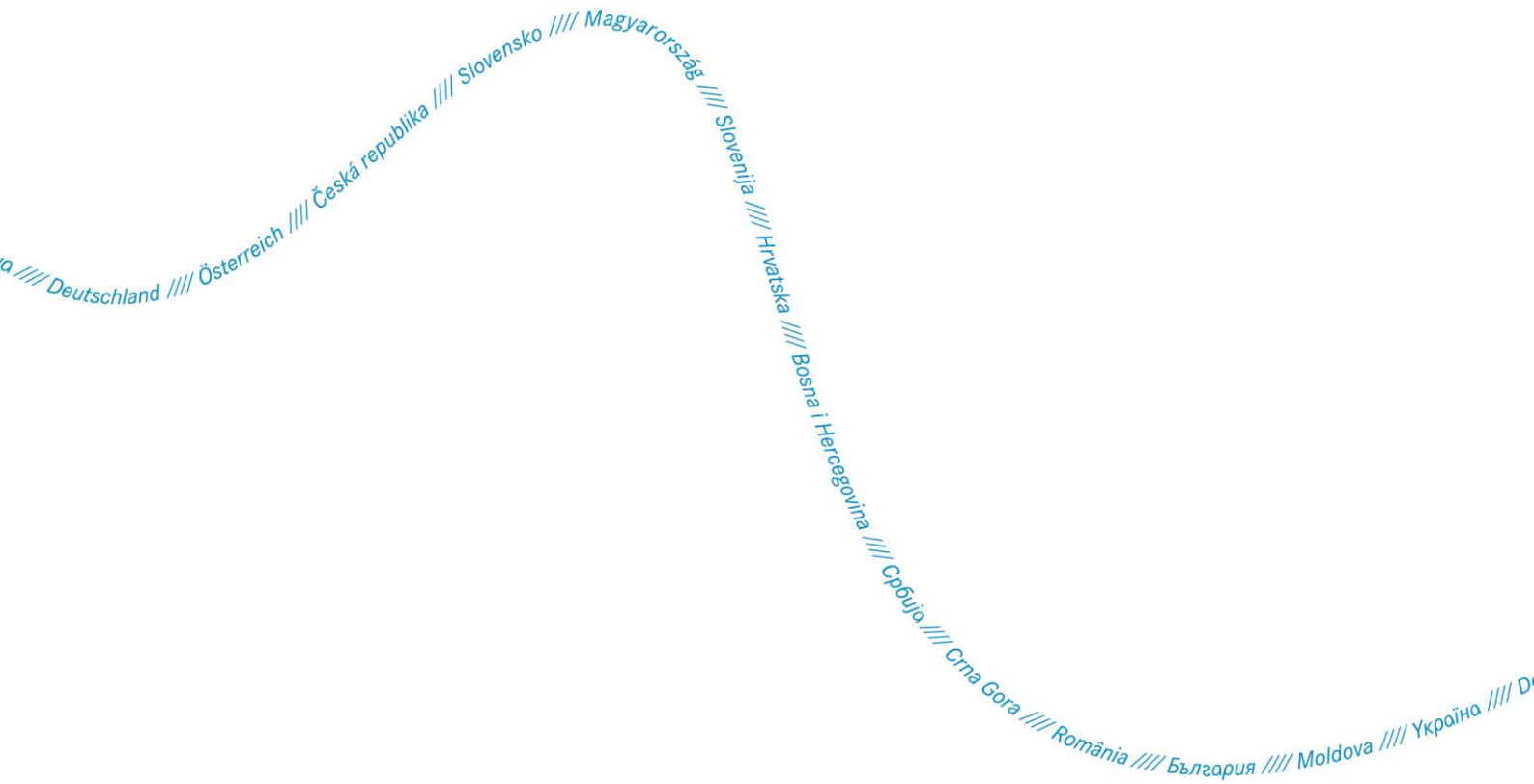
ICPDR IKSD

International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River

Internationale Kommission zum Schutz der Donau

Shared waters – joint responsibilities

ICPDR Annual Report 2025



Message from the Executive Secretary

2025 was a pivotal year for the ICPDR, filled with momentum, collaboration, and forward-looking action, as we worked together with colleagues across the Danube River Basin to strengthen our shared commitment to protecting this vital river basin.

One of the most exciting milestones was the launch of the Joint Danube Survey 5 (JDS5) in July, the ICPDR's flagship monitoring effort. Experts and students alike from across the Danube River Basin came together to sample, analyse, and engage the public in what is the most comprehensive surface water monitoring survey in the world. The report writing will take place in 2026 and will provide a wealth of knowledge to guide our work in the years ahead.

Throughout the year, we also focused on increasing water resilience, embracing digital tools, and supporting intersectoral and intergenerational cooperation. Young people and youth outreach continued to play an important role in our work, while cooperation with regional partners was strengthened, including through a shared commitment to the source-to-sea approach.

On behalf of the ICPDR Delegations, I want to thank everyone who contributed to the ICPDR's work this year. Your dedication, energy, and expertise continue to move us closer to a cleaner, healthier, and safer Danube for all.

Birgit Vogel

ICPDR Executive Secretary

ICPDR Highlights in 2025

The following highlights are just a few of the many achievements carried out by the ICPDR in the Danube River Basin in 2025:

Fifth Joint Danube Survey (JDS5) officially launched

Following extensive preparations spanning over three years, the Joint Danube Survey 5 (JDS5) kicked off 1 July 2025 with a press conference in Vienna. The most comprehensive investigative surface water monitoring effort in the world, JDS5 marks the fifth edition of the ICDPR's flagship survey and will provide crucial data and insights into the status of the Danube that will feed into the Danube River Basin Management Plan 2027. The survey also featured a citizen science component for the first time.

The official launch was accompanied by an exhibition in the rotunda of the Vienna International Centre (VIC), featuring a selection of JDS5 panels, as well as displays marking the 20th anniversary of the Danube Art Master exhibition. A live panel discussion also helped highlight the importance of basin-wide monitoring and cooperation, as well as the role of outreach in bringing these efforts closer to the public.

Citizen science brought the public directly into JDS5

For the first time, citizen science played a major role in the Joint Danube Survey, involving local schools and communities in actively contributing to data collection across the basin. Through the "Gems of Water" initiative, coordinated with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) in support of JDS5, students from 13 schools in 10 countries collected and processed water samples from the Danube and its tributaries. The samples were later analysed at the JRC Water Laboratory for hundreds of pesticides. Beyond the scientific results, the initiative strengthened public engagement in river protection and gave young people a unique opportunity to participate directly in basin-wide environmental research and cooperation.

Fit for 2055: Making the ICPDR fit for the next 30 years

In 2025, the ICPDR officially launched its "Fit for 2055: Making the ICPDR Fit for the Next 30 Years" development process. Building on discussions held since 2022, the initiative aims to reflect on the future strategic direction, structure, and working culture of the ICPDR in light of evolving environmental, technical, and societal challenges across the Danube River Basin.

Throughout the year, ICPDR Delegations, Heads of Delegation, and the Secretariat engaged in discussions on the organisation's future priorities, governance structures, cooperation mechanisms, and long-term role within the region. Facilitated interviews with ICPDR Heads of Delegation were also carried out in autumn 2025 to help identify opportunities for strengthening cooperation, improving working methods, and ensuring the ICPDR remains fit for purpose in the decades ahead. The process is set to continue throughout 2026.

Slovenia assumes ICPDR Presidency from Slovakia in 2025

The ICPDR Presidency was transferred from Slovakia to Slovenia in January 2025, with a ceremonial handover held in Vienna. Outgoing President Vladimír Novák (Slovakia) gave the traditional bottle of Danube water to incoming President Lidija Globevnik. President Globevnik highlighted Slovenia's priorities for the year, including the successful launch of Joint Danube Survey 5, strengthening water resilience, advancing the source-to-sea approach, and reinforcing cooperation across ICPDR Expert Groups and regional partners.

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 Commission.

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 nine expert groups:

- River Basin Management Expert Group (RBM EG)
- Pollution Management 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)

- Prut Expert Group (Prut EG)
- Tisza Expert Group

List of Expert Group Chairpersons

Group Name	Name	Nominated By	Organisation
RBM EG	Vacant	n/a	n/a
PM EG	Amila Ibrulj	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry (BMLUK)
MA EG	Franz Wagner	Austria	BMLUK
APC EG	Yurii Nabyvanets	Ukraine	Ukrainian Hydrometeorological Institute
FP EG	Clemens Neuhold	Austria	BMLUK
IMGIS EG	Dragoș Ungureanu	Romania	National Administration "Apele Române"
PP EG	Susanne Brandstetter	Austria	BMLUK
PRUT EG	Rodica Iordanov	Moldova	Apele Moldovei

In addition to the permanent Expert Groups, the ICPDR also continued the work of the Strategic ad-hoc Expert Group in 2025. In line with the rotational system agreed by the ICPDR, the group was chaired by Mitja Bricelj (Slovenia) in line with the 2025 Presidency. The Strategic ad-hoc Expert Group engages in preparatory work for the ICPDR related to legal and administrative issues. As an ad hoc EG, it does not engage in regular meetings but rather convenes upon request of the ICPDR.

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

Task Group	Chairperson	Nominated By	Responsible Expert Group
Hydromorphology Task Group (HYMO TG)	Petra Repnik	Slovenia	RBM EG
Economics Task Group (ECON TG)	Danka Thalmeinerová	Slovakia	RBM EG
Groundwater Task Group (GW TG)	Andreas Scheidleder	Austria	MA EG
Nutrient Task Group (N TG)	Franz Überwimmer	Austria	PM EG

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 26 organisations have taken the opportunity to become ICPDR observers:

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

- viadonau
- Worldwide Fund for Nature – Central and Eastern Europe (WWF-CEE)

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 develop activities relevant to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the development of the Danube River Basin Management Plans (DRBMPs). Furthermore, the Hydromorphology Task Group and Economics Task Group both report to the RBM EG.

In 2025, the RBM EG continued coordinating activities related to the implementation of the DRBMP Update 2021 and preparations for the DRBMP 2027. Throughout the year, discussions focused on basin-wide cooperation, strengthening coordination across ICPDR Expert and Task Groups, and advancing the technical and strategic groundwork needed for the next river basin management planning cycle.

The Interim Report on the Implementation of the Joint Programme of Measures has been published as PDF version on the ICPDR webpage in January 2025; no printed version was produced. The PP EG further promoted and disseminated selected key messages of the Interim Report via a dedicated social media campaign that ran until between May and November.

A major focus was the finalisation of the 2025 Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) document, which will serve as an important basis for the development of the DRBMP 2027. The RBM EG worked closely with the ICPDR Expert and Task Groups to update and refine the document, incorporating technical input related to pollution, hydromorphological pressures, biodiversity, droughts, climate change adaptation, and water resilience. The SWMI document will be finalised and published for public consultation in 2026.

Preparations for the DRBMP 2027 also advanced significantly throughout the year. The RBM EG discussed the preliminary timeline, structure, and reporting approach for the upcoming management plan, with a focus on shortening the core document while keeping valuable technical content in annexes, improving coordination between national and basin-wide planning processes, reducing reporting burdens where possible and ensuring data consistency by using identical data in the national river basin management plans and the DRBMP.

Discussions also addressed future data collection rounds and the revision of DanubeGIS reporting templates in cooperation with the IMGIS EG. The final timeline, structure, list of maps and annexes will be further discussed and developed by summer 2026, followed by drafting a preliminary draft management plan (without updated data), finalising the data collection templates and launching data collection for the DRBMP 2027.

Climate resilience and drought management remained important cross-cutting topics throughout 2025. The RBM EG followed ongoing ICPDR drought-related activities, in particular the outcomes of the ICPDR Overview Report on Droughts and the prioritisation of suggested drought activities within the ICPDR framework. Moreover, the RBM EG exchanged with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre on scientific and technical aspects related to drought monitoring and low flow forecasting. The RBM EG closely followed the implementation of the Danube Water Balance project, which delivers a basin-wide water balance model for surface and groundwater, tested in transboundary sub-basins and complemented by an assessment of climate scenarios.

Cooperation with sub-basin organisations remained an important component of RBM EG activities. Coordination continued with the Tisza, Sava, and Prut River Basin initiatives to support alignment between regional planning activities, reporting processes, and basin-wide management objectives.

The Hydromorphology Task Group (HYMO TG) continued its work on river continuity, sediment management, ecological prioritisation (linked to NaturaConnect project), and nature-based solutions, all supporting the development of the DRBMP 2027. HYMO TG activities also contributed to JDS5 through cooperation with the DANUBE4all and DanubeSediment_Q2 projects. JDS5 HYMO activities include a multi-hierarchical hydromorphological assessment along the Danube and its tributaries and a 10 km reach assessment of the Danube on new HYMO deteriorations and improvements. In cooperation with the FP EG, the HYMO TG also finalised the new Nature-based Solutions Annex for the discussion paper on coordinating the Water Framework Directive and Floods Directive. At the 34th HYMO TG meeting, Ms Petra Repnik (Slovenia) announced her resignation from her role as Chairperson after seven years, with strong appreciation expressed for her long-standing contribution to the work of the group.

The ECON TG continued work related to the economic analysis supporting the DRBMP 2027, including discussions on financing, economic indicators, and the application of Article 4(4) exemptions under the Water Framework Directive. At the 27th Ordinary Meeting in 2024, Ms Danka Thalmeinerová was confirmed as Chairperson of the ECON TG, which went into effect in 2025.

Sturgeon-related activities also remained an important area of coordination under the RBM EG umbrella. Cooperation continued with the Danube Sturgeon Task Force (DSTF) on initiatives supporting sturgeon conservation, river continuity, habitat restoration, and monitoring activities across the basin. The RBM EG also maintained exchange and dialogue with relevant projects were also in focus (e.g. LIFE Boat4Sturgeons, MonStur, DANUBElifelines).

Looking ahead, the RBM EG will continue coordinating the development of the DRBMP 2027, supporting cooperation across Expert and Task Groups, and strengthening integrated river basin management efforts throughout the Danube River Basin.

Pollution Management: Assessing Pressures Across the Danube River Basin

The Pollution Management 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 2025, the group formally continued its work under the name Pollution Management Expert Group, while retaining the abbreviation PM EG. The name change followed discussions initiated in 2024, when the group agreed that the previous title, Pressures and Measures Expert Group, no longer fully reflected the scope and main working field of the group. The updated name better reflects the group's expertise and focus on pollution-related pressures, while other ICPDR Expert and Task Groups address additional pressure types such as hydromorphological alterations and invasive alien species. The 2025 PM EG Chair, Ms Amila Ibrulj expressed willingness to continue serving as Chair and was subsequently elected by the PM EG.

Throughout 2025, the PM EG continued supporting preparations for the DRBMP 2027. A major area of work focused on the pollution-related Significant Water Management Issues (SWMIs). The group maintained the existing structure covering organic pollution, nutrient pollution, and hazardous substances pollution, while also continuing discussions on cross-cutting topics such as agriculture and plastic pollution.

The PM EG also continued discussions related to pollution inventories and reporting processes linked to the DRBMP 2027. The group further reviewed data collection templates connected to pollution inventories and agreed that no additional inventories were required beyond the existing wastewater and industrial discharger inventories already maintained within the ICPDR framework. The PM EG also discussed its expected contributions to the DRBMP 2027, including the updated pollution pressure assessments, the Joint Programme of Measures and the related management scenarios, the evaluation of climate change impacts on pollution and the demonstration of implementation success for both pressures and measures.

Hazardous substances pollution remained an important area of work in 2025. The PM EG continued following developments under the Tethys project, which supports activities related to transnational monitoring, harmonised chemical analyses, national and transnational databases, emission modelling, policy review and strategy development. Project developments were regularly discussed within the group in order to support practical implementation and basin-wide coordination.

Plastic pollution also remained a high priority throughout the year. The PM EG followed progress under the AquaticPlastic project, including activities related to citizen science, remote sensing approaches for plastic monitoring, microplastic monitoring activities, and data collection and abatement options related to plastic pollution at the hydropower plants.

Wastewater management continued to be another important focus area. The PM EG continued discussions with the World Bank and EUSDR PA4 on future workshops, webinars, and targeted training events addressing resilient wastewater management, circular economy approaches, hazardous substances removal and financing aspects. In April

2025, the PM EG and the World Bank jointly organised a dedicated workshop on wastewater management in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The workshop provided insights into the findings of a diagnostic analysis of sector policies, institutions and regulatory frameworks in the Western Balkan countries, including identified service delivery challenges, their root causes and proposed reform options.

In cooperation with the EUSDR PA4, an online workshop on sewage sludge management and energy efficiency in the Danube Region was organised in June 2025. The workshop aimed to discuss the status of sewage sludge management in the Danube countries and identify relevant messages for national policy makers and experts.

Contributions to JDS5 also remained an important topic throughout the year. The PM EG continued supporting the JDS5 sampling campaign at selected urban wastewater treatment plants, focusing on various matrices including wastewater inflow and outflow, combined sewer overflows and sewage sludge and targeting substances of high interest such as emerging chemicals and microplastics. In close cooperation with the JDS5 team, the PM EG developed a detailed sampling concept, elaborated a sampling protocol, facilitated the sampling campaign and coordinated the reporting.

The Nutrient Task Group (NTG) continued discussions on basin-wide nutrient emission modelling and diffuse pollution stemming from land use and entering surface waters through diffuse pathways. The group agreed to continue assessments on those diffuse pollution issues that should be tackled jointly at the basin-wide level. With regard to the assessments for the DRBMP 2027, streamlining between a Romanian national model development and the update of the basin-wide model is foreseen, to be carried out in the framework of a national World Bank project implemented in Romania.

The NTG developed a nutrient issue paper highlighting a key success of the Danube countries in pollution reduction, application of the source-to-sea approach and sustainable nutrient management. The paper will be published in 2026.

The NTG is implementing a stepwise approach to building dialogue with the agricultural sector, starting with webinars on water and agriculture. Potential webinar topics were discussed and prioritised in spring 2025, and the group consequently selected the topic for the kick-off webinar. It was agreed to start with good examples of cooperation and exchange between the agricultural and water sectors. The first webinar is planned for spring 2026.

Looking ahead, the PM EG will continue supporting pollution management activities across the Danube River Basin and contributing to preparations for the DRBMP 2027, with a continued focus on coordination, knowledge exchange, and basin-wide cooperation.

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 2025, the MA EG focused strongly on activities related to JDS5, which officially launched in July following extensive basin-wide preparations and coordination activities. The survey brought together experts, national coordinators, laboratories, and partner organisations from across the Danube River Basin and beyond.

Throughout the year, the MA EG coordinated discussions related to JDS5 data collection and management, including the use of the sampling web application and data upload tools. Countries continued uploading sampling data and agreed on further steps related to the preparation and completion of monitoring datasets, with all national JDS5 data expected to be uploaded by the end of 2025.

The MA EG also reviewed feedback from the JDS5 sampling campaign during its 42nd meeting. Discussions addressed materials distribution, standard operational procedures, sampling implementation, collection of samples, expert support, and related technical issues. Overall, the sampling campaign was carried out as planned, with only minor operational adjustments due to weather conditions. Activities included biological, microbiological, chemical, groundwater, wastewater, isotope, microplastic, and radioactivity monitoring.

Preparations for the JDS5 Final Report also began during the year. The MA EG agreed that the report would follow the same format as the JDS4 Scientific Report, while discussions started on the structure and composition of chapters ahead of the drafting process in 2026.

Public outreach remained an important component of JDS5 activities. The MA EG has repeatedly expressed its appreciation for the cooperation with the Public Participation Expert Group (PP EG) in communicating JDS5 activities to the public, a cooperation that has helped increase the visibility of the survey, broaden public understanding of its scientific work and results, and strengthen engagement across the Danube River Basin.

Biodiversity-related work also continued throughout the year. The revised ICPDR Aquatic Biodiversity Report underwent substantial revision following comments received from ICPDR experts and observers. Updates included a new introductory chapter explaining the objectives and purpose of the report, revisions to the structure of scientific chapters, and the inclusion of taxa lists for biological quality elements. The report will be further updated in 2027 using results from the JDS5 biodiversity longitudinal survey.

The MA EG also continued discussions related to the DRBMP Update 2027, including the expected availability of risk assessment and status assessment data from Contracting Parties. Discussions additionally addressed approaches for comparing surface water body status across reporting cycles and demonstrating long-term implementation progress since the first DRBMP.

Work related to the TNMN continued throughout 2025. The MA EG approved the TNMN Yearbook 2023 following revisions coordinated by Slovakia. The group also approved the Danube load data to the Black Sea for 2024, which were reported to the Black Sea Commission.

The Analytical Quality Control programme also continued in 2025 through QualcoDanube activities focusing on nutrients. Participating laboratories coordinated through the Secretariat on planning, invoicing, and sample distribution activities.

Groundwater monitoring activities remained an important area of work under the Groundwater Task Group (GW TG). Discussions focused on updates related to the DRBMP Update 2027, revisions of groundwater body nominations of basin-wide importance, and groundwater sampling activities under JDS5. In 2025, the ICPDR adopted groundwater body SK1000100P – CZ16520 as a new groundwater body of basin-wide importance, becoming 'GWB-13'.

The GW TG also continued discussions on increasing the visibility of groundwater to the public, including updates to the ICPDR groundwater leaflet in cooperation with the PP EG.

Looking ahead, the MA EG will continue supporting the implementation and evaluation of JDS5 while strengthening monitoring methodologies, scientific coordination, and data quality across 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 2025, the APC EG continued supporting activities related to accidental pollution prevention and emergency preparedness across the Danube River Basin, with a strong focus on maintaining and improving the operational reliability of the Danube AEWS.

Between November 2024 and October 2025, two AEWS warning messages were triggered. These included an oil spill in the Danube near Ruse in January 2025 involving mineral oil, as well as a discoloration event in the Begej Canal in August 2025.

The APC EG continued carrying out regular AEWS testing activities throughout the year. In April 2025, the ICPDR Secretariat initiated a basin-wide test to assess the functionality of the system, the 24/7 operability of Principal International Alert Centres (PIACs), and the overall use of the system. The test confirmed that the AEWS functioned as expected from a technical perspective, while also helping identify areas for further improvement related to communication systems and operational preparedness.

A comprehensive multinational AEWS test was also carried out during the 17th APC EG Meeting in Bratislava in October 2025. The exercise simulated transboundary pollution incidents moving downstream through international river systems and actively involved all 14 PIACs. The test assessed the creation, updating, confirmation, and closure of alerts within the system and confirmed that the AEWS operated effectively overall. Discussions during and after the exercise also helped identify technical issues, including a system bug linked to follow-up reports, which was resolved during the test itself.

A major technical milestone during the year was the continued implementation of the upgraded AEWS following the end of Drupal 7 support in January 2025. The upgraded system incorporates the modern ICPDR website design while maintaining the existing functionality of the AEWS.

The APC EG also continued contributing to the development of the 2025 Interim Overview on the Significant Water Management Issues (SWMIs) in the Danube River Basin. The group agreed to maintain the existing report structure and continue addressing accident prevention and AEWS activities under the hazardous substances pollution section.

Work also continued on updating inventories related to Accident Hazard Sites (AHSs) in support of the DRBMP 2027. Discussions focused on improving reporting templates, simplifying elements of the Water Hazard Index methodology, and examining possibilities for extending the methodology to better incorporate natural hazards and risk-related factors.

The APC EG additionally continued discussions related to contaminant spill modelling for the Danube River Basin. Comparative assessments of spill models developed for the Elbe, Rhine, and Sava River Basins were carried out to better understand their applicability, limitations, and operational requirements. Discussions highlighted the

complexity of applying a single spill model across the highly diverse Danube River Basin and stressed the importance of identifying the practical needs of potential users before further development.

Further progress was achieved under the SAFETY4TMF project, which supports coordinated prevention, preparedness, and disaster management activities related to TMFs across the basin. Activities in 2025 included policy and gap analyses, updates to TMF inventories, training activities, stakeholder engagement, pilot investigations, and transboundary accident risk mapping exercises. The project also continued supporting discussions related to revised TMF hazard and risk assessment methodologies and the future use of updated TMF inventories for the DRBMP 2027.

Looking ahead, the APC EG will continue strengthening accident prevention, emergency preparedness, and transboundary coordination activities while supporting the further development of the AEWS and related risk management tools across the Danube River Basin.

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 2025, the FP EG continued preparations for the DFRMP Update 2027. The group discussed and agreed on the Table of Contents as a working basis for the plan, covering key areas such as flood hazard and flood risk maps, objectives, measures and their prioritisation, water retention, coordination with the WFD and other relevant EU legislation, cost-benefit analysis, climate change impacts, international coordination, public information and consultation, and next steps. Countries were asked to update the DFRMP Update 2027 working template and Annex 2 by March 2026.

The FP EG also advanced work on the coordination between the WFD and the Floods Directive. In cooperation with the HYMO TG, the group updated the WFD-FD Discussion Paper by adding a new chapter on nature-based solutions. The chapter was approved by the FP EG and later by the RBM EG, strengthening the shared understanding of how nature-based solutions can support coordinated flood risk management and river basin management.

DanubeHIS remained an important tool for basin-wide hydrological data sharing. In 2025, work focused on high and low water level definitions for hydrological stations. Countries agreed to provide for each hydrological station the discharge values for high-water levels (Q100 – 100-year flood event) and low water levels, together with short descriptions of national methodologies to be used as reference values in current discharge graphs. This work will also support the definition of common drought indicators, including low water levels, within the ICPDR's basin-wide drought activities. Further system development focused on improved export formats and performance.

The Danube Forecasting Forum 2025 was organised by the ICPDR in Ljubljana from 30 September to 1 October. The main topic was the 2024 flood events, with a particular focus on early warning. Other themes included communicating modelling results to local decision-makers and citizens, flash floods, and the preparedness of flood early warning systems in a changing climate. Participants welcomed the forum and agreed that it should continue in 2027.

Work also continued on the review and update of the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment. Countries reviewed the 2019 Summary Report on the implementation of Articles 4 and 5 of the European Floods Directive in the Danube River Basin District and submitted necessary revisions. The Secretariat updated the Report accordingly, using data available as of 31 October 2025.

The FP EG also reviewed progress on flood hazard and flood risk maps for the Danube River Basin District. Most updated national maps are expected to become available in summer 2026. In preparation, the Secretariat prepared the template for updating the related summary report, with several countries already providing updated text.

Reporting on recent flood events remained an important part of the group's work. The report on floods in the Danube River Basin in 2023 was finalised and approved by the FP EG. Work also continued on the 2024 floods report, with national reports submitted by the relevant countries, although some evaluations were still ongoing.

The group also followed developments related to Danube EFAS. The EC JRC presented the next major release of EFAS v6.0, including hydrological model improvements, calibration updates, an increased number of calibration stations, longer observation periods for calibration, and testing of an Artificial Intelligence Forecasting System.

Looking ahead, the FP EG will continue supporting the elaboration of the DFRMP Update 2027, strengthening DanubeHIS, and advancing cooperation on flood forecasting, early warning, and climate-related flood risk management across the Danube River Basin.

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 collecting and analysing the water-related information in DRBD, and 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 and DanubeHIS.

In 2025, the IMGIS EG continued supporting data collection and reporting activities related to the DRBMP and DFRMP Updates 2027. A major focus throughout the year was the review and update of DanubeGIS templates based on experiences from previous reporting cycles and input received from ICPDR Expert and Task Groups.

Several groups proposed adjustments to existing templates. The HYMO TG agreed on updates related to sediment transport and sediment dredging, while the RBM EG and GW TG discussed revisions connected to exemptions reporting. Minor adjustments were also proposed by the APC EG and PM EG. In addition, the IMGIS EG introduced several simplifications and structural improvements, including the removal of unused templates and clearer linkages between catchments and rivers. The updated DanubeGIS template documentation and upload guidance, coordinated with all Expert Groups, were unfortunately not adopted by the Heads of Delegation at the 28th Ordinary Meeting as the basis for data collection for the 2027 updates of the DRBMP and DFRMP. Discussions on this topic will therefore continue throughout 2026

The IMGIS EG also continued supporting the FP EG in the review and update of datasets connected to DanubeHIS, including Water Gauge Stations, Precipitation Stations, rivers, and river water segments. These datasets are synchronised with DanubeHIS and support basin-wide visualisation of hydrological monitoring activities. Several countries continued addressing outstanding issues related to dataset completeness and review.

Work also continued on updates connected to flood risk management reporting. Countries reviewed and updated datasets related to Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk and flood hazard and risk maps in preparation for the DFRMP Update 2027. The final update of the APSFR map was completed using data submitted by the end of October 2025.

The IMGIS EG additionally continued discussions on long-term comparability of data reported across DRBMP cycles between 2009 and 2027. Discussions addressed challenges linked to changing river water body delineations, improved geometry data, and evolving reporting methodologies. Several approaches were discussed to support more meaningful comparisons of implementation progress across reporting cycles.

Development of ICPDR information systems also remained a key focus area in 2025. The planned migration of DanubeGIS continued to be revised into a stepwise upgrade process due to limited Secretariat capacities. Priority was placed on

upgrading functions related to data collection and validation ahead of the start of DRBMP 2027 data collection in 2026.

Further development of DanubeHIS also continued during the year. Improvements focused on aggregate value calculations, export formats, metadata downloads, and high and low water level definitions for hydrological stations.

JDS5-related data collection tools were also further improved in 2025. Enhancements to the JDS5 Data Collection Portal included the introduction of a survey planner, revised data collection templates, sampling registration tools, and a dedicated workspace to support the drafting and review of JDS5 report chapters. The portal played an important role in facilitating sampling logistics and ensuring harmonised data collection throughout the survey.

Usage of ICPDR information systems and digital platforms increased significantly during 2025. DanubeGIS recorded a 77 percent increase in visits compared to the previous year, while DanubeHIS saw traffic rise by more than 300 percent. Strong growth was also observed for the JDS data portals, DanubeAEWS, Danube Box, and the main ICPDR website, reflecting growing public and professional interest in ICPDR data and information platforms.

The IMGIS EG also continued following developments related to EU reporting processes and the EU Working Group on Data and Information Sharing, while EU Member States exchanged experiences related to reporting activities at the European level.

Looking ahead, the IMGIS EG will continue supporting the development of ICPDR information systems, harmonised reporting processes, and basin-wide data management tools in preparation for the DRBMP and DFRMP Updates 2027.

Public Participation: Promoting Public Participation and Communication in the Danube

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

In 2025, the PP EG played a central role in planning and implementing communication strategies for JDS5, as well as strengthening public participation across the Danube River Basin. Many Danube Day 2025 activities incorporated JDS5 themes and messages, helping highlight the survey's scientific, educational, and citizen science dimensions.

A key event linking Danube Day, Danube Art Master, and the launch of JDS5 was the opening of a week-long ICPDR exhibition at the Vienna International Centre in July 2025. The exhibition presented Danube Art Master activities, JDS5 objectives and sampling methods, and demonstrated how the survey connects scientific monitoring with educational initiatives and youth engagement. The event included a live panel discussion featuring representatives of the ICPDR, JDS5, the PP EG, and environmental outreach initiatives, helping further strengthen the visibility of the survey among both institutional and public audiences.

The official JDS5 kick-off event took place on 1 July 2025 in Vienna and received widespread media attention across print, online, radio, television, and social media platforms. Speakers highlighted the goals of JDS5, its contribution to a cleaner, healthier, and safer Danube, and the innovative citizen science component that distinguishes the survey from previous editions. A live sampling demonstration was also held during the event.

Throughout the year, communication activities under the JDS5 Communication and Information Framework focused on raising basin-wide awareness of JDS5, strengthening visibility of the ICPDR and its Contracting Parties, promoting citizen science and youth engagement, and ensuring transparent and accessible communication. Activities included press materials, animations, coordinated outreach campaigns, and collaborations with content creators and influencers to broaden audience reach.

Danube Day and Danube Art Master once again brought together schools, organisations, and communities throughout the basin. In 2025, both initiatives also received additional support through the ICPDR's cooperation with Erste Group. The partnership continued supporting a broad range of outreach activities, including Danube Day, Danube Art Master, Danube Box 2.0, volunteering initiatives, and social media cooperation activities.

The PP EG also continued strengthening the ICPDR's social media activities in 2025. The ICPDR Social Media Guidelines were updated to reflect evolving digital communication practices, including new sections related to collaborative content and tagging partner organisations. The updates support the ICPDR's efforts to maintain consistent, professional, and transparent communication practices across all social media channels.

Several communication campaigns performed particularly well throughout the year. The Interim Report Campaign launched between May and November 2025, generated strong engagement across ICPDR social media platforms

through thematic storytelling and best-practice examples. The "Women in Science" series also continued successfully, while the "JDS5 Danube Diaries" initiative shared behind-the-scenes stories and field experiences from the survey to maintain public interest and engagement.

Positive growth continued across ICPDR digital platforms in 2025, particularly on LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook, reflecting increasing engagement with ICPDR communication and outreach activities.

The PP EG also contributed to initial preparations for the DRBMP 2027 Update. The group developed and submitted the outline for the Public Participation Chapter of the plan to the RBM EG. The proposed approach reflects changing communication landscapes and places greater emphasis on interactivity, visual storytelling, digital participation tools, and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

Looking ahead, the PP EG will continue supporting JDS5 communication activities throughout the report-writing phase and leading up to and following its publication, public participation processes, and basin-wide outreach initiatives while further strengthening public engagement and awareness across the Danube River Basin.

Partnership and Cooperation: Planning with the Danube's 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.

Sava River Basin

Cooperation between the ICPDR and the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) continued throughout 2025 across a wide range of technical and strategic activities.

Implementation of the Sava and Drina Rivers Corridors Integrated Development Program (SDIP) continued progressing during the year. The programme supports transboundary water cooperation and integrated water management in the Sava River Basin through studies, basin-wide planning activities, system upgrades, and supporting initiatives aligned with the priorities of the Sava countries.

Several basin-wide studies advanced in 2025, including the Hydrological Study for the Sava River Basin and the Study on Sediment, Water and Biota in the Sava River Basin. Activities included data collection and systematisation, stakeholder engagement, sediment and water sampling campaigns, and the development of a sediment simulation model. The studies aim to strengthen understanding of hydrological processes, sediment dynamics, climate change impacts, and sustainable water resources management across the basin.

Work also continued on the Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Sava River Basin, which focuses on ecotourism, nautical tourism, and cycling tourism while balancing environmental protection and socio-economic development. A Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for the Sava River Basin was also launched in 2025 to support the development and prioritisation of adaptation measures across the region.

The ISRBC additionally continued activities related to the improvement and operationalisation of the Sava Flood and Low-flow Forecasting and Warning System (Sava FFWS 2.0), including model upgrades, forecasting improvements, warning products, and training activities for users.

Youth engagement also remained an important focus area. The 13th Sava Youth Parliament, held in Gradiška in October 2025 under the slogan "Tourism; let's do it in a sustainable way!", brought together students from across the Sava River Basin to explore sustainable tourism, environmental protection, and regional cooperation.

Tisza River Basin

Cooperation in the Tisza River Basin continued in 2025 through the work of the ICPDR Tisza Group and ongoing exchanges between the five Tisza countries.

Discussions during the year focused on the future direction of transboundary cooperation activities in the basin following the unsuccessful submission of the Tisza DESWAT project proposal under the Danube Region Programme. The proposed project aimed to strengthen transboundary water resource management cooperation, support updates related to Significant Water Management Issues under the Integrated Tisza River Basin Management Plan, and develop adaptation measures addressing climate change impacts on water quantity and quality.

As the proposal was not resubmitted in 2025, the Tisza countries agreed to organise a brainstorming session in 2026 to discuss future priorities, possible project development, and financing opportunities for the Tisza Group.

The Danube Water Balance-NEXt project is also expected to support future Tisza activities, with the Tisza Basin selected as one of the project's pilot basins.

Prut River Basin

Cooperation in the Prut River Basin continued progressing in 2025 through the work of the Prut Expert Group (Prut EG).

At its meetings in 2025, the Prut EG agreed to focus its Work Programme on three main priorities: the development of an integrated River Basin Management Plan and Flood Risk Management Plan for the Prut River Basin, the improvement of coordinated transboundary monitoring activities, and sectoral dialogues related to agriculture and navigation.

Preparatory work for the future Prut River Basin Management Plan continued during the year through a stepwise approach beginning with screening procedures and gap analyses. Countries also began collecting relevant information and discussing organisational arrangements needed for drafting the plan.

The Prut EG additionally discussed measures to strengthen transboundary monitoring cooperation, including possible new monitoring stations and parameters. Ukraine and Moldova highlighted capacity-building and training needs related to monitoring activities and river basin management planning.

The work of the Prut EG also received support through the EU4Green Recovery East project, particularly under activities related to transboundary regional environmental cooperation led by UNECE. Continued cooperation between the project, participating countries, and the ICPDR Secretariat is expected to support the future activities of the Prut EG.

Cooperation with the Black Sea Commission

Cooperation between the ICPDR and the Black Sea Commission (BSC) continued throughout 2025 through regular data exchange, reporting activities, and strengthened cooperation on regional environmental initiatives.

Under the framework of the Black Sea Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (BSIMAP), annual data exchange between the ICPDR and the BSC continued through reporting on Danube pollution loads to the Black Sea. The load assessment data is based on regular monitoring carried out by Romania at the Reni monitoring station. In 2025, the BSC Permanent Secretariat submitted its annual summary report to the ICPDR, presenting selected data and assessments related to the condition of the north-western shelf of the Black Sea in 2024 based on information provided by Romania and Ukraine.

A major area of cooperation in 2025 focused on the Source-to-Sea (S2S) approach linking the Danube River Basin, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean region. Strengthening cooperation on this topic was identified as a priority under the Slovenian ICPDR Presidency, with activities carried out in cooperation with the Black Sea Commission and UNEP MAP/Barcelona Convention.

The ICPDR, BSC, and UNEP MAP continued discussions aimed at strengthening trilateral cooperation and promoting more integrated transboundary collaboration from source to sea. Several high-level events throughout 2025 supported this work, including activities connected to the UN Ocean Conference in Nice and the 10th Mediterranean Coast Week in Slovenia. These discussions focused on reducing pressures on coastal and marine ecosystems, improving climate resilience, and strengthening cooperation between river basin, coastal, and marine management frameworks.

The Source-to-Sea approach was also highlighted as an important tool for supporting integrated implementation of the Danube River Protection Convention, the Bucharest Convention, and the Barcelona Convention. Discussions throughout the year explored opportunities for stronger coordination, knowledge exchange, and future cooperation initiatives across the Danube, Black Sea, and Mediterranean regions.

The ICPDR and BSC additionally continued exchanges with international partners and funding organisations regarding future opportunities to further develop and support Source-to-Sea cooperation activities.

Regular Budget and Financial Contribution

Regular Budget for the Financial Year 2025

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 January to 31 December 2025.

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 2025

Contracting Party	Contribution in %	Contribution in EUR	Actual payment in EUR
Austria	8.22%	116,937.41	116,937.41
Bosnia & Herzegovina	4.90%	69,649.32	69,649.32
Bulgaria	8.22%	116,937.41	116,937.41
Croatia	8.22%	116,937.41	116,937.41
Czech Republic	8.22%	116,937.41	116,937.41
Germany	8.22%	116,937.41	116,937.41
Hungary	8.22%	116,937.41	116,937.41
Moldova	1.84%	26,160.14	0.00
Montenegro	3.65%	51,834.54	51,834.54
Romania	8.22%	116,937.41	116,937.41
Serbia	8.22%	116,937.41	116,937.41
Slovakia	8.22%	116,937.41	116,937.41
Slovenia	8.22%	116,937.41	116,937.41
Ukraine	4.90%	69,649.32	0.00
European Union	2.50%	35,555.58	35,555.58
Total	**100.00%**	**1,422,223.00**	**1,326,413.54**

Expenditure - Financial Year 2025

Budget Line	Approved Budget in EUR	Expenditure in EUR	Balance in EUR
1. Staff	1,009,142.00	975,120.59	34,021.41
2. Office Running	144,297.00	135,978.29	8,318.71
3. Public Participation, Communication and Outreach	93,500.00	88,913.96	4,586.04
4. Travel & Meetings	67,000.00	57,206.04	9,793.96
5. Services	108,284.00	105,535.45	2,748.55
Total	**1,422,223.00**	**1,362,754.33**	**59,468.67**

Contracting Parties & Heads of Delegation

Will be added.