibition was showcased in **Bratislava's Old Town**.

The ICPDR also provided participation and partnership in important activities and events both in the DRB and across the world.





## Slovakia assumes ICPDR Presidency from Serbia in 2024

The **ICPDR Presidency** transitioned from Serbia to Slovakia, with a ceremonial handover held in Vienna. Outgoing President Bojan Vranjković (Serbia) passed the traditional bottle of Danube water to incoming **President Vladimír Novák**, Director General of the Slovak Ministry of Environment.

Novák outlined Slovakia's priorities for the year: raising awareness of the Joint Programme of Measures, ensuring the successful preparation and launch of Joint Danube Survey 5, and reinforcing the ICPDR's focus on climate change adaptation and drought management across all Expert Group agendas.



# Working Together: The ICPDR's operational and institutional framework

Since its establishment in 1998, the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River has brought together representatives from the highest ministerial levels, technical experts, members of civil society, and the scientific community, working toward a better future for the Danube and its tributaries.

**The ICPDR is the largest international body of European river basin management experts. Its mission is to promote and coordinate sustainable river and water management methods for the benefit of all citizens of the Danube River Basin.**

## Structure of the ICPDR

On 29 June 1994, Danube countries came together and signed the [Danube River Protection Convention](#) (DRPC), coming into force in October 1998. Since then, the ICPDR has served as a forum for coordination and cooperation on fundamental water management issues, taking all appropriate legal, administrative, and technical measures to maintain and improve the quality of the Danube River Basin and its tributaries. The ICPDR is made up of 15 Contracting Parties: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, and the European Union.

The work of the ICPDR is guided by two group meetings, an [Ordinary Meeting](#), which establishes policy and strategy, and a [Standing Working Group](#), which provides guidance and prepares key decisions. Working alongside these are Technical Expert Groups, Task Groups, and representatives of stakeholder groups that provide the scientific and technical basis for ICPDR's work.

[Expert groups](#) (EG) are one of the most active and vital parts of the ICPDR structure. They assist in meeting the requirements specified under the DRPC and work along with the implementation of the [EU Water Framework Directive](#) (WFD) and the [EU Floods Directive](#) (FD).

**There are currently seven expert groups:**

- River Basin Management Expert Group (RBM EG)
- Pressures and Measures Expert Group (PM EG)
- Monitoring and Assessment Expert Group (MA EG)
- Accident Prevention and Control Expert Group (APC EG)
- Flood Protection Expert Group (FP EG)
- Information Management and GIS Expert Group (IMGIS EG)
- Public Participation Expert Group (PP EG)

## List of Expert Group Chairpersons

| Group Name | Name                                 | Nominated by   | Organisation                                                                                              |
|------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RBM EG     | Benjamin Klein (until December 2024) | Germany        | Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUKN) |
|            | Daniela Buzica (until November 2024) | European Union | DG Environment                                                                                            |
| PM EG      | Christian Schilling                  | Austria        | Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management (BML)                             |
| MA EG      | Franz Wagner                         | Austria        | Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management (BML)                             |
| APC EG     | Yurii Nabyvanets                     | Ukraine        | Ukrainian Hydrometeorological Institute                                                                   |
|            | Janez Polajnar                       | Slovenia       | Slovenian Environment Agency                                                                              |
| FP EG      | Clemens Neuhold                      | Austria        | Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management (BML)                             |
| IMGIS EG   | Dragoş Ungureanu                     | Romania        | Romanian Waters                                                                                           |
| PP EG      | Susanne Brandstetter                 | Austria        | Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management (BML)                             |



**Task groups** were established under the responsibility of the permanent expert groups, and they are called upon to provide insights on specific tasks. They consist of delegates from existing expert bodies and additional affiliated experts and specialists.

There are currently four Task Groups:

- Hydromorphology Task Group (HYMO TG)
- Economics Task Group (ECON TG)
- Groundwater Task Group (GW TG)
- Nutrient Task Group (N TG)

### List of Task Group Chairpersons

| Group Name      | Name                | Nominated by | Organisation                            |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Economics       | Cristian Rusu       | Romania      | Romanian Waters                         |
| Groundwater     | Andreas Scheidleder | Austria      | Umweltbundesamt                         |
| Hydromorphology | Petra Repnik        | Slovenia     | Slovenian Water Agency                  |
| Nutrient        | Franz Überwimmer    | Austria      | Office of the Upper Austrian Government |

### ICPDR Observers

The ICPDR strongly believes that environmental protection is a community responsibility and the active involvement of the public is a core principle in sustainable water management.

So far, the following 25 organisations have taken the opportunity to become ICPDR observers:

- |                                         |                                                                                                  |                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| – Black Sea Commission (BSC)            | – Danube Youth Council (DYC)                                                                     | – International Hydrological Programme of the UNESCO (IHP/Danube)    |
| – Carpathian Convention                 | – European Anglers Alliance (EAA)                                                                | – International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC)                  |
| – Central Dredging Association (CEDA)   | – European Barge Union (EBU)                                                                     | – RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands                                      |
| – CEEweb for Biodiversity               | – European Water Association (EWA)                                                               | – Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) |
| – Danube Civil Society Forum (DCSF)     | – Friends of Nature International (NFI)                                                          | – VGB PowerTech e.V. (VGB)                                           |
| – Danube Competence Centre (DCC)        | – International Association for Danube Research (IAD)                                            | – viadonau                                                           |
| – Danube Commission (DC)                | – Global Water Partnership (GWP-CEE)                                                             | – Worldwide Fund for Nature – Central and Eastern Europe (WWF-CEE)   |
| – Danube Environmental Forum (DEF)      | – International Association of Water Service Companies in the Danube River Catchment Area (IAWD) |                                                                      |
| – Danubeparks                           |                                                                                                  |                                                                      |
| – Danube Sturgeon Task Force (DSTF)     |                                                                                                  |                                                                      |
| – Danube Tourist Commission (DIE DONAU) |                                                                                                  |                                                                      |

# River Basin Management: Securing a Sustainable Future for the Danube River

It is the responsibility of the River Basin Management Expert Group (RBM EG) to coordinate activities relevant to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the development of the Danube River Basin Management Plans. Furthermore, the Hydromorphology Task Group (HYMO TG) and Economics Task Group (ECON TG) both report to the RBM EG.

**In 2024, the ICPDR made steady progress towards implementing the Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP) Update 2021, as well as towards preparing the next update of the plan, due in 2027. The RBM EG identified technical and strategic gaps to be addressed, aligned activities with other Expert Groups, and prepared for key deliverables, including the Interim Report on the Implementation of the Joint Programme of Measures.**

The [Interim Report](#), published in June 2024, presents a mid-term overview of progress toward the implementation of the [DRBMP management objectives](#). It is the first time that an interim report has been developed as a stand-alone publication. The report outlines basin-wide progress, reflects updates from national level implementation reports, and serves as a communication tool for both technical and general audiences.

Work also continued towards reviewing and updating the data and tools that underpin the DRBMP processes. The [RBM EG](#) collaborated with the [Information Management & GIS Expert Group](#) (IMGIS EG) to ensure harmonised mapping and reporting methodologies.

Climate change and drought management remained key cross-cutting priorities throughout 2024. As an important step, the ICPDR developed an [Overview Report on Droughts and Low Flows](#) in the DRB, providing a summary of existing drought management strategies, tools and measures, and a list of suggestions for potential basin-wide actions to be implemented at the basin-wide level. This horizontal topic will remain a shared focus, especially where it intersects with navigation, agriculture, hydropower generation, water quality, hydromorphology and ecology. In addition, the ICPDR has been closely following the implementation of the Danube Water Balance project, an initiative aiming at developing a hydrological model for the entire DRB.

Regarding inland navigation, the update of the [Joint Statement process](#) was launched towards a more sustainable navigation in the DRB. In September 2024, a stakeholder workshop was held to discuss the update process and an initial outline of the Joint Statement 2.0 document.

An [ICPDR Hydropower Workshop](#) took place in June 2024 in Vienna, Austria. Representatives of the Danube countries, the hydropower sector and stakeholder organisations jointly discussed the challenges and opportunities of sustainable hydropower generation.

The RBM EG followed the implementation of various projects related to sturgeon conservation (e.g. [We Pass 2, LIFE Boat4Sturgeons](#)) and maintained a close cooperation and coordination with the Danube Sturgeon Task Force.



»The ICPDR shows the true value of transboundary cooperation in the Danube River Basin. Because water knows no administrative boundaries the science, planning, and decision-making can and must be done together. That is what we do under umbrella of ICPDR for the sake of whole Danube Basin and people who live in this unique and precious part of world.«

Elizabeta Kos  
Croatia's Head of Delegation  
to the ICPDR





The **HYMO TG** focused on developing inputs for the Interim Report and the discussions of HYMO JDS5 activities (hydromorphological types and segments, HYMO assessment method development and application at JDS5 sampling sites including sturgeon habitat assessment, finalisation of the JDS5 HYMO survey plan). The ECON TG also provided contributions to the Interim Report and discussed the reporting on economic figures for the next DRBMP.

Looking ahead, the RBM EG will start coordinating the development of the **2025 Report on the Significant Water Management Issues**, an essential step toward the next management plan updates, while ensuring that interim progress is communicated clearly and effectively.

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# Pressures and Measures: Assessing Challenges and Targeting Priorities

The Pressures and Measures Expert Group (PM EG) plays a vital role in understanding pollution-related pressures facing our Danube River Basin. This understanding is essential for our long-term sustainable development – as is assessing the efficacy of proposed alleviating measures.

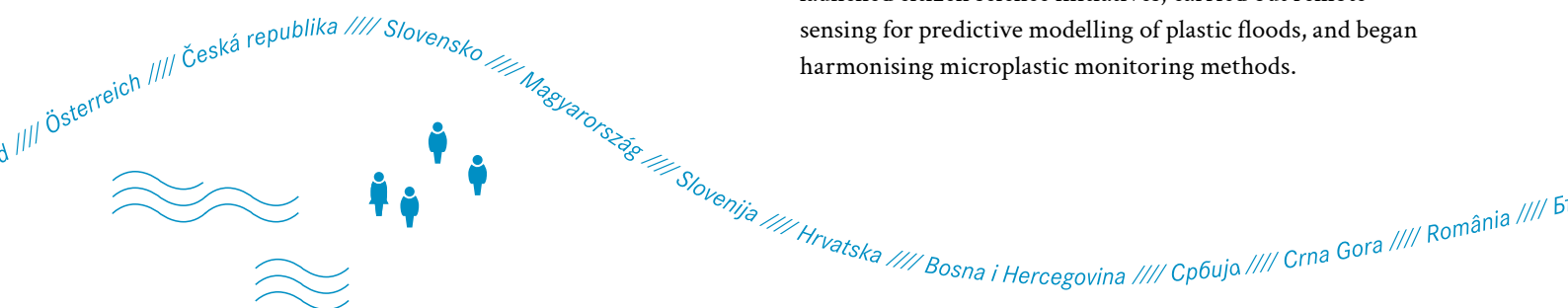


**In 2024, the Pressures and Measures Expert Group (PM EG) continued to advance ICPDR efforts to reduce pollution across the Danube River Basin. On top of the year's key technical developments, the PM EG agreed to rename itself the Pollution Management Expert Group starting in 2025. The new name more clearly reflects the group's focus on pollution-related pressures.**

In line with the rotational system introduced in 2024, Mr. Christian Schilling from Austria served as Chairperson for the year.

The **PM EG** played an active role in finalising the pollution-related chapter of the **2024 Interim Report on JPM Implementation**, including contributions of visuals and case study materials. The group also began initial discussions on the pollution-related Significant Water Management Issues (SWMIs) and the data collection templates for the 2027 Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP) Update.

**Plastic pollution** remained a high priority. The ICPDR published a guidance document and a public brochure on tackling plastic pollution. Furthermore, the group tracked developments in the **AquaticPlastic project**, which investigated the impact of plastic debris on hydropower operation, launched citizen science initiatives, carried out remote sensing for predictive modelling of plastic floods, and began harmonising microplastic monitoring methods.



Progress also continued on hazardous substances pollution through the [Tethys project](#), which builds on the earlier Danube Hazard m<sup>3</sup>c initiative. Tethys aims to deliver practical emission inventories, modelling tools, risk assessment methods and policy recommendations that support both national and basin-wide water management. In addition, the ICPDR published a guidance document on managing chemical pollution.

[Wastewater management](#) was another key area of focus. In April 2024, a joint World Bank-ICPDR workshop was held on rural water management aspects. The group continued discussing how to organize additional knowledge exchange events in cooperation with the World Bank and EUSDR PA4, focusing on new challenges and circular economy aspects.

The group also proposed 10 urban wastewater treatment plants, each in a different Danube country, for monitoring in [JDS5](#). In addition to inflow and outflow sampling, members discussed the inclusion of combined sewer overflow and sewage sludge, along with the analysis of compounds of interest such as emerging chemicals and microplastics.

The [Nutrient Task Group](#) (NTG) remained active under the PM EG's umbrella. It reinforced basin-wide nutrient emission modelling as a shared priority and a management tool to explore sub-regional differences in pollution sources and to assess measure efficiency. The NTG also began identifying key agricultural stakeholders in each country and developed a stepwise approach to strengthen dialogue with the agricultural sector. Potential topics of planned webinars within the dialogue process were identified by the NTG experts. The ICPDR initiated contact with the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#) (FAO) to explore collaboration on water-agriculture issues, particularly related to drought and pollution.

»The ICPDR is an exemplary international organization that, by its very nature, fosters collaboration and requires multilateral solutions to address transboundary issues. Its commitment to cooperation and shared responsibility truly sets it apart.«

Gheorghe Constantin  
Romania's Head of Delegation Representative  
to the ICPDR



# Monitoring and Assessment (MA EG): Quantifying Problems and Monitoring Progress

The Monitoring and Assessment Expert Group (MA EG) is responsible for all water quality and assessment issues, including the Joint Danube Survey (JDS). The group's scope covers the Trans-National Monitoring Network (TNMN) operations, including its Analytical Quality Control (AQC) programme.



**In 2024, the Monitoring and Assessment Expert Group (MA EG) played a pivotal role in advancing the scientific foundations of the ICPDR's work. Key priorities included continued preparations for the 5<sup>th</sup> Joint Danube Survey (JDS5), activities related to groundwater monitoring, support for the new aquatic biodiversity indicator system, and final contributions to the 2021 TNMN Yearbook.**

Preparations for JDS5 were in full swing, with national coordinators and expert teams working closely with the [JDS5 Biology Core Group](#) to finalise methodologies and logistics. Building on lessons from JDS4, the Biology Core Group ensured scientific alignment across biological quality elements, including fish, with a special attention to the Danube sturgeon, macrozoobenthos, phytoplankton, phyto-benthos, macrophytes and zooplankton. In particular, eDNA monitoring continued to gain traction, with expert nominations from multiple countries helping integrate this tool into core survey work.

The [JDS5 Chemistry Core Group](#) in cooperation with the [NORMAN Association](#) were behind a careful design of the JDS5 chemical monitoring which would focus on target and non-target screening of thousands of organic substances, passive sampling and the analysis of microplastics. The [NORMAN-ICPDR JDS5 Coordination Workshop](#) involving experts from the ICPDR and NORMAN network took place in Bratislava on 23–24 September 2024. At this workshop the areas of common interest concerning JDS5 monitoring were identified and agreed.

Additional focus areas in JDS5 are antibiotic resistance microbiological monitoring, including antibiotic resistance, isotope analysis, radiology and hydromorphological monitoring focussing on habitat structure analysis.

The [Aquatic Biodiversity Report](#) and accompanying indicator system continued to evolve in 2024. Based on recommendations from Heads of Delegation, the system aims to streamline national reporting while ensuring that Danube-level biodiversity trends can be identified. The MA EG supported the incorporation of JDS data, eDNA approaches, and national experience to make the system both meaningful and manageable. Serbia is leading work on harmonising invasive alien species data collection, contributing to a basin-wide picture of species distribution and change.

Groundwater activities focused on finalising the [2021 TNMN Yearbook](#) and reviewing quality data from all basin-wide significant groundwater bodies. Several countries contributed updates to ensure data continuity, including adaptations to account for recent regional disruptions.



The group experts supported ongoing assessment of non-relevant metabolites (nrMs) in groundwater. National lists of substances were compiled and exchanged to inform a consistent classification system, in anticipation of updates to EU directives. As part of broader engagement, several countries also contributed images and stories related to local springs, wells, and aquifers, to help raise [public awareness about groundwater protection](#).

Looking ahead, the MA EG will continue to strengthen monitoring methodologies, enhance data quality and accessibility, and ensure the scientific robustness of ICPDR activities. With JDS5 launching in summer 2025, the groundwork laid in 2024 ensures the survey will deliver valuable, policy-relevant insights into the status and trends of the Danube River Basin.

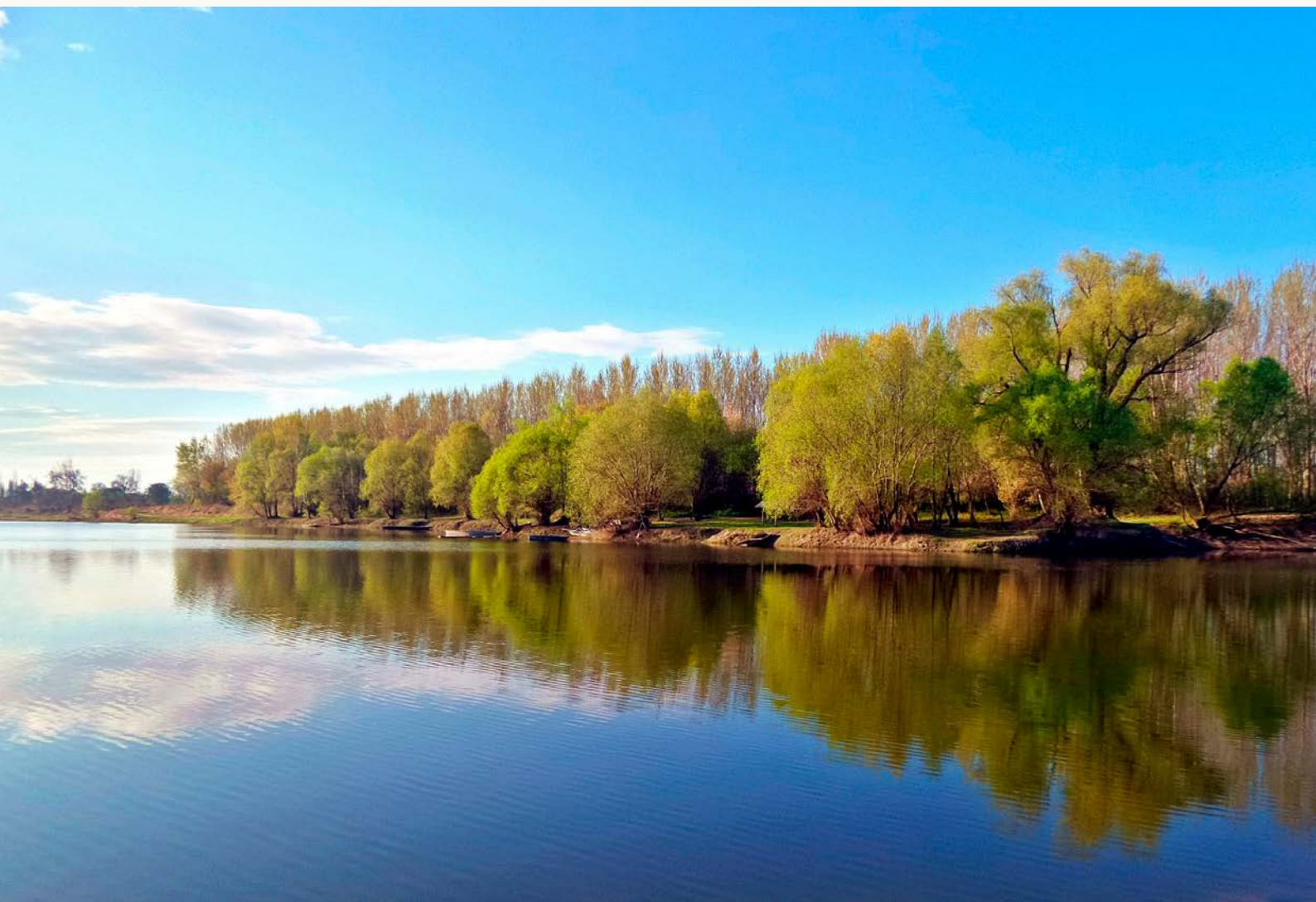


# Accident Prevention and Control Expert Group: Reducing Risks and Responding to Water Emergencies

The Accident Prevention and Control Expert Group (APC EG) focuses on testing and maintaining the Danube Accident and Emergency Warning System (Danube AEWS) and updating inventories of accident hazard sites (AHS).

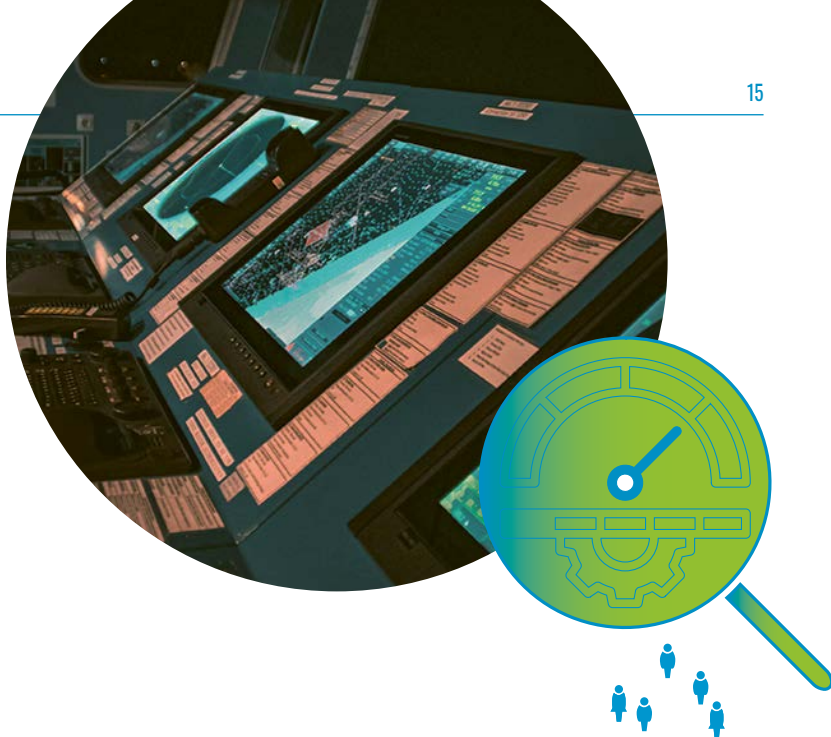
**In 2024, the Accident Prevention and Control Expert Group (APC EG) continued strengthening the basin-wide framework for accidental pollution preparedness, response, and prevention.**

**Building on previous progress, the group oversaw successful Danube AEWS tests, supported the roll-out of the SAFETY4TMF project, and contributed to international knowledge exchange on tailings safety and transboundary accident risk.**



»The Danube Convention and the ICPDR have been a fascinating success story of cooperation, openness, and integration of civil society in public water management from their beginnings to today. We all have to continue this in order to master the challenges in our common Europe.«

Monika Mörth  
Austria's Head of Delegation  
to the ICPDR



Two basin-wide tests of the **Danube Accident Emergency Warning System (AEWS)** were conducted in 2024, in spring and autumn, in line with the updated AEWS testing schedule. These tests confirmed the responsiveness of all **14 Principal International Alert Centres (PIACs)** and the reliability of the system's technical infrastructure. The APC EG reviewed the outcomes of both exercises and reaffirmed the importance of regular testing to maintain 24/7 operational readiness across the network.

The **AEWS Operations Manual** continued to be updated to reflect the evolving needs of the system and to incorporate additional guidance for extraordinary events with potential trans-boundary impacts. The manual now includes clarifications on informal messaging, explanatory clauses for PIAC activities, and expanded communication scenarios.

In 2024, the **SAFETY4TMF project** officially began implementation following its approval for funding in late 2023. The project focuses on improving safety standards, prevention strategies, and disaster response capacities for **tailings management facilities (TMFs)** in the Danube River Basin. The APC EG supports project activities and helps disseminate key findings within the ICPDR framework.

The APC EG also participated in the **UNECE Joint Expert Group's international workshop** on accidental water pollution from TMFs, held in April 2024. This event brought together experts from across Europe to share practices on accident prevention and emergency response, further raising the visibility of Danube-specific approaches.

Throughout 2024, the group maintained its focus on inventory updates of **Accident Hazard Sites (AHSs)** and **TMFs**. Efforts were made to harmonise selection criteria, improve data consistency, and address confidentiality concerns. Work continued on updating the existing hazard assessment methodologies and integrating the inventories into broader risk management frameworks, including possible applications of risk scoring methods.

Early discussions also resumed on the feasibility of a basin-wide contaminant spill model. Several countries expressed interest in adapting such a model for the Danube, highlighting the model's potential for improving forecasting and emergency response coordination in the event of a major spill. Further investigations will focus on assessing the advantages and limitations of these models regarding their potential use for the Danube.

By reinforcing early warning capacities, facilitating knowledge exchange and collecting up-to-date information on accident pollution hot spots, the APC EG continues to enhance the Danube River Basin's ability to prevent and respond to accidental pollution events.

# Flood Protection: Sustainable Solutions for the Entire Danube River Basin

The task of the Flood Protection Expert Group (FP EG) is to assess, map, manage and mitigate flood risks, and thus it forms the foundation for integrated basin-wide flood risk management in the Danube River Basin.

**In 2024, the Flood Protection Expert Group (FP EG) continued advancing flood risk management efforts in the Danube River Basin, with a focus on preparing the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan (DFRMP) Update 2027, operationalising the Danube Hydrological Information System (DanubeHIS), and enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration.**

As part of the [DFRMP Update 2027](#), the FP EG worked discussed a new sub-chapter that will present national methodologies for evaluating implementation progress, including achievements and the share of green infrastructure measures. While green measures are often used in combination with other types of measures, countries exchanged experiences on how they monitor and report such data. Climate change adaptation remained a central theme, with members reaffirming the need to strengthen long-term resilience despite uncertainties at the local level. The FP EG also discussed pluvial flooding, identified as a growing concern due to changing precipitation patterns. Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia presented case studies, underscoring the importance of including this topic in future plans.

Following years of development, [DanubeHIS](#) was officially launched at the ICPDR Ordinary Meeting in December 2023. The system publishes [hydrological and precipitation data](#) provided by Danube countries and builds on a foundation of a harmonised data policy and automatic near real time data exchange. It provides the national data in a common format and visualisation. Key improvements in 2024 included the display of Q100 (hundred-year flood) levels, low water levels, based on the discussion of national experts in defining thresholds as reference values.



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//// Укранська



**Nature-based solutions** (NBS) gained more prominence through the cooperation of the HYMO TG with FP EG contributing to the draft WFD-FD Discussion Paper. Members advocated for stronger recognition of NBS in reducing flood risks, supporting biodiversity, and enhancing climate resilience. Feedback on the discussion paper helped shape a more integrated approach to water and flood management planning across sectors.

The FP EG also worked on the update of the **Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment** (PFRA), in line with the EU Floods Directive. Countries were invited to update the map of Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk (APSFRs) and provide input on significant flooding events. These updates will be included in the revised PFRA and submitted to the European Commission.

The ICPDR's role in fostering cooperation across disaster and water management sectors was again highlighted during 2024, particularly in relation to the evolving impacts of climate change and the importance of basin-wide coordination in building flood resilience.

»Climate change poses challenges to water, but water is also the solution to the climate change problem.«

Danka Thalmeinerová  
Slovakia's Head of delegation  
to the ICPDR

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# Information Management and Geographical Information System: Mapping out a Brighter Future for the Danube

The Information Management and Geographical Information System Expert Group (IMGIS EG) plays a vital role in conceptualising, informing, presenting and supporting the tasks of the ICPDR. It's responsible for the development and maintenance of datasets, maps and online systems, such as the DanubeGIS.

**GIS maps offer a powerful, visual perspective on the state of the basin, helping to identify patterns, understand land and water use, and plan for future scenarios. In 2024, the Information Management and Geographic Information Systems Expert Group (IMGIS EG) focused on improving data infrastructure, supporting reporting needs for the Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP) Update 2027, and advancing user-friendly tools for both internal coordination and public engagement.**

The group held its 38<sup>th</sup> meeting on 24–25 April 2024 in Snagov (RO), and the 39<sup>th</sup> meeting online on 8 October 2024. Key topics included enhancing the [DanubeGIS platform](#), [DanubeGIS data collection](#) and reporting needs, streamlining data templates, DanubeGIS data access and usage, and responding to external data requests (including data provisions for ICPDR related projects).

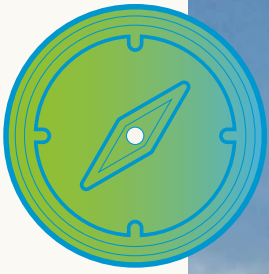
Throughout the year, the [IMGIS EG](#) supported [DanubeGIS updates](#) for upcoming reporting cycles. The group reviewed and revised its data templates for the DRBMP/DFRMP Update 2027, identifying opportunities to simplify structure and improve clarity. Consultations with other ICPDR Expert and Task Groups informed the process, which is expected to be completed in 2025. The group also continued exploring tools – such as story maps and dashboards – to help make complex basin data more accessible and engaging.

DanubeHIS was officially launched in December 2023 following a successful testing phase. Newly added features include improved data visualisation, the ability to display multiple parameters per station, and data charts showing Q100 and low-water levels as reference values, where available. The launch marked a major milestone in basin-wide hydrological data sharing. At the 26<sup>th</sup> ICPDR Ordinary Meeting, countries were encouraged to also upload validated, historical datasets to support long-term trend analyses.

In coordination with the [Flood Protection Expert Group](#) (FP EG), the IMGIS EG advanced work on datasets related to Water Gauging and Precipitation Stations. The review and update of this information in the DanubeGIS improved interconnectivity with DanubeHIS, although challenges with recent data availability remained an ongoing topic.



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Analytics showed a steady rise in the use of [ICPDR digital platforms](#) in 2024. DanubeGIS recorded 83 percent increase in visits compared to 2023. The main ICPDR website also saw significant growth, with user engagement rising steadily following its relaunch the previous year. Popular features included the Library, News, and interactive maps.

Looking ahead, the IMGIS EG will continue supporting DRBMP/DFRMP 2027 reporting preparations and improving the interoperability of ICPDR systems. The focus will remain on harmonising datasets, advancing visual storytelling tools, and ensuring the reliability of core platforms like DanubeGIS and DanubeHIS.

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# Public Participation: Promoting Public Participation and Communication in the Danube

The Public Participation Expert Group (PP EG) is responsible for outreach activities and publicizes information about the Danube River Basin through both online and offline channels. Its key role is to encourage involvement and enhance visibility, which is central to the ICPDR's activities.

**In 2024, the Public Participation Expert Group (PP EG) continued to build momentum for stakeholder engagement and youth involvement in the Danube River Basin. Highlights included preparations for Danube Day and Danube Art Master's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, new communications materials for the Joint Programme of Measures (JPM), and ongoing coordination with partners across the region.**

The 20<sup>th</sup> edition of **Danube Day**, celebrated on 29 June 2024, was a major milestone as it coincided with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Danube River Protection Convention, the DRPC, the founding document that established the ICPDR. PP EG members reported strong participation and high public interest, with many countries linking activities to the theme of collective action. Celebrations took place in **more than ten countries**, from public festivals and river clean-ups to educational campaigns and art projects for schools. The ICPDR supported national events by distributing promotional materials and amplifying activities through its central communication channels. Member countries also coordinated closely with local partners to broaden outreach and promote stewardship of the Danube and its tributaries.

As part of the **Joint Programme of Measures (JPM)** outreach, the PP EG finalised a set of communications tools designed to make the JPM more accessible and relevant to the public. These include visualised “storylines” that explain the plan’s key objectives, progress updates, and priority areas. The materials were developed in close coordination with the JPM Editorial Team and the Permanent Secretariat and are being translated into national languages for use across the basin. They will be published in 2025 alongside the draft Interim Report.

»Engaging the young generation is key to a sustainable future for our rivers. Fostering a deep understanding of the Danube River Basin helps preserve its beauty and our way of life. The smiles of children releasing juvenile sturgeons during Danube Day celebrations will always stay with me.«

Péter Kovács  
Hungary's Head of Delegation  
to the ICPDR



The **Danube Youth Council** (DYC) took part in multiple events and meetings in 2024, including a public outreach panel at the **Beyond Borders Breakfast Debate** and the **PP EG meeting** itself. Members contributed fresh perspectives on how to involve young people in river basin protection and are working with the Secretariat to co-develop upcoming activities. In December 2024, the 27<sup>th</sup> ICPDR Ordinary Meeting officially welcomed the DYC as the 25<sup>th</sup> observer to the ICPDR, formalising youth engagement in the decision-making framework.

Additional communications efforts included updates to the **Danube Art Master** (DAM) competition, with several countries already planning their national-level 2025 contests. The PP EG began preparations for new awareness campaigns focused on climate adaptation and water resilience. These campaigns will be launched in 2025 in connection with the preparatory work towards the 2027 updates of the Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP) and Danube Flood Risk Management Plan (DFRMP).

Throughout the year, the PP EG also reviewed progress on citizen science initiatives in planning of the 5<sup>th</sup> **Joint Danube Survey** (JDS5) and continued supporting other ICPDR Expert and Task Groups with communications input.



# Partnership and cooperation: Regional Partners & Sub-Basins

Forging strong, successful partnerships at the local, national, and international levels makes the work of the ICPDR a model for the rest of the world.

**The ICPDR supports the development of sub-basin programmes within the DRB as well as partnerships with our neighbouring regions. This cooperation, as well as a close relationship with the EU's Strategy for the Danube Region, is vital for sustainable integrated river basin management.**

## EUSDR

A joint special session of the [ICPDR](#) and the [EU Strategy for the Danube Region](#) (EUSDR) was held at [OM-27](#) to explore opportunities for deeper collaboration in response to major transformations shaping the Danube Region. Participants engaged in interactive discussions focused on five key cross-sectoral themes: transformative economies and industries, transformative climate change adaptation and mitigation, transformative societal values, transformative quality of government and governance, and transformative [EU 27+](#). The session encouraged out-of-the-box thinking and aimed to identify concrete next steps for cooperation between the ICPDR and EUSDR.

## Sava River Basin

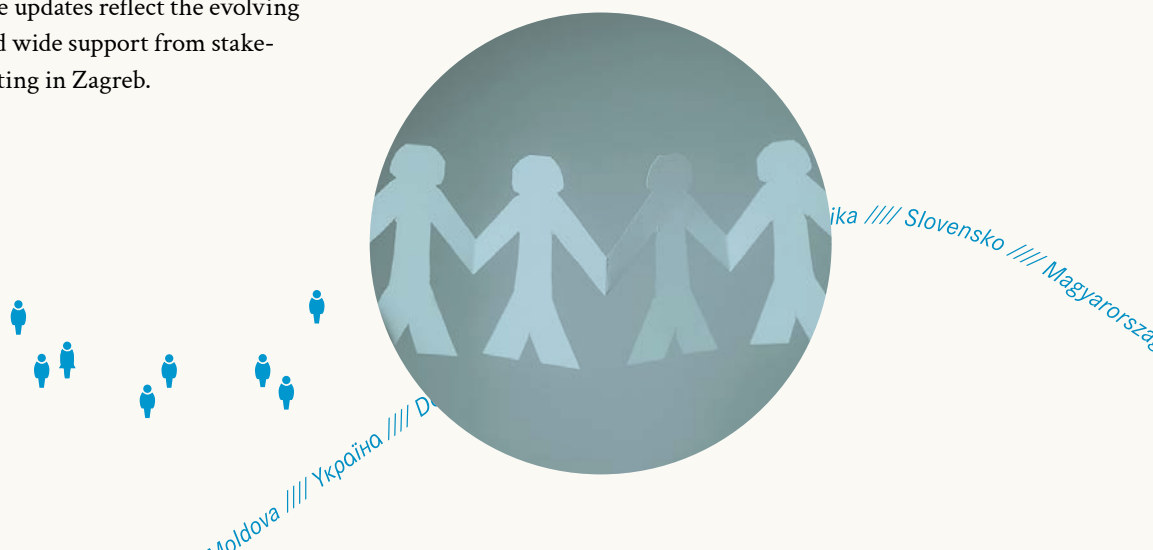
The [International Sava River Basin Commission](#) (ISRBC) remained active across multiple thematic areas. In navigation, 2024 saw the adoption of updated Navigation Rules, backed by first revisions to the Joint Statement and towards the renewal of the PLATINA manual. These updates reflect the evolving needs of the sector and received wide support from stakeholders at the ISRBC's 14<sup>th</sup> meeting in Zagreb.

GIS and data systems continued to improve, with new functionalities added to the [Sava GIS](#) and [Sava HIS platforms](#). Upgrades from projects like SHELTER and WACOM introduced additional data layers, including cultural heritage sites in flood-prone areas. The [Sava Flood Forecasting and Warning System](#) (FFWS), operated by ten national institutions, continued to support preparedness and was bolstered by recent capacity-building efforts. Planned upgrades aim to further strengthen the system's performance.

Cooperation with international actors remained a priority. In 2024, the ISRBC presented its work at [UNECE events](#) and contributed to the [UN Water Action Agenda](#). Through initiatives like the Advanced System for Floods and Low Flow Forecasting in the Sava River Basin, the ISRBC supported progress toward several Sustainable Development Goals. Engagement with youth and the public also continued, including the 11th Sava Youth Parliament and the final activities of the "Can You Hear Our Rivers" project.

## Tisza River Basin

The ICPDR [Tisza Group](#) focused much of its work in 2024 on preparing a resubmission of the [JOINTISZA2 project](#) under the second call of the Danube Region Programme. Following a feedback loop in late 2023, the group continued refining the proposal to meet the updated requirements ahead of the March 2025 submission deadline.





### Prut River Basin

Significant progress was made in 2024 toward **formalising trilateral cooperation** in the Prut River Basin. In October 2023, the environment ministers of Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine signed the “Declaration Regarding Cooperation on the Management of International Water Issues in the Prut River Basin.” The declaration provides a framework for data exchange, climate adaptation, shared planning, and public participation. It also paves the way for a dedicated Prut Basin Expert Group under the ICPDR.

At OM-27, the ICPDR welcomed this development and acknowledged the Prut as a key priority for strengthened transboundary cooperation. The Standing Working Group also agreed to provide a space for the three countries to collaborate within the ICPDR structure, building on the model of the Tisza Group. Work to draft Terms of Reference is ongoing with support from the EU-funded programme EU4Environment.

### Cooperation with the Black Sea Commission

In November 2024, the **Black Sea Commission** submitted its annual summary report to the ICPDR. Based on Romanian and Ukrainian data, the report confirmed that there was no deterioration in the status of the Black Sea caused by discharges from the Danube. Romania noted climate-related impacts on nutrient transport and mixing processes, while Ukraine reported rising air and seawater temperatures and continued limited sampling due to the ongoing war. The ICPDR, BSC, and UNEP/MAP also intensified their collaboration on a **Source-to-Sea** (S2S) approach in 2024, including joint participation in international events and discussions on a new tripartite Memorandum of Understanding. Slovenia has expressed interest in prioritising this approach during its upcoming ICPDR Presidency in 2025.



# Regular Budget and Financial Contribution

## Regular Budget for the Financial Year 2024

Three independent auditors, appointed by the Contracting Parties, audited the consolidated financial statement including the accounting records of the ICPDR for the financial year from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024.

The Audit Team certified that the Statement of Accounts is correct, and the contents, structure and details are in accordance with ICPDR rules and regulations and accounting principles assuring transparency of financial management.

## Contributions – Financial Year 2024

| Contracting Party    | Contribution in % | Contribution in EUR | Actual payment in EUR |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Austria              | 8.22 %            | 113,537.54          | 113,537.54            |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina | 4.90 %            | 67,624.32           | 67,624.32             |
| Bulgaria             | 8.22 %            | 113,537.54          | 113,537.54            |
| Croatia              | 8.22 %            | 113,537.54          | 113,537.54            |
| Czech Republic       | 8.22 %            | 113,537.54          | 113,537.54            |
| Germany              | 8.22 %            | 113,537.54          | 113,537.54            |
| Hungary              | 8.22 %            | 113,537.54          | 113,537.54            |
| Moldova              | 1.84 %            | 25,399.64           | 25,399.64             |
| Montenegro           | 3.65 %            | 50,327.49           | 50,327.49             |
| Romania              | 8.22 %            | 113,537.54          | 113,537.54            |
| Serbia               | 8.22 %            | 113,537.54          | 113,537.54            |
| Slovakia             | 8.22 %            | 113,537.54          | 113,537.54            |
| Slovenia             | 8.22 %            | 113,537.54          | 113,537.54            |
| Ukraine              | 4.90 %            | 67,624.32           | 67,624.32             |
| European Union       | 2.50 %            | 34,521.83           | 34,521.83             |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>100.00 %</b>   | <b>1,380,873.00</b> | <b>1,380,873.00</b>   |

## Expenditure – Financial Year 2024

| Budget Line                                         | Approved Budget in EUR | Expenditure in EUR  | Balance in EUR   |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. Staff                                            | 972,197.00             | 951,368.84          | 20,828.16        |
| 2. Office Running                                   | 140,504.00             | 133,051.79          | 7,452.21         |
| 3. Public Participation, Communication and Outreach | 93,500.00              | 91,877.43           | 1,622.57         |
| 4. Travel & Meetings                                | 67,000.00              | 53,783.13           | 13,216.87        |
| 5. Services                                         | 107,672.00             | 69,020.80           | 38,651.20        |
| <b>Total</b>                                        | <b>1,380,873.00</b>    | <b>1,299,101.99</b> | <b>81,771.01</b> |

# Contracting Parties and Heads of Delegation

## Austria

until 5 Feb. 2024:  
Günter Liebel,  
from 5 Feb. 2024:  
Monika Mörth,  
Federal Ministry of Agriculture,  
Regions and Tourism  
[www.bml.gv.at](http://www.bml.gv.at)

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mirza Hujic,  
Ministry of Foreign Trade  
and Economic Relations  
[www.mvteo.gov.ba](http://www.mvteo.gov.ba)

## Bulgaria

No head of delegation  
nominated in 2024  
[www.moew.government.bg](http://www.moew.government.bg)

## Croatia

Elizabeta Kos,  
Ministry of Economy and  
Sustainable Development  
[www.mingor.gov.hr](http://www.mingor.gov.hr)

## Czech Republic

Lukáš Záruba,  
Ministry of Environment  
[www.mzp.cz](http://www.mzp.cz)

## Germany

Heide Jekel,  
Federal Ministry for the  
Environment, Nature  
Conservation and Nuclear  
Safety  
[www.bmu.de](http://www.bmu.de)

## Hungary

Peter Kovács,  
Ministry of Interior  
[www.kormany.hu/hu/belugyminiszterium](http://www.kormany.hu/hu/belugyminiszterium)

## Moldova

Radu Cazacu,  
Waters of Moldova  
[www.mediugov.md](http://www.mediugov.md)

## Montenegro

Zorica Djuranovic,  
Ministry of Agriculture,  
Forestry and Water  
Management  
[www.gov.me](http://www.gov.me)

## Republic of Serbia

Maja Srbić,  
Ministry of Agriculture,  
Forestry and Water  
Management  
[www.minpolj.gov.rs](http://www.minpolj.gov.rs)

## Romania

Adriana Petcu,  
Ministry of Environment,  
Waters and Forests  
[www.gov.ro](http://www.gov.ro)

## Slovakia

Vladimír Novák,  
during Presidency 2024:  
Danka Thalmeinerová,  
Ministry of Environment  
[www.minzp.sk](http://www.minzp.sk)

## Slovenia

Mitja Bricelj,  
Ministry of the Environment  
and Spatial Planning  
[www.gov.si](http://www.gov.si)

## Ukraine

until 6 Dec. 2024:  
Oleksandr Krasnolutskyi,  
from 6 Dec. 2024:  
Olena Kramarenko,  
Ministry of Environmental  
Protection and Natural  
Resources  
[www.mepr.gov.ua](http://www.mepr.gov.ua)

## European Union

Luca Perez,  
European Commission,  
DG Environment  
[www.ec.europa.eu/environment](http://www.ec.europa.eu/environment)



**Czech Republic**  
Ministry of Environment  
[www.mzp.cz](http://www.mzp.cz)

**Germany**  
Federal Ministry for the Environment,  
Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety  
[www.bmu.de](http://www.bmu.de)

**European Union**  
European Commission, DG Environment  
[www.ec.europa.eu/environment](http://www.ec.europa.eu/environment)

**Austria**  
Federal Ministry of Agriculture,  
Regions and Tourism  
[www.bml.gv.at](http://www.bml.gv.at)

**Croatia**  
Ministry of Economy and  
Sustainable Development  
[www.mingor.gov.hr](http://www.mingor.gov.hr)

**Slovenia**  
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and Spatial Planning  
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**Bosnia and Herzegovina**  
Ministry of Foreign Trade  
and Economic Relations  
[www.mvteo.gov.ba](http://www.mvteo.gov.ba)

### Slovakia

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[www.minzp.sk](http://www.minzp.sk)

### Hungary

Ministry of Interior  
[www.kormany.hu/hu/belugyminiszterium](http://www.kormany.hu/hu/belugyminiszterium)

### Romania

Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests  
[www.gov.ro](http://www.gov.ro)

### Ukraine

Ministry of Environmental Protection  
and Natural Resources  
[www.mepr.gov.ua](http://www.mepr.gov.ua)

### Moldova

Waters of Moldova  
[www.mediugov.md](http://www.mediugov.md)



### Montenegro

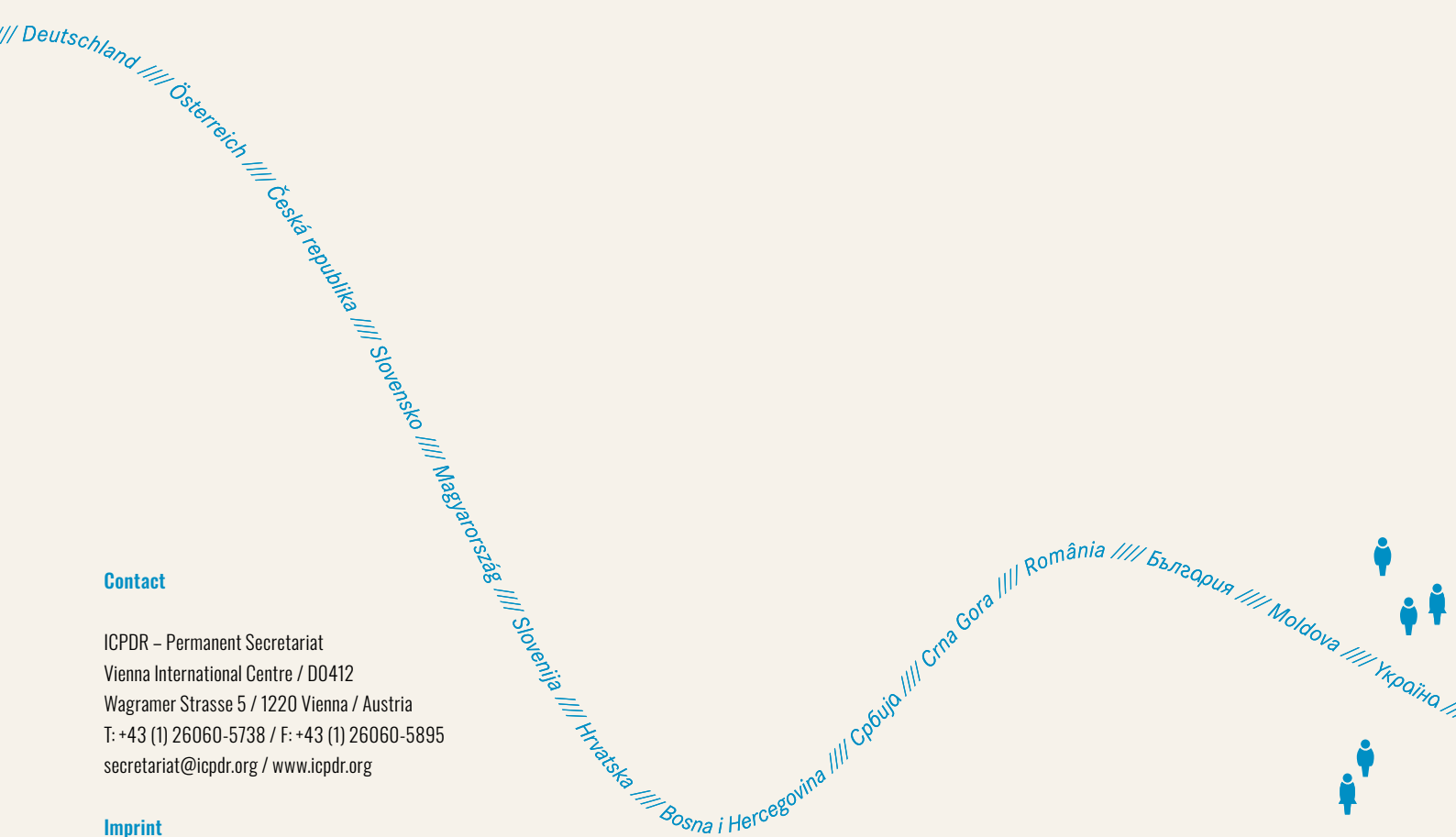
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry  
and Water Management  
[www.gov.me](http://www.gov.me)

### Republic of Serbia

Ministry of Agriculture,  
Forestry and Water Management  
[www.minpolj.gov.rs](http://www.minpolj.gov.rs)

### Bulgaria

Ministry of Environment and Water  
[www.moew.government.bg](http://www.moew.government.bg)



## Contact

ICPDR – Permanent Secretariat  
Vienna International Centre / D0412  
Wagramer Strasse 5 / 1220 Vienna / Austria  
T: +43 (1) 26060-5738 / F: +43 (1) 26060-5895  
secretariat@icpdr.org / www.icpdr.org

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