



UNDP | GEF  
DANUBE  
REGIONAL  
PROJECT

DANUBE REGIONAL PROJECT  
WORKING FOR THE DANUBE AND  
ITS PEOPLE



# MORE THAN JUST A RIVER?

The Danube River, Europe's second longest, stretches 2,870 km from Germany's Black Forest to the Danube Delta and Black Sea. The Danube River Basin is Europe's second largest with an area of 801,463 km<sup>2</sup>. Now including the territories of 19 countries, it is the world's most international river basin – home to 81 million people with a variety of languages and histories.

Countless other rivers drain from the basin into the Danube River such as the Morava in the Czech Republic, Austria and Slovakia; the Tisza in Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine; the Sava in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro; and the Prut River in Romania, Moldova and Ukraine.

The basin shows a tremendous diversity of habitats and ecosystems through which rivers and streams flow, from glaciated mountain tops to forested valleys and wet lowlands. Many remain relatively untouched with species of outstanding ecological value. Many areas, including wetlands, also provide beneficial services such as flood protection and water purification.

Unfortunately, over the last 150 years, many of the basin's natural assets and functions were impacted by human activities. Some 80% of the Danube's wetlands and floodplains were lost. Pollution remains a serious problem for both the Danube Basin and Black Sea, especially from nutrients from agriculture, municipal wastewater (human waste and detergents) and industry.

Toxic substances are a key threat, made worse by mining accidents and floods. Navigation, hydropower dams, river channelling, gravel extraction, groundwater exploitation and climate change also pose key threats.





## THE BIG PICTURE

The Danube Regional Project (DRP) is part of the larger USD \$95 million 'GEF Strategic Partnership for Nutrient Reduction in the Danube/Black Sea Basin' approved in 2001. The Partnership targets assistance at 17 Danube and Black Sea countries to address trans-boundary concerns from nutrient pollution. One of GEF's largest and perhaps most ambitious water-related projects in the world, its long-term objective is for countries to take measures to reduce nutrients and hazardous substance pollution to levels necessary to permit Black Sea ecosystems to recover to 1960s conditions.

Its intermediate objective includes the implementation of urgent control measures to reduce nutrient discharges to the Black Sea to levels at or below those observed in 1997. The Partnership also aims to help prevent the renewed ecosystem deterioration that might occur with expected future economic improvement in Danube and Black Sea countries.

The Partnership includes three components. The first is the DRP. The second is the 'Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Regional Project' for the six Black Sea littoral countries. The third is the 'Investment Fund for Nutrient Reduction' implemented by the World Bank, geared to supporting single country investment projects for nutrient reduction as well as wetland and floodplain restoration.

Having cooperated in numerous joint efforts, the GEF Strategic Partnership, ICPDR, EC and Danube countries can take credit for recent demonstrable water quality and ecosystem improvements in the Danube and Black Sea ecosystems over the last decade.



## UNDP-GEF AND ITS PARTNERS

The Global Environment Facility (GEF), established in 1991, helps countries to work together, set priorities and implement joint actions. The Danube Basin was the first regional trans-boundary waters project funded by the GEF. Since 1991, GEF projects for the Danube have been implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). On December 1, 2001, the 'Danube Regional Project (DRP)' was launched.

### KEY PARTNERS ARE:

**Danube Countries:** In 1998, the 'Danube River Protection Convention', the major legal instrument for transboundary water management in the basin, came into force. Today, 13 countries (and the EU) are 'Contracting Parties' to the Convention: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine.

**Danube NGOs:** Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are significantly involved in Danube issues, from raising public awareness to lobbying for policy reform to carrying out field demonstration projects and public actions.

**European Union:** Environmental improvements in the Danube countries have been driven through the EU's environmental directives which all current and future EU Member States are obliged to fulfil. The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) aims to achieve a "good status" of all European waters and ecosystems by 2015. It obliges every EU river basin to develop a 'River Basin Analysis' by 2004 followed by a 'River Basin Management Plan (RBMP)' by 2009.

**ICPDR:** The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) is a trans-national body, established in 1998, mandated by the Danube countries to implement the Danube River Protection Convention and EU WFD. It is the legally responsible institution for further development of Danube water management and regional cooperation.



## DANUBE REGIONAL PROJECT SOLUTIONS

The DRP's main goal is to strengthen the capacity of the ICPDR and Danube countries to cooperate in fulfilling their commitments to implement the Danube River Protection Convention and WFD. Reducing nutrient pollution is especially important given downstream problems in the Black Sea and the fact that nutrient pollution is one of four key issues that could prevent Danube countries from meeting the WFD requirements.

### KEY DRP ACTIVITIES HAVE SUPPORTED PARTNERS IN:

**Reducing nutrient pollution**, especially through the introduction and application of 'best agricultural practices' and demonstration projects on farms, advising governments on how to reduce the use of phosphates in laundry detergents, and providing guidance on how to best manage wetlands to absorb pollution.

**Enhancing public awareness and participation**, through assistance to ICPDR products and activities (e.g. Danube Watch Danube Day), strengthening the Danube Environment Forum NGO network, financial grants to NGOs, strategic communications and media outreach.

**Conserving wetlands**, including protection and restoration efforts, and through encouraging water managers to include wetlands in their planning activities.



#### **Developing a Danube River Basin Management Plan,**

including valuable contributions to the 'Danube River Basin Analysis 2004'. Importantly, a clear win-win situation has resulted after 15 years of interventions geared to improving integrated river basin management planning by UNDP-GEF, ICPDR, EU and the Danube countries.

**Municipal wastewater management,** especially through providing utility managers with decision-making tools for pricing and investing.

**Upgrading information systems,** especially the Trans-National Monitoring Network for water quality, the Accident Emergency Warning System, and the web-based information system (DANUBIS) for improving public awareness.



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Ultimately, UNDP-GEF efforts in the Danube-Black Sea area could become a progressive model for expanding public awareness of the threats from nutrient pollution worldwide.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT  
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