
Implementing Agency	United Nations Development Programme
Region	Eastern Europe
Focal Area	International Waters
Project Title	Developing the Danube River Basin Pollution Reduction Program
GEF Allocation	US\$3.9 million
Cofinancing	US\$3.6 million
Total Financing	US\$7.5 million
Dates	October 1996–September 1998
Environmental Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deteriorating water quality of Danube river and tributaries, due to wastewater and other pollution generated in thirteen-country river basin
Project Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop prioritized pollution reduction projects for cofinancing by national and international sources • Improve and develop policies for protection of river basin • Increase public awareness and participation in solving the Danube’s environmental problems

The waters of the Danube River Basin and its tributaries together make up a river-based ecosystem of great economic, social, and environmental value. The more than 2,800-kilometer river drains a basin of 817,000 square kilometers, containing all of Hungary, most of Austria, Croatia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia and significant portions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The river network supplies drinking water and supports agriculture, industry, fishing, tourism, recreation, power generation, and navigation. At the same time, it receives wastewater from a population of 85 million people in these thirteen countries.

Before the transition of Central and European countries to free-market economies began, countries of the region paid little attention to degradation of the environment. The river system transported considerable pollution across national borders and eventually into the Black Sea. This led to eutrophication of coastal waters, algae blooms, fish deaths, and economic losses to the tourism industry. The economic transition, including industrial and agricultural restructuring, has created opportunities to change policies and practices to benefit the environment and people’s quality of life, although developing the needed public awareness and environmental policies will still be challenging.

The main problems in the basin include: (a) high loads of nutrients and eutrophication, (b) contamination by hazardous substances, including oils, (c) microbiological contamination, (d) contamination by substances causing heterotrophic growth and oxygen depletion, and (e) competition for available water.

The Project Building on earlier efforts, such as the Danube Strategic Action Plan, this project was intended to stimulate sustainable institutional and financial arrangements for the effective environmental management of the Danube River Basin. The project’s immediate goal is to prepare activities to prevent and reduce pollution necessary to restore the Danube River Basin and protect the Black Sea environment. Prioritized pollution reduction projects, set within a strategic policy framework for the Danube and Black Sea basin, will be presented to national and international sources for cofinancing. The project’s objectives are to (a) complete the knowledge base for priority setting, (b) review policies for protecting the Danube Basin and Black Sea, (c)

increase public awareness and participation, and (d) develop financing for the pollution reduction program within the context of the Danube Strategic Action Plan.

- Activities**
- Update and prepare national reviews of the Danube system and economic impacts on it in each country
 - Analyze national action plans for existing and planned investments and work toward an agreed, basinwide analysis of priority environmental issues in the basin and their impacts on the Black Sea
 - Initiate review of the Danube Strategic Action Plan, and initiate development of an overall Black Sea approach to managing international waters, pollution reduction, and ecological rehabilitation
 - Issue newsletter on the river, supporting the Danube Environmental Forum and national NGO meetings
 - Establish a Danube network on the Internet, and update the Danube Information System
 - Provide small grants for community-based pollution reduction and awareness projects
 - Develop financial strategies for reducing pollution in each country
 - Prepare and propose projects on priority hotspots
 - Develop long-term mechanisms to provide financial support for the Danube River Basin.

- Benefits**
- Improve quality of water and ecosystems in the Danube river basin
 - Strengthen capacities of environmental NGOs
 - Improve international cooperation on sustainable management of the Danube and Black Sea.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a financial mechanism that provides grants and concessional funds to developing countries for projects and activities designed to protect the global environment. GEF resources address climate change, biological diversity, international waters, and depletion of the ozone layer. Activities concerning land degradation, primarily desertification and deforestation as they relate to the four focal areas, are also eligible for funding.

GEF is a joint venture of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Bank. These three agencies implement GEF projects.

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