

# DEF Bulletin

The Danube Environmental Forum Newsletter

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ENVIRONMENTAL  
FORUM

DEF



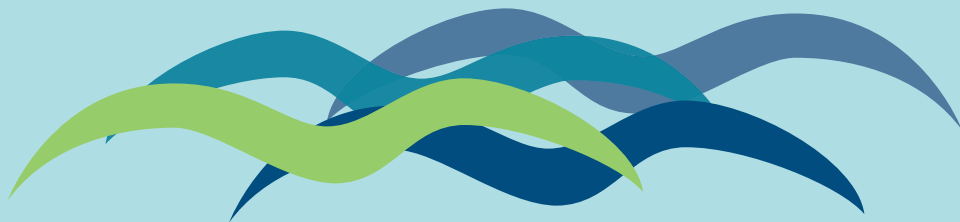
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*Danube Floodrisk Project*

*Danubepark*

*Sava day 2009*



## IMPRESSUM

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## NGOs Common Position towards Sustainable Navigation in the Danube River Basin

Stimulated by the EU's Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) programme and NAIADES Action Plan, which aim to promote inland navigation and have led to a significant push for more river regulation and hydromorphological alterations through additional infrastructure, the civil actors working in the field of water management from the Danube region set up a common policy in the name of nature protection.

During their last meeting in October 2009, the NGOs gathered together to elaborate a set of key recommendations which should be followed if navigation on the Danube is to become environmentally sustainable. Their vision of the Danube River is a lifeline where ecology and river users thrive hand-in-hand to provide life and ecosystem services, as well as to continue supporting the livelihoods of the people who live in the Danube basin.

Their common position is that inland navigation plays a key role in contributing to the European transport sector and is recognized as satisfying the specific social and economic needs of Danube states. They state that planned engineering projects for improving the conditions of inland navigation should only be implemented or continued under the following conditions:

- a) That they guarantee and renew functioning ecosystem processes (amount, quality and timing of water and sediment flows required by eco-region specific freshwater and estuarine ecosystems and human livelihoods to sustain themselves)
- b) Respect socio-economic needs of regional and local economies
- c) Prove that they meet all legal requirements, in particular compliance with the non-deterioration clause of the European Union's Water Framework Directive (hereafter WFD) as well as achievement of the environmental objectives of the Danube River Basin Management Plan and Natura 2000 sites
- d) Do not require new dams or barrages on waterways.

To accomplish these goals, the NGO community include measures which should be undertaken both on national and international levels.

These measures involve the development of a Master Plan for Sustainability of the Danube basin for the improvement of spatial planning for conserving and improving biodiversity, plus more resources to be allocated both in the Master Plan elaboration and implementation. They also recommend that a strategic Appropriate Assessment of impacts on Natura 2000 sites is elaborated. A strengthening of bottom-up and genuine public participation processes is crucial for the implementation of these aims. Recommendations of the Danube Commission in the navigation sector should also be revised in order to enable solutions best adapted to the local environment. Their recommendations should be discussed by all relevant stakeholders. According to the NGOs, the European Commission should establish and apply a fully operational system to reject projects that are likely to damage Natura 2000 sites or work against WFD objectives.

For all these aims to be achieved, the EU and national water legislation needs to be properly implemented and be at the centre of efforts to tackle transport challenges, climate change and threats caused by species invasion.

The NGOs involved include Birdlife International, Bund Naturschutz Bayern, the Croatian Society for Protection of Birds, Danube Environmental Forum, European Anglers Alliance, European Environmental Bureau, Green Action, Grünes Herz Europas, International Association for Danube Research, Österreichische Kuratorium für Fischerei & Gewässerschutz, Ribiska Zveza Slovenije, Transport & Environment, Verband Deutscher Sport-Fischer, VIRUS, and the World Wide Fund for Nature.

**The full position paper can be downloaded from:**

[http://assets.panda.org/downloads/ngo\\_danube\\_navigation\\_position\\_final\\_2.pdf](http://assets.panda.org/downloads/ngo_danube_navigation_position_final_2.pdf)

## Danube Floodrisk Project: Flood Risk Assessment for the Danube Floodplains

The Danube River is one of the most important natural axes in South-East Europe. It links most of the countries in the SEE area. Thus, the improvement and good examples of transnational cooperation of all countries regarding this river will be a brilliant signal for the whole region. This project has a far reaching strategic focus beyond risk management and could become a flagship project for the SEE Programme. It will improve safer sustainable conditions for the living environment and economy in the Danube floodplains. It integrates stakeholders and different acting groups and disciplines.

The Danube Floodrisk Project is being implemented under the INTERREG IVC programme of the EU, which provides funding for regional and local public authorities in all European regions, plus Switzerland and Norway, in order to exchange and transfer knowledge and good practice.

The project focuses on the most cost-effective measures for flood risk reduction: risk assessment, risk mapping, involvement of stakeholders, and risk reduction by adequate spatial planning. The project will bring together scientists, public servants, NGOs and stakeholders who will develop jointly a scalable system of flood risk maps for the Danube River floodplains. Transnational methodology and models will be defined and implemented for flood risk assessment and mapping. This will result in proposals for flood mitigation measures, adjustment of spatial development plans, assessment tools for economic development in flood plains and raised awareness of flood risk of stakeholders, politicians, planners and the public. Infrastructure at risk, such as industry, power stations and supply infrastructure, will be considered in the project.

The overall objective of the FLOODRISK project is to develop and produce high quality, stakeholder oriented flood risk maps for the transnational Danube River floodplains to provide adequate risk information for spatial planning and economic requests. Risk information is the basis for sustainable development along the Danube River. The key objective will only be reached by



intensive transnational cooperation and stakeholder integration. The goal is to link scientific progress in harmonization of approaches and data with practically oriented stakeholder and end user involvement. Vertical and horizontal cooperation are the two pillars of the project. The project's single objectives are:

- Development of joint mapping method for flood risk and harmonization of data sources.
- Production and provision of risk maps and risk information.
- Integration of relevant stakeholders and users on different levels into the definition and realization processes.
- Assessment of different economic aspects of land use in the river basin, such as spatial planning, recreation and agriculture, as well as energy supply or health services.
- Linkage of flood risk mapping and provision of maps as a basis for planning, e.g. within the EU Floods Directive.
- Development and distribution of exemplary procedures within the Danube countries and beyond.
- Implementation of the EU Directives, including WFD and Floods Directive, providing feedback based on the experiences of the project cooperation by using the platform of the ICPDR Flood Protection Expert Group.

The main envisaged results are:

- Harmonized data and methods (geographic data, hydraulic models, etc.), one transnational adjusted digital terrain model.
- Joint categories, checklist for all risk mapping actions in the Danube countries.
- Consultation of experts, stakeholders, and decision makers.
- Flood risk and hazard maps atlas, DVD + Internet posted.
- Innovative, cost-efficient risk oriented risk management, integrating aspects such as



## Programme co-funded by the EUROPEAN UNION

economy, climate change, nature development, spatial planning, urban development, and agriculture.

- Assessment of risk situation for power supply stations and nuclear power stations, as well as for other important infrastructure in risk areas.
- Eight regional test cases to reflect the approaches and to support the dissemination process.

19 institutions all along the Danube countries, central public bodies, universities, research institutes and operational agencies, NGOs are involved in the project. The lead partner, the Ministry of Environment, Romania, and all project partners are committed to use top international expertise not only to achieve the technical objectives of the project, but to serve as an example of synergy and cooperation between countries and institutions.

DEF will contribute to the project's implementation, taking part in communication and harmonization activities together with other partners. DEF is the responsible partner for stakeholder involvement and end user integration. Risk maps are produced for different uses, including spatial planning and water management. For the elaboration and implementation of risk information and to ensure risk adaption, it is important to involve the regional/local stakeholders in the process of the map development. It is necessary to identify the end users and to integrate them in the process. Regional/local water management

experts need to be involved from the beginning of the project. The products will be catalogues of demands, discussion of content, and the reflection of the mapping actions. Guidance and advice will be given, including the needs of the stakeholders/end users as an input for harmonization and mapping. The maps will be directly accessible for the public. As stakeholder oriented products, they will be used for territorial planning and for definition of the infrastructure and enterprise development conditions in the Danube floodplains. The activities included in the Danube Floodrisk Project started in mid-2009 and are planned to end by late 2012.

For further information regarding DEF participation, contact the DEF Secretariat at [def@baja.hu](mailto:def@baja.hu)

### DEF member activities in the Waste Management area

The project **BALKWASTE** is a LIFE – Environment project (LIFE 07 ENV/RO/000686) aiming to promote sustainable waste management planning in the Balkan region and to develop an integrated decision tool in the Balkan Region.

#### Project Partners:

REPA - AGEN IA REGIONAL PENTRU, PROTEC IA MEDIULUI BAC U

National Technical University of Athens, (School of Chemical Engineering), TUC - Technical University of Crete, Electronic and Computer Engineering Department, EUROCONSULTANTS S.A., CSDCS - Club "Sustainable Development, of Civil Society" – a DEF-member, EFCon - SC European Focus Consulting SRL, and SUROVINA družba za predelavo odpadkov

This project's aims are to promote the dissemination of knowledge deriving from the implementation of the EU waste strategy and policy in Member states to the whole Balkan Region, using Romania and Bulgaria as case studies for the implementation of integrated waste management planning. Beneficiaries from four Balkan Countries (Greece, Bulgaria, Slovenia,

Romania) will cooperate in order to develop decision support tools that will incorporate EU policies on waste and recycling and can be easily implemented by competent authorities. The project covers a period of three years and its main objectives include:

- Aiding accession countries (Romania and Bulgaria) to incorporate and implement EU waste management and natural resources protection policy
- Establishment of a waste network for knowledge exchange within the Balkan Region
- Establishment of monitoring procedure regarding waste management efficiency and Infrastructures
- Provision of technical support to local entities that are responsible for waste management planning and implementation
- Demonstration of innovative decision support tools
- Increase awareness of waste management aspects in the Balkan region
- Promote collaboration among relevant stakeholders within the Balkan Region
- Ensure the sustainable character of a waste management monitoring procedure and its future expansion
- Supplement officially established EU monitoring procedures

The adoption of sustainable practices in solid waste management is an important step towards environmental protection and conservation of natural resources. The program aims to record the current solid waste management practices



in Greece, Romania, Slovenia, and Bulgaria and to promote information exchange between those countries. The long term target of the project is to create an information exchange network that will continue to operate after the completion of the project and will evaluate progress in the waste management sector through the use of indicators.

The project tasks are summarized below:

- Analysis of the current status and legislative framework regarding solid waste. Data will be collected and analyzed at a national level and regional level and waste management practices, together with the corresponding statutes, will be recorded.
- Identification of two case study regions in Romania and Bulgaria. The infrastructure and the waste management status of those regions will be assessed. Development of a database for municipal waste treatment technologies
- Examination of specifications for sustainable waste management planning and development of guidelines for the evaluation of alternative waste management scenarios. Development of criteria for the assessment of treatment technologies.
- Development of analytical tools for evaluation of alternative management options. The tools will be expanded in order to be able to evaluate alternative scenarios. Following that, the tools will be distributed to all public and private stakeholders.
- Identification of MSW composition in the case study areas. Based on data from the MSW composition analysis and information from previous actions, the software model will be implemented in the selected regions. All potential funding options for the selected plan will be investigated.
- A data base containing all relevant stakeholders in terms of waste management will be created.

Furthermore, a monitoring platform for the evaluation of waste management performance in the Balkan Countries will be created.

Lucia Ilieva - CSDCS

## CSDCS IS A MOBILITY MANAGEMENT NETWORK INITIATOR FOR BULGARIA

The Green Paper on Urban Mobility outlined the need to address congestion and its negative impact on towns and cities. Mobility Management promotes sustainable transport by changing attitudes and behaviour. At its core are inexpensive “soft” measures that have a high benefit-cost ratio, enhancing or reducing the need for investment in infrastructure (such as new tram lines, roads, and cycle tracks). It enables local/regional authorities to develop tailor-made mobility measures. Mobility Management measures are known to reduce car travel by between 5% and 25%.

Mobility management is not a part of mainstream policy in most EU Member States. Key decision-makers may not know about it or may doubt its effectiveness because it is a relatively new concept.

The project EPOMM-PLUS aims to achieve a quantum leap in the use of mobility management in Europe. It establishes EPOMM (the European Platform on Mobility Management) as THE authority and THE networking instrument for the promotion of mobility management in the EU, thus strengthening EU cooperation and dissemination in this field.

EPOMM is an EU network of Ministries or appointed agencies responsible for mobility management. EPOMM has been successful in part, but its dissemination work is restricted by lack of resources. The overall aim is for all EU27 Member States to become EPOMM members.

EPOMM-PLUS will address this by:

- a) transferring existing good practice (often developed with EU funding) and
- b) supporting existing local pioneers by developing national networks.

EPOMM-PLUS targets 3 groups of Member States

1. Group 1: 6 EPOMM member countries (UK; NL; ES, FR, AT, SE)  
Group 2: 4 other countries (BE; IT; DE; FI) with some mobility management activity where EPOMM-PLUS will help develop a national network
2. Group 3: 10 States with minimal experience of mobility management. Many are

New Member States now experiencing high growth in car ownership. EU Structural Funds investment in infrastructure could accelerate this trend if alternative measures such as mobility management are not introduced in parallel

Group 1 is represented by the existing EPOMM National Focal Points, Groups 2 & 3 by Network Initiators, organisations with an overview over relevant actions in their country and the capacity to link with EPOMM-PLUS activities

Thus EPOMM-PLUS addresses energy-efficient transport by preparing the ground for more effective implementation of EU policies. It will contribute to extending and widening the potential range of market players and accelerate the take-up and transfer of best practices.

The objectives of this ambitious project are:

1. Institutionalisation: Create 17 national networks (all partner countries but UK, NL, FR) and enrol the relevant national ministry to become an EPOMM member
2. Implementation: Initiate a large number of Mobility Management projects
3. Spread: make EPOMM multi-lingual
4. Transfer good practice between countries; from EU-projects to national levels
5. Impact: Extend the influence of EPOMM into countries where Mobility Management is under-recognised

EPOMM-PLUS exploits the well established tools of EPOMM by making them more “networked” and extending their quality, reach and audience. In a five month start-up phase, inventories, work plans and an action plan will be developed. In the two year main phase, an EU network structure will be built up.

The expected results are:

- At least 21 EPOMM members by end-project
- At least 21 national networks
- 61 national and European workshops held
- 8,000 subscribers to EPOMM e-news
- 18 language versions of EPOMM website portals
- At least triple monthly number of visits on EPOMM website (currently about 110,000)
- Mobility Management projects launched in countries as a result of EPOMM-PLUS:



- increase of 10% in mature countries, 50% increase in others
- 12 successful transfers of knowledge/experience of energy-efficient transport to new players, from country to country, from National Focal Points workshops: 2 x 6 workshops, with knock-on affecting estimated minimum 240,000 people
- 20 good practice transfers from EU-projects to a national level: affecting estimated minimum 400,000 people
- 400 updated case studies on the website (minimum 10 per partner country).

Lucia Ilieva - CSDCS

### **Past and Present Achievements of the Eco Counselling Centre Galati, (ECCG), Romania DEF NFP Romania**

This year, ECCG celebrated 13 years of existence out of which the past ten years were also dedicated to the establishment and development of the Danube Environmental Forum.

Such intense activity was made possible thanks to the dedication of ECCG staff members and volunteers but also to the funding, mostly provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environment of Luxembourg, to which several other grants have been added through the years.

The infrastructure, knowledge, and expertise in developing programmes and projects built up in the past 13 years have proven a useful and supportive asset to all those who wanted to get things changed from an environmental perspective, be it an administrative body, the public at large, NGOs, business sector, or schools. Defying many challenges and constraints, ECCG has successfully

- maintained itself as an *independent, non political, and non-profit organization*
- purchased, repaired and self-sustained its own *environmental-friendly Headquarters*
- implemented more than 50 *environment-related projects,*

- initiated *pilot projects* including rural sustainable development programme, wastes, and wastewater treatment management, best agricultural practices, cross border cooperation.
- Helped establish, develop and strengthen the environmental *NGO community and networks* in Romania, the Central Eastern Region, and the Danube River basin, and become part of the decision making process within the ICPDR and EC structures.

Also,

- Developed full *membership in international and European NGO networks* such as Eco Counselling Europe (ECE); Danube Environmental Forum (DEF); Black Sea NGO Network (BSNN); European Environment Bureau (EEB); ICLEI- Europe Water network; and Global Water Partnership for CEE countries

And, *cooperation and partnerships* with

- the Umweltberatung Offices in Luxembourg and Austria, Global 2000, Austria; Peace Corps Association USA, Romania; Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe of (REC offices from Szentendre-Hungary, Bucharest-Romania, Cahul-Rep. Moldova); WWF International (Danube-Carpathian Programme, Vienna and Bucharest offices); the Institute Eco Conseil, Namur, Belgium; Friends of the Earth Europe, etc.
- Involvement in the 1998-1999 EU-led *Danube Pollution Reduction Programme* and the UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project in the frame provided by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR, and also, EU New NGO Forum Project (2006-2008), under the co-ordination of the EEB (European Environmental Bureau).
- Concurrently, ECCG has been a DEF Observer to the ICPDR, also DEF Speaker for Lower Danube area in 1999-2008, and DEF representative in the ICPDR Expert Groups, ECCG representatives developed lobbying activities for protection of the Danube River Basin from the navigation prospective.
- Developed databases of NGO's, associa-

tions, businesses and *individuals in Romania interested in Danube and Prut Rivers-related issues.*

All the projects implemented, partnerships, and cooperation have helped ECCG to contribute to making the voice of the Romanian and international environmental non-governmental sector more prominent and more influential.

**Petruta Moisi, president of ECCG**

Board member of the Danube Environmental Forum (DEF)  
DEF Representative to ICPDR Public Participation Expert Group

## The Celebration of Drava Day in Koprivnica - 2009

On 17 September 2009, in Barcs, Hungary, the governments of Croatia and Hungary signed a joint agreement establishing the Croatian - Hungarian transfrontier Bio-reserve Mura - Drava - Danube, that will protect common biodiversity along these 3 rivers. This will be the biggest protected river-area in Europe.

The World Wildlife Fund, recognizing the global significance of this joint agreement, celebrates the leading role of the governments of the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Hungary, and bestowed the award "Waters for the Living Planet", by Lifeng Li, the director of WWF's global freshwater program.

The value of the River Drava was recognised in recent years as a heritage important to local, regional and European relations as a reminder of a unique river network that flows into the Black Sea.

The riparian forests, the river islands, sandbanks, and wetlands are essential for the flora and fauna of this area.

This protected area covers 500 km of the watershed of these 3 rivers and about 630,000 acres of unique natural and cultural landscape. The area was protected through the efforts of domestic and international NGOs (including EuroNatur, WWF, The Green Action, The Drava League, The Croatian Society for Protection of Birds and

Nature, The Biological Society Drava - Virovitica, The Ecological Society Koprivnica, The Ecological NGO Franjo Koščec Varaždin, The Green Osijek and others), and is now waiting to be confirmed by UNESCO so that it will become an official Biosphere Reserve during 2010.

This area is home to the largest nesting white-tailed eagle in Europe and other endangered species including the little tern, black stork, otter, and sturgeon. This is also a very important area for resting and overwintering for more than 250,000 marshland birds every year.

The goal of the NGO members of The Drava League on this year's Drava Day in Koprivnica was to answer the questions, what to do now, when the joint agreement of the Biosphere Reserve Mura - Drava - Danube is signed? What is the role of the institutions and of the NGOs? What does it mean on the level of government and everyday life?

Additional commitment of all stakeholders is necessary so that this agreement will be promoted, and that protection and development programs on local and regional level are established. The conference also spoke of the current achievements of some of the members of The Drava League, protection of the river area in the category Natura 2000, current and future cooperation with the State authority for Natural protection, our common intentions, and what each of the members intend to do in its own County in order to ensure the protection and preservation of this extraordinary landscape.

On this occasion the NGO Franjo Koščec presented the results of the work of the Environmental Regional Volunteer Centre of North-western Croatia, which started its operations in summer 2008.

**Dora Radosavljevi , NGO president**

## DANUBEPARKS - The Danube River Network of Protected Areas

In June 2009, the Danube River Network of Protected Areas was established at the signing of the Declaration of Vienna. As a first step the partnership expands cooperation, coordination, consultation, and strengthens links between the national administrations of protected areas of Danube riparian countries. These aim to enhance nature conservation and wise management of natural and cultural heritage in and beyond the boundaries of Protected Areas along the Danube River.

### From Idea to Reality

Based on existing co-operation, representatives of Protected Areas launched an appeal for the establishment of a Danube River Network of Protected Areas as a platform for continuous transnational co-operation (Declaration of Tulcea, April 2007). Permanent collaboration and regular meetings or workshops should enhance the transboundary cooperation in the near future. The development and realization of joint programs and international projects is the priority aim for the near future. Cultural festivals, ceremonies and exchange programs (of volunteers) are important steps to help us reach our long-term goals.



DANUBEPARKS – a transnational project in the ETC-programme for Southeast Europe

Based on existing partnerships among Protected Areas along the Danube River and in accordance with the appeal launched by the “Declaration of Tulcea” in April 2007, the transnational project DANUBEPARKS has been developed.

For the first step the partnership includes 12 Protected Areas from eight Danube countries (Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania). Additional partners will be invited in the future. All Project Partners work on site and are leading actors in the management of natural heritage, with

full political support from relevant ministries underlined by the numerous ministries joining DANUBEPARKS as observer partners.

In the project period between March 2009 and February 2012, the ETC-SEE project DANUBEPARKS is to invest a project budget of 2.7 million € for the conservation and sustainable development of the natural heritage of the Danube river.

The transnational cooperation focuses on the following agenda:

#### 1. River Morphology & Revitalization

Plans to make the Danube a major transport corridor under EU Trans-European Transport (TEN-T) guidelines are putting the river natural heritage at risk. Pilot projects have shown high potential for river revitalisation compatible with navigation and flood protection.

#### 2. Floodplain Management & Habitat Network

The Protected Areas represent a relevant number of all sites along the Danube river which enables the “Danube River Network of Protected Areas” to work on habitat networks on a transnational scale. Based on joint guidelines, management plans for selected areas will be elaborated. Pilot projects of transnational relevance in managing and restoring floodplains and improving habitat connectivity will be implemented.

#### 3. Conservation of Danube flagship species

Conservation programs launched by DANUBEPARKS focus on selected flagship species (White-tailed Eagle and Danube Sturgeons). Although several Protected Areas are active in the conservation of these species, they cannot be protected by a single Protected Area. All conservation measures will be accompanied by activities for raising public awareness.

#### 4. Monitoring & NATURA 2000

NATURA 2000 is a European network of protected habitats. Transnational cooperation is essential for its implementation. All project partners represent NATURA 2000 sites, in total covering a high number and a relevant area of all sites along the Danube river. Based on know-how transfer among all partners, DANUBEPARKS aims to create joint monitoring concepts. Danube-wide monitoring of selected bird species, establishment of a transnational fish database, and monitoring



activities on selected mammal species will be implemented. The findings of the monitoring are likely to play an important role in raising public awareness and will be presented by various media.

#### 5. Danube Nature Tourism

Protected Areas are becoming active players in the sustainable development of regions. One key factor in this process is the development of nature tourism involving a wide range of partners and stakeholders. Nature tourism is a key element to fulfill the educational mission of Protected Areas as well as an essential tool to raise public awareness and gain acceptance for conservation. It can be an important source of income for the region, especially because most Protected Areas are located in less developed areas. DANUBEPARKS aims to develop a common brand of Danube nature tourism based on the beauty and value of Danube nature, tradition and culture.

For detailed info see [www.danubeparks.org](http://www.danubeparks.org).

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**EUROPEAN UNION**

## The Třebůvka Valley

The Třebůvka River flows on the boundary between the Pardubice and Olomouc districts of the Czech Republic. It is an important right-hand tributary of the Morava River. Together with its floodplain, is a refuge for many life forms which are declared in the list of endangered or critically endangered species, including European Beaver *Castor fiber*, Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis* and European Tree Frog *Hyla arborea*. The Snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis* and Martagon Lily *Lilium martagon* are worthy representatives of the flora. This beautiful piece of Moravian nature is also a relaxing place for people. The most valuable part is between the towns of Vranová Lhota and Loštice. Every year, floods are common in the floodplain. This ecosystem works very well and performs an important flood protection function.

Unfavorable human interventions could lead to the degradation of this ecosystem. The valley of the Třebůvka River has been threatened by water management plans for a long time. It contains big reservoirs, as well as the Danube-Oder-Elbe canal. These projects are maintained in the national planning policy, but negative impacts on the inhabitants and nature are evident. Several villages should be deleted from the plan. To prevent the devastation of the valley, the NGO "Údolí Třebůvky" (Třebůvka valley) was founded in 2008. It was established in Loštice and the members are local inhabitants and friends of the Třebůvka River. This NGO is also a member of the Union for the Morava River, the only DEF member in the Czech Republic. Údolí Třebůvky NGO participates in decision making processes, influences planning processes, informs and arranges events for the wider public, works with youth, commissions and collects expert papers, organizes petitions, and also publicizes information in the regional press. Several small projects have been recently organized for the benefit of local people and nature. The NGO web site is available at <http://www.udolitrebuky.cz>. This NGO cooperates with many organizations and institutions, for example, the Partnership Foundation,



Figure: Údolí Třebůvky NGO arranges a trip along the Třebůvka River twice a year.

the Ecological Law Service, Dam Stop Initiative, and Friends of the Earth Czech Republic. Let's hope that the Třebůvka River will be spared from megalomaniacal plans.

Svatava Šimková & Lukáš Krejčí

## Conservation of endangered bird species populations in natural habitats of the Danube inland delta

### Project LIFE07 NAT/SK/000707

In the past, the Danube inland delta was one of the largest and most diverse natural wetland complexes in Central Europe. Large parts of it have been destroyed during recent decades, and now the loss of habitats and their destruction continues as a result of outdated river regulations and poor area management. The decreasing habitat quality and human disturbance have led to a major decrease in populations of the typical floodplain bird species. Therefore, Slovak and Hungarian partners prepared a common international project for restoration of the natural habitats of endangered bird species.

The partnership was created by NGOs and water management authorities in both countries, which are active along the Danube floodplains. An inevitable part of project is a scientific approach to monitoring project effects carried out by the Comenius University Faculty of Natural Sciences in Bratislava.

The project area is spread along both banks of the Danube river from Bratislava to Štúrovo. One part of the area is in Slovakia, the Dunajskéľuhys special protected area, and the other is in Hungary, the Szigetköz special protected area.

The Slovak part of the project area is in the floodplain of the Danube river and in its close vicinity, along the main river and its rich network of branches. The area starts at Devín and spreads to the estuary of Ipe .

The Hungarian part of the project area is formed by large floodplain of the Danube river between the villages of Rajka and Göny , Moson Danube and scattered well-preserved wetlands within the Szigetköz.

The project's general objective is to improve the conservation status of the floodplain bird spe-

cies that are protected in SPA Dunajskéľuhý and SPA Szigetköz, including Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Garganey *Anas querquedula*, Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*, Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*, and Common Redshank *Tringa tetanus*.

For this purpose we will restore the most threatened natural habitats of the target bird species by various measures. Plans which will be implemented in the years 2009 – 2013 include:

1. Restoration of selected wetlands, dried-up and disturbed river branches and oxbows
2. Restoration of river branch connectivity, water regimes and flowing water conditions
3. Landlease or purchase and the introduction of appropriate habitat management
4. Elimination of fish migration barriers at two strategic points
5. Restoration of abandoned meadows as feeding and nesting bird habitats
6. Restoration of bird refuges and nesting areas by planting native tree species
7. Acquiring relevant scientific data on target species and their habitats
8. Awareness raising of key stakeholders and the public

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## **Sava Day 2009 with students of Technical Grammar and Veterinary Nursing School BIC, Slovenia**

This year the pupils of project Barje and Healthy Schools participated in the fifth traditional activity in cooperation with the Municipality of Ljubljana, the Ministry of the Environment, and the Danube Ecological Forum. The slogan of Sava Day was "We love our river!"

We are all familiar with the Sava river and our nearest river, the Ljubljanica, so we decided that this year on Sava Day we would go on a field trip and visit the place where the waters of both rivers meet and flow together towards new people and new countries.

We gathered at the mouth of the Ljubljanica river flowing into the Sava river on International Sava Day on the 1st of June, 2009.

We decided to throw a message in a bottle into the Sava river in the hope that it will be found and read by someone who also loves our river. Our bottle was not an actual bottle; we used natural materials like wood instead so as not to pollute the river. Inside was our message of good will. It is meant for the people that our river visits after leaving our country. From then on, the river belongs to them, and becomes the common property and responsibility of everyone who lives alongside it.

Everybody, please, think of this! You should not throw anything into the river that you yourself wouldn't want to see in it. Everything that ends up in the water is taken by the river to the people and countries that live further downstream.

Let the river take the message in the bottle far, with kind regards and best wishes for our river. We hope that somebody finds it and perhaps will send us an answer.

*This message in a bottle was thrown into the Sava river by BIC LJUBLJANA, students of Technical Grammar and Veterinary Nursing School, in the hope that it will be found and read by someone who loves our river.*

***If you find this letter, please send a reply.***

***We are looking forward to hearing from you.***





Sava Osole

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## Danube Delta wetlands destruction continues

### DDT, poaching and moral crisis

One of the most significant threats to biodiversity in South Eastern Europe is the lasting destruction of wetlands in the Danube Delta, both in Ukraine and Romania. The Danube Delta is one of the largest wetlands complexes in the world – over 5800 km<sup>2</sup> - and has been a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve since the 1990s.

Romania's struggling transitional economy has created pressures to continue to exploit the country's natural resources and sacrifice the environment. Particularly in the Danube Delta, this pattern is clearly counterproductive. The rich environmental resources it possesses are not only economically valuable and important in themselves (EUR 15 to 20 million/year from fishing and tourism), but their preservation could also yield further economic benefits in protect-

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ing the Black Sea and, in the long run, restoring Danube Delta fisheries.

The Danube Delta still possesses vast biodiversity and is the nursery for an important fishery, but it is threatened by industrial and agricultural development, from polders resisting all strategies and action plans of wetland restoration, and high levels of pollution from Europe's most polluted major rivers and, in some cases, by unlawful acts such as poaching using electricity and chemical substances, and sometimes dumping of toxic and hazardous substances. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of October we were boating from Uzli lake into Isa lake, and near the passage channel a strong smell of DDT surrounded us. We looked around but there was no sign of barrels or other floating objects. We all recognized the stench because DDT was produced in Romania in large quantities in the 1970s and 80s, and under the code name "lindan", C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub>Cl<sub>6</sub> was produced here. Probably somebody wanted to get rid of their old stock.



The weird and scary part of the story is that after eight days, when we passed again on that channel while returning to Murighiol, the DDT smell was exactly the same as on the first day. I don't want to jump to any conclusions; I just want to inform the public with the aim of raising awareness on the matter. DDT kills more than insects.

After 2000, electro-fishing became a popular sport in the Danube Delta. At that time, it was practiced only during the night by local village people, using heavy car batteries, a transformer, and a controller. Captures included many fish species, and catfish was the big prize, as 10 to 20 kg specimens were caught, along with many





others around 400-500 grams. Carp was not a victim at the time, I guess because of its thick and solid scales.

If by misfortune, coincidence, or mistake, the patrol boats of the Danube Delta Administration of the Biosphere Reserve were present in the area, the poachers had only to drop overboard their batteries, and they were pretty much OK; eventually they had to explain why they were fishing at night, and what they were going to do with the fish.

Today, modern technology plays its part; there are small, compact, lightweight car batteries, and more amps per battery, radio walkie-talkies with a range of 10 or 20 km, infrared binoculars, and now and then, Beretta or Winchester hunting

rifles or shotguns. The poor carp has no chance at all, like the rest of its fish brothers and sisters. Also, the watch boats no longer patrol at night. It is too risky and too much fuel spent for nothing. Of over 150 poachers caught in the act in the last few years, only a dozen or two faced the police and prosecutors, and only 2 were convicted by a judge for their criminal activities.

We are facing a global crisis, but also a moral one. We take care of other business now, not of that of nature. Nature knows how to wait, though. But for how long?

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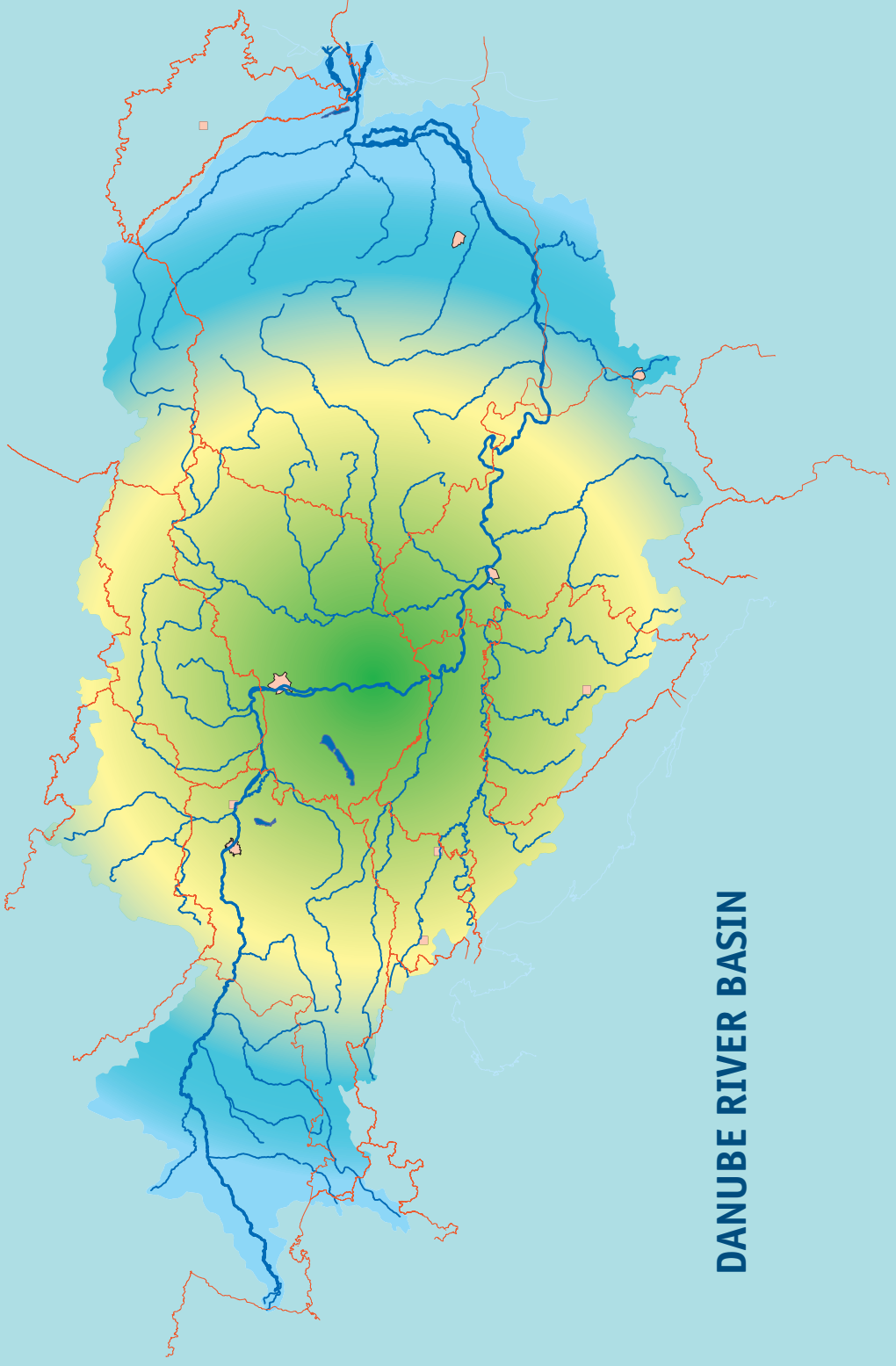
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