

# PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

### PRODUCTS AND ACTIVITIES

#### THE DRP, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

A major component of the UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project (DRP) has been devoted to enhancing public participation and communications in the Danube River Basin. One main focus has been to strengthen **public input** into the implementation of the **Danube River Protection Convention** as well as the development of the **Danube River Basin Management Plan** and sub-basin plans – as required by the EU Water Framework Directive. Another focus has been to assist in reducing nutrient and toxic **pollution** in the Danube Basin and to the Black Sea. Finally, another has been to build the **capacities** of NGOs involved with water-related issues.

Activities have been based on **four pillars**:

1. Small Grants Programme for Danube NGOs
2. Enhancing access to information and public participation in environmental decision-making
3. Support for the Danube Environmental Forum (DEF)
4. Strategic communications

#### WHAT ARE THE PRODUCTS AND ACTIVITIES?

##### 1. SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME (SGP)

The Small Grants Programme (SGP) was the DRP's main vehicle for **engaging** local stakeholders to address environmental problems and challenges through NGO involvement. It also helped to build the **capacities** of NGOs in project management, implementation and communications.

Grants were distributed to NGOs in the Danube Basin through **two rounds**, each lasting approximately one year. **National Grants** were awarded to single NGOs acting on their own. **Regional Grants**, with larger amounts of funding relative to National Grants, were awarded to projects implemented by at least two NGOs working in at least two Danube countries and addressing transboundary issues. The **11 target countries** were Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

In total, for both grant rounds, **120 National Grants** and **10 Regional Grants** were distributed to NGOs. The main focus was the **reduction of nutrient** and **hazardous pollution** to Danube Basin waters. The distribution of grants is classified under a number of **themes** that are roughly the same as the overall theme set used by the DRP to organize its activities and sub-projects:

- > Agriculture
- > Wetlands
- > River basin management
- > Hazardous waste
- > Wastewater
- > Detergents and phosphates
- > Other (e.g. solid waste, general awareness raising, food industry)

*(Some of the above themes have a **separate DRP Information Sheet** that details some of the most successful projects that were awarded grants. Furthermore, separate and more detailed 'stories' have been written about many of these individual successful projects.)*

## **2. ENHANCING ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING**

The DRP supported a multi-year effort to build the **capacities** of governments, local communities and NGOs in the Danube River Basin for improved **public access** to water-related **information** and **public participation** in water management **decision-making**. The guidelines for this effort came from the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Aarhus Convention and other EU directives on access to information and public participation.

The project activity, called 'Enhancing Access to Information and Public Participation in Environmental Decision-making', was implemented in **five** Danube riparian **countries**: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Serbia. The experiences, lessons learned and best practice models developed in these countries will be of value for water management stakeholders throughout the entire Danube Basin.

The project developed a number of **outputs** including reports, manuals for government employees, information databases, training, study tours, information dissemination and public participation tools, and information brochures for citizens and NGOs. *(See separate DRP Information Sheet on this activity, and the REC website for more:*

[www.rec.org/REC/Programs/PublicParticipation/DanubeRiverBasin/](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/PublicParticipation/DanubeRiverBasin/))

## **3. SUPPORT FOR THE DANUBE ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM (DEF)**

Particular attention has been given to establishing and strengthening the capacities of the **Danube Environmental Forum (DEF)**, an umbrella organization of NGOs in the Danube River Basin. The DEF's mission is to protect the Danube River with its tributaries, their biodiversity and resources by enhancing cooperation among governments, NGOs, local people and stakeholders towards the sustainable use of natural ecosystems.

UNDP/GEF supported Danube NGO structures and specifically the DEF for the last 10 years. From the DRP, the DEF received support to further raise the capacities of the network and its members to resolve Danube water pollution issues. The DRP provided extensive support to build

and strengthen the DEF regional NGO network and to establish a Regional Secretariat to coordinate its widespread, multi-country activities and projects. The DEF now has 174 member organizations from 13 Danube countries.

DEF strengthening was linked with the DRP's other public participation and communications activities noted here. For example, many DEF NGOs received DRP grants and were able to participate in pilot projects for improving access to governmental information at the local level in five countries in southeast Europe. (*See separate DRP Information Sheet on this activity*)

#### **4. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

A consistent strategic approach to communications was used throughout the project which included the identification of communications goals, target audiences, main messages and delivery vehicles (i.e. communications products and activities).

Wheels were quickly set in motion to develop basic products for communicating what the DRP does such as a new visual identity and strap-line for the project, brochures, website and Powerpoint presentations. Activities also included the writing and submission of stories about the Danube and DRP for international environmental journals.

Target audiences of the DRP received significant communications support. For example, the ICPDR magazine 'Danube Watch' received financial support, technical help in redesigning its structure and numerous story submissions. International Danube Day and its associated international art competition, coordinated by the ICPDR, were supported, as were ICPDR publications. ICPDR staff also received capacity-building for strategic communications and media products.

The DEF received strategic communications support for planning and implementing local and international campaigns and projects, its visual identity and branding, media outreach and publication production. A select number of DRP sub-projects were also supported to develop and implement strategic communications, and effective products and activities that would reach target audiences in the best position to affect positive change.

#### **WEBSITE:**

See the 'Public Participation and Communications' theme on DRP website: [www.undp-drp.org/drp/themes\\_public-participation.html](http://www.undp-drp.org/drp/themes_public-participation.html)

# PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

### PRODUCTS AND ACTIVITIES

#### SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME

#### ABOUT THE SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME (SGP)

The Small Grants Programme (SGP) was the UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project's (DRP) main vehicle for **engaging** local stakeholders and the public to address regional environmental problems and challenges through NGO involvement. It also helped to build the **capacities** of NGOs in project management, implementation and communications.

Grants were distributed to NGOs in the Danube River Basin through **two rounds**, each lasting approximately one year. **National Grants** were awarded to single NGOs acting on their own. **Regional Grants**, with larger amounts of funding relative to National Grants, were awarded to projects implemented by at least two NGOs working in at least two Danube countries and addressing transboundary issues. The **11 target countries** were Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

The SGP was **administered** by the **Regional Environmental Center (REC)**, an international organization with its headquarters in Szentendre, Hungary and Country Offices in each of the 11 countries targeted by the SGP.

#### SELECTION AND MONITORING

Concise and compelling **announcements** of the grant competitions were publicized in international and national media that were known to effectively reach NGO readers. Many NGOs responded to each call with project concepts which were screened by **selection panels**. National projects were screened and selected by **national selection panels**.

Regional projects were screened by an **international panel** that initially invited a short-list of NGOs to prepare more detailed proposals for submission. Short-listed regional grantees were then **further** assisted financially and technically in project **proposal development**, after which five regional grants were selected in each round.

In total, for both grant rounds, **120 National Grants** and **10 Regional Grants** were distributed to NGOs in **11 countries** in the Danube Basin. Once launched, the implementation

of projects was monitored and evaluated by the REC and DRP through regular reporting and site visits. The best practices of NGO projects were highlighted in stories submitted to both national and international media.

## KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED

It was strategically decided that the **key issues** addressed by the NGOs (the 'scope' of the SGP) should be the same as the key issues addressed by the overall DRP.

As a result, the main focus was on the **reduction** of **nutrient** and **hazardous pollution** to Danube Basin waters -- from the Danube River itself to its many tributaries. This could be through direct reductions in pollution (i.e. monitoring shows that local pollution levels decreased during the time of the project) or through indirect means, which meant that pollution reductions are expected as a result some time in the future (e.g. through raising the awareness of local residents or reforming local pollution prevention policies).

Overall, the distribution of grants is classified under a number of **themes** that contribute to pollution reduction. This set of themes, roughly the same as the overall set used by the DRP to organize all of its activities and sub-projects, is:

- > Agriculture (reducing pollution from agricultural sources)
- > Wetlands (protecting and restoring wetlands to retain and reduce pollution)
- > River basin management (strengthening public participation and institutional frameworks that support it)
- > Hazardous waste (for example, from industry or illegal waste dumps)
- > Wastewater (for example, municipal and rural wastewater, or reducing phosphates used in laundry detergents)
- > Other (e.g. solid waste, general awareness raising, food industry)

*(Some of the above themes have a **separate DRP Information Sheet** that details some of the most successful projects that were awarded grants. Furthermore, separate and more detailed 'stories' have been written about many of these individual successful projects.)*

## EXAMPLES AND HIGHLIGHTS

### THE FIRST ROUND OF GRANTS

The problem targeted most through the first round of DRP **national grants** was pollution generated by agricultural and municipal activities. Several projects involved actual field work with direct environmental results. Activities ranged from the removal of illegal dumps to the reforestation of riverbanks. NGOs built artificial wetlands that can function as wastewater treatment areas, promoted organic farming methods, helped improve nature reserves, cleaned up polluted ponds and created three new protected areas. They also improved bird habitats, reduced silt in water ways, and helped purify the water in reservoirs. Key successes included the protection of Slovakian wetlands, improved trans-boundary water protection between Moldova and Ukraine and raising awareness among 200,000 residents in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina,

**Regional projects** brought together 15 NGOs from the Danube Basin. Approaches ranged from broad promotional efforts to targeted preventive work such as popularizing environmentally friendly technologies and campaigning against the construction of a river canal. A range of stakeholders were targeted including farmers, public authorities, school children, enterprises and designers. NGO activities consisted of awareness raising, education, organizing meetings and network building. The work effected a change in attitudes and behavior among key players in the river basin, and therefore had an indirect effect on the long-term reduction of nutrients and toxics. Other actions, including the rehabilitation of wetlands, establishment of composting facilities and the cleaning up and fortification of river banks, more directly reduced nutrient and toxic pollution. The grants pushed Danube pollution issues onto the agenda of communities and brought stakeholders to the table where they could organize and press for solutions to problems with their local authorities.

## THE SECOND ROUND OF GRANTS

At the **national level**, 57 projects were supported. Examples included: reducing pollution from Danube tributaries such as the Sava, Drina, Ipoly, Prut, Zitova and Maramures rivers; campaigning for and promoting organic agriculture in Vukovar, Croatia, the Morava River Basin in the Czech Republic, Subotica, Serbia and Montenegro, and Moldova; promoting best agricultural practices to eliminate nutrients and toxics in Serbia and Montenegro, Hungary and Croatia; promoting environmentally-friendly detergents in the Czech Republic and Slovenia; and implementing new wastewater cleaning systems for households and farms in Slovenia.

Five **regional** multi-country projects included building bridges between stakeholders near the Hernad River in Hungary and the Sebes-Koros rivers in Romania. NGOs sought to increase public participation in managing the Sava River Basin and to promote best agricultural practices (BAPs) to reduce pollution from farming in Lower Danube countries. And the advantages of re-usable diapers and environmentally-friendly detergents were communicated in Slovenia and Croatia.

(To find out more, see the two brochures produced by the REC for the first round national and regional grants. Brochures for round 2 are now in development.)

### WEBSITE:

See the 'Public Participation and Communications' theme on DRP website: [www.undp-drp.org/drp/themes\\_public-participation.html](http://www.undp-drp.org/drp/themes_public-participation.html).



**FOLLOW THE LEADER:** Grants supported several model fields demonstrating organic farming methods.

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

**Dirty detergent alert**

The Bosnian capital of 400,000 dumps all of its wastewater, untreated, directly into rivers that ultimately drain into the sea at the Danube Delta. One of the main problems is that on the Bosnian market, it is possible to find detergents with more than 30 percent phosphorous, a nutrient that feeds river-killing algae.

With the help of a USD 7,885 Danube Regional Project national grant, the green organisation Ekotim raised public awareness about detergents with a project called “No FOSFOS.” It began with the sampling of water from communal wastewater at seven points on the River Miljacka. The samples were then tested at no charge by the Institute for Hydromechanics, a project partner. Research results were presented in a publicity campaign that reached an estimated 200,000 people. In cooperation with another project partner, “Student eFM Radio,” Ekotim did a promotional spot on phosphorous-free detergents that reached more than 150,000 listeners. Other publicity efforts included the distribution of 9,000 postcards in the city, 20,000 leaflets and brochures in workshops in schools, posters placed in public toilets and print articles. Ekotim devised “green” and “black” lists of detergents, and put them in leaflets and on a project website.

Test results of samples from the River Miljacka showed that the first part of project met with success. The amount of phosphorous dumped into the river was reduced from 310 to 245 kg per day.

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**SLOVAKIA**

**Consciousness of streams**

With the help of a USD 7,650 grant, the green organisation Tatry conducted a sweeping campaign of public information and environmental restoration to improve water quality in area streams and rivers. As one of the main aims was to involve teachers and students, Tatry devised several initiatives targeting schools. The group created an exhibition called “Streams are not Drains,” and showed it to 5,000 students in 13 communities. An artistic competition following the theme “Living and Dead Water” involved 357 participants in 24 different schools and an “adopt-a-stream” programme resulted in certificates being awarded to four schools.

Tatry took several measures targeting the general public. Among these, the group held a seminar entitled “The River as a Living Organism” 16 times, reaching a total of 402 participants. An autumn lecture cycle involving nine talks was attended by 148 people. Several print materials were published and distributed, including brochures on drinking

water, willow trees and river bank protection; a methodological pamphlet called “The River as a Living Organism;” a poster; a leaflet; and various postcards. Materials were distributed to approximately 800 schools and self-governments among other recipients.

Direct environmental restoration included 240 hours of voluntary work surveying for illegal dumps and invasive plants in the countryside and fund raising for land revitalisation.

Tatry partnered with a water company in the Vah river basin to eradicate illegal dumps near streams in the Liptov region. One campaign enlisted 710 volunteers who worked a total of 5,600 man-hours to collect 1,400 sacks of trash.

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**BULGARIA**

**Investments in banks**

Although most of the national grants projects focused on awareness raising, some included direct environmental action. An initiative carried out by the NGO Green Balkans near the Danube port of Russe involved direct floodplain restoration, helping to improve the river’s self-cleaning mechanisms while imparting ecological skills and know-how to volunteer participants.

The project, funded with a USD 8,170 grant, helped improve the state of an area slated for designation as a Natura 2000 site, thus furthering Bulgaria’s international commitments to conserve the Danube and revive its wetlands.

The project addressed human-caused damage that began in the 1960s, as dam building led to the drying out of wetlands and floodplains and the invasion of hybrid poplar trees on island forests. The river had lost its natural filtration capacity as well as many animal and plant species.

Green Balkans, in cooperation with the Danube State Game-Breeding Station in Russe, carried out the restoration of 60 hectares of natural flood plain forests and the planting of more than 3,000 saplings on Telikata Island. The work led to the designation of three new protected areas covering nearly 1,300 hectares, including Doychov and Malak Bliznak islands and the Mechka-Batin fish-breeding ponds.

To select the areas to be protected, an eight-day river expedition was organised along the entire Bulgarian section of the Danube involving biologists, botanists and ornithologists.

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**FISHY FOE:** In Hungary, project workers ridded lakes of alien carp that eat plants and thus destroy a natural pollution absorption mechanism.

**A Bulgarian project resulted in the restoration of natural flood plain forests and the planting of 3,000 saplings on a river island.**

**MOLDOVA**

**Multi-pronged approach**

A notable success story from Moldova involved the promotion of organic agriculture as well as environmental clean-up work in the Prut River Basin. With a grant of USD 8,533, the NGO Cutezatorul of Falesti carried out a multi-pronged initiative involving nine NGOs, 90 farmers, national and international experts and local governments. As a way of reducing toxic and nutrient runoff from agriculture, organisers established four chemical-free demonstration gardens and set up a “green phone” hotline to dispense advice on earth-friendly farming. In total, 138 callers were given advice on organic practices.

Another component involved clean-ups of pollution hotspots. In the communities of Albinetul Vechi, Calinesti and Chetris, caches of disused household and agricultural chemicals were properly disposed of, illegal dumps were cleaned up and more than 5,500 metres of riverbank was reforested. Windbreaks and riparian flora were planted to prevent erosion.

Awareness raising materials were published and distributed, including four issues of a project bulletin, three fliers, three posters and an ecological agriculture guide. Media outreach at the local, regional and national levels yielded project publicity in 14 newspaper articles, 16 radio broadcasts and four TV programmes.

A contest to identify the cleanest, greenest area of the Prut River Basin drew the participation of 24 municipalities and resulted in the removal of 15 illegal dumps, the planting of 17,000 trees and tidying up of 12 springs.

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**HUNGARY**

**Old-fashioned farming**

While most national grant projects targetted a broad swath of local populations through public outreach efforts, a successful project in Hungary yielded significant results by addressing just a small group of farm owners.

Carried out by the MAKK Foundation-Hungarian Environmental Economics Centre, the project addressed agricultural practices in Bodrogkoz, an area in the northeastern corner of the country in the floodplain of the upper Tisza River. The project promoted traditional, “extensive” agriculture as an economically viable alternative to environmentally harsher intensive farming. The project started with appraisals of existing practices and proceeded with the developing of workplans to implement more sustainable methods.

By the fifth month of the project, six farms had been assessed covering 430 acres. Of these, best agricultural practices were being applied on just 170 acres, organisers determined. All six farms were deemed suitable for organic demonstration plots, which were envisioned as a follow-up to the project. Organisers developed 13 project proposals for follow-up work and submitted them to various sponsors. In effect, the Danube Regional Project grant was used as seed money to implement a larger vision of agricultural transformation. Project documents were posted on the organisers’ website to share results with a wider audience.

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**MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE:** To test the impact of an anti-phosphate campaign, Bosnian grantees sampled water.

**CZECH REPUBLIC**

**Purifying a pond**

Despite its location in the middle of a nature reserve, the Pisečný fish pond in south Moravia was choking on algae growth from local farm runoff and seepage from municipal sewage from the nearby settlement of Milotice. The 19-hectare body of water forms the core of a 40-hectare preserve and is home to important communities of water lily and yellow floating heart. The magenta blooms of marsh orchid (*Orchis palustris*) brighten its surrounding meadows. The fish pond is completely harvested of its carp, pike and eel each year. In years past, locals dumped manure into its waters to improve fish growth, but the surplus nutrients disturbed the pond’s ecological balance. This practice was stopped in recent years and a 50-metre green belt was created to reduce nutrient drainage from fields.

With a grant of USD 7,900, the NGO Sagittaria carried out a project to restore the pond’s natural equilibrium. The project included the preparation of a new management plan to bolster the body’s natural cleaning mechanism, and the seeding of better fish stocks during the period 2005-2014. It involved the production of plant seeds in a 20-by-20 metre pond enclosure, and the storage of seeds in a seed bank. Scientific monitoring was organised to measure the work’s effect and a public awareness campaign sought to build community support. This included information panels, the production of a brochure for fish managers and local people, a website and three meetings to lobby the municipality and fish managers.

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**Reducing nutrient and toxic pollution at the national level**



NOTEWORTHY: In Satu Mare, Romania, a project team member inventories birdlife on the Tur River. Photo by Jasmin Sadikovic

### The REC

The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) was established in 1990 to assist in solving environmental problems in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) by promoting cooperation among non-governmental organisations, governments, businesses and other environmental stakeholders, and by supporting the free exchange of information and public participation in environmental decision-making.

The REC has been involved in Danube environment-related projects since its inception, and has taken an active role in cooperating with key Danube players to enable NGO involvement in international initiatives related to the entire basin. The REC closely cooperates with relevant stakeholders such as the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and the Danube Environmental Forum.

The organisation took part in the Danube Pollution Reduction Programme (1999–2001) by enabling NGO contributions toward the initiative's goals. Additionally, the REC participated in the ICPDR expert group, which developed the Danube River Basin Strategy for Public Participation in River Basin Management Planning 2003–2009. This document was adopted by the ICPDR in June, 2003.

### The Danube Regional Project

The world's most international river basin, the Danube River Basin has been radically altered over the last 150 years by human activity. It has lost 80 percent of its wetlands and floodplains and continues to suffer from pollution from industry, farming and municipal wastewater.

The Danube Regional Project (DRP) was launched in 2001 in cooperation with 13 national signatories of the Danube River Protection Convention, Danube NGOs, the European Union (EU) and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR). The DRP's main goal is to help the ICPDR and Danube countries to cooperate in fulfilling their commitments to implement the river convention and EU environmental legislation, especially the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

One of the key activities of the DRP is the distribution of grants to NGOs to help them contribute to this work. With these funds, NGOs have worked to:

- **Enhance public awareness and participation** by carrying out publicity campaigns and reaching out to media.
- **Reduce agricultural pollution** through education and promotional efforts focused on best agricultural practices.
- **Raise public awareness** about the impacts of phosphates in laundry detergents.
- **Conserve wetlands** through restoration efforts and through encouraging water managers to include wetlands in their planning activities.



\* Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration)  
\*\* Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

### Grants for the river

The grants component of the Danube Regional Project was designed to enable environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the Danube River countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to contribute to the reduction of nutrient and toxic pollution of watercourses. This project has two main components, national grants focusing on issues of national priority and regional grants promoting cooperation in trans-boundary projects.

The first of two rounds of grants implementation, running from 2002 to 2006, resulted in:

- USD 217,022 awarded for five regional projects, each involving NGOs from multiple countries. These projects focused on transboundary cooperation, regional networking, stakeholder cooperation, best practices in agriculture and the basin/sub-basin approach to decision making.
- USD 469,507 awarded for 60 national NGO initiatives which took a multi-stakeholder approach to address different issues related to Danube pollution.

In total, 65 projects of national and regional scale were coordinated and monitored by the REC through its country office network, which covers 11 countries in the Danube basin.

### National grants improve water quality

National-level projects were awarded up to USD 15,000 a piece. The problem targeted most by the first round of DRP grants was pollution generated by agriculture and municipal activities. Several projects involved actual field work with direct environmental results. NGO recipients of national grants carried out activities ranging from the removal of illegal dumps to the reforestation of riverbanks. They built artificial wetlands that can function as wastewater treatment areas, promoted organic farming methods, helped improve nature reserves, cleaned up polluted ponds and created three new protected areas. They also improved bird habitats, reduce silt in water ways, and help purify the water in reservoirs.

The national NGO grants focussed on:

- **Agricultural discharge:** 35 percent of the projects addressed agricultural issues by, for example, promoting organic farming.
- **Municipal discharge:** 40 percent of the projects dealt with problems caused by municipalities such as insufficient wastewater treatment and/or unsustainable consumption patterns.
- **Land use/wetlands:** 12 percent of the projects went toward work such as improving natural cleansing functions of wetlands and erosion control.
- **Industrial discharge:** 13 percent of the projects involved activities such as raising awareness about clean mining technologies or other industrial issues.

AMOUNTS AWARDED BY COUNTRY			
COUNTRY	USD AWARDED	COUNTRY	USD AWARDED
Bosnia and Herzegovina	50,000	Romania	29,340
Bulgaria	33,470	Slovakia	45,000
Croatia	50,000	Slovenia	40,000
Czech Republic	40,000	Serbia and Montenegro	60,000
Hungary	49,822	Ukraine	27,950
Moldova	40,000		



## Bringing NGOs into the flow

First round of national grants for the Danube Regional Project



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER







MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE: A student in Slovakia gets a lesson in watershed fundamentals.

### Channelled efforts

For decades now, plans have been put forward to connect the Czech city of Brecliv to either Vienna or Bratislava with a canal large enough to handle international freight shipping. There are also plans to extend the canal in the opposite direction, well into Poland. If constructed, the Danube-Oder-Elbe Canal (DOEC) would extend more than 500 kilometres at a cost of around EUR 10 billion.

The project Danube-Oder-Elbe Canal: A Grassroots, National and European Campaign to Prevent the Greatest Threat to Wetland Loss in Central Europe sought to halt the plan on the grounds that the potential benefits in terms of reduced road transport and greater shipping business did not justify the costs to the environment. The campaign alerted the public and decision makers to risks posed to wetlands and other river ecosystems. Stopping the canal would preserve habitat diversity, a key ingredient to a healthy natural environment.

More precisely, the campaign aimed:

- to prevent the projected deterioration of the wetlands and floodplains adjacent to the Morava River, and Czech, Slovak and Austrian tributaries of the Danube;
- to work for an official rejection of the canal by local, national and EU authorities; and
- to demand the exclusion of the DOEC route from zoning and infrastructure plans.

At the local level, public meetings and a conference were held and information was disseminated. At the national level, the campaign pressured officials — primarily in ministries of environment, transport and local development — to drop the project. At the EU level, the campaign pointed out that the project conflicted with the Birds and Habitats Directives, as well as with the establishment of Natura 2000 sites.

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NGO PARTNER AND COUNTRY: Priatelja Zeme Slovensko (Friends of the Earth Slovakia)

### Looking below the surface

Lowland rural areas in Slovakia are undergoing substantial development and urbanisation, which is taking an environmental toll on the sub-basins of the Morava, Mura and Ogosta rivers. Without public pressure to address these threats, decision makers at multiple levels are failing to respond. The project Addressing Nutrient and Toxic Pollution in the Sub-basins of the Morava, Mura and Ogosta Rivers sought to promote the sub-basin approach for dealing with pollution problems, establishing a model for addressing issues in other river basins, including technical challenges and those related to public participation.

The project's objectives were:

- to transfer and disseminate to the public the existing expert information on the main point and non-point sources of pollution in three river basins;
- to undertake a public campaign to motivate and mobilise local people in three river basins to take direct action for reducing water pollution in their neighbourhoods;
- to promote environmentally friendly farming methods and stakeholder cooperation as effective tools to reduce nutrient pollution in waters; and
- to contribute to nutrient pollution reduction in the Ogosta basin in Bulgaria with the construction of a wetland site.

At the local level, the project invited local residents to help clean up the Morava and Ogosta watersheds. Primary school teachers, particularly in Bulgaria, were encouraged to spend more time on water-related lessons, and environmentally friendly farming methods and alternative rural development were promoted. Also at the local level, the stage was set for preparing water pollution reduction plans for all three sub-basins by identifying large-scale and long-term solutions to water pollution problems. A good example was the construction of an artificial wetland to filter sewage for the Bulgarian village of Falkovets. The project produced a number of publications, including the leaflet Sources of Water Pollution in Morava River Basin.

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NGO PARTNERS AND COUNTRIES: Centre for Environmental Information and Education, Sofia (Bulgaria) ● Ecological Centre of Pomurje, Murska Sobota (Slovenia)

### Basin instincts

Agricultural and municipal run-off into the Prut River is creating algae blooms in the Black Sea that deprive other aquatic organisms of oxygen. The project Prut Basin Wide Approach for Nutrient Reduction and Cross-border Co-operation sought to facilitate a regional, transboundary effort to reduce nutrient loads and to enhance public participation in the drafting of a management plan for the Prut River Basin. The project aimed to raise awareness of the problem, improve access to information, establish a forum for experts and implement concrete measures at the demonstration sites.

The project applied a regional approach to fostering cooperation, networking, and the sharing of transboundary perspectives. A total of 269 teachers and 1,395 students mainly from Mastacani, Baurci Moldoveni, Galati and Chisinau attended training sessions and outdoor activities and received awareness raising materials. Some 1,210 people attended 18 multi-stakeholder meetings organised in the pilot areas and elsewhere in the Prut basin.

Hands-on activities included the installation of compost bins and the planting of reed-bed buffers. Monitoring in Mastacani revealed that reed-bed buffers reduced nutrient run-off from a landfill by 42 percent. A March 2005 inception conference and follow-up meetings held in 2006 drew participants from governmental and non-governmental organisations. The project led to the formation of a Moldavian NGO platform, the Alliance for a Clean Prut.

In all, 50,000 people received materials generated by the project, whether in print or online. The Alliance for a Clean Prut has initiated the development of a Prut Management Plan, and organic waste management plans are under preparation for the pilot areas of Mastacani (Romania) and Baurci Moldoveni (Moldova).

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NGO PARTNER AND COUNTRY: Ecological Movement of Moldova (Moldova)

### Growing support

The Danube basin suffers from the widespread use of industrial fertilisers and chemical pesticides. Conventional farming causes erosion and is a large source of pollution of both ground and surface water. Organic farming can significantly reduce these impacts. Now legally defined by European Union norms, organic farming has gained in popularity, but mainly in mountainous areas in the form of responsible cattle raising. However, in highly productive lowland areas, this form of agriculture has been expanding very slowly, and it is precisely in these areas where the need for change is most acute.

The objectives of the Support and Promotion of Ecological Agriculture in the Production Areas Located in the Danube Basin project were:

- to promote organic farming methods by stressing its benefits;
- to contribute to policy development;
- to increase consumer awareness about organic farming and its products; and
- to create an international NGO network and an action plan for advancing and promoting organic farming in the Danube basin.

The project promoted organic producers to local consumers, including paid media advertising about "open days." The leaflet Organic Farming and Organic Food was published in four languages and distributed at these events. A network of organic farming organisations was also formed. Organic farming was promoted to conventional farmers through specialised media, the Internet, traditional post and personal contacts.

Organic farming associations were involved in organics commissions established by ministries of agriculture. These bodies worked on action plans to develop organic farming and at the EU level sought to boost subsidies for organic farming on arable land. These efforts went especially well in the Czech Republic, where subsidies rose by 50 percent, while in Slovakia the number of organic farms increased from 131 in 2004 to 270 in 2006.

A highlight was the further success of the Bioacademy, a series of meetings related to healthy agricultural methods. The 2005 version, which was supported by the project, featured a workshop on organic farming and water, and the formulation of an action plan on organic farming in the Danube Basin. More than 150 participants attended the event, and a number of publications were disseminated in its wake.

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NGO PARTNERS AND COUNTRIES: BIOSELENA Foundation Karlovo (Bulgaria) ● TERRA'S Association Subotica (Serbia and Montenegro) ● EKOTREND Association of Ecological Farmers (Slovakia) ● Information Centre for the Development of Moravske Kopanice (Czech Republic)



DIRTY WORK: PRO BIO of the Czech Republic showed how organic farming reduces nutrient runoff into rivers.



SPREADING THE WORD: A pollution-mitigation project in Bulgaria involved the creation of an artificial wetland.

### Watershed events

The problems of cross-border water pollution are mainly due to a lack of coordination and public participation. The Networking the River Coalitions for Healthy Watershed project sought to address these shortcomings by supporting better environmental management and more effective cooperation for Danube watershed protection. The project targeted stakeholders through river-based networks focused on the reduction of river pollution.

The specific objectives of the project were:

- to establish river coalitions and facilitate the signing of "river contracts" in partner countries, based on cross-border and cross-sectoral cooperation;
- to create a cross-boundary network of partner river coalitions focused on improving the information flow through the river basins, and supporting mutual cooperation;
- to carry out activities that improve water quality as defined in the river contracts; and
- to boost environmental awareness and a sense of responsibility for surface water quality.

The most important practical outputs included the restoration of a floodplain, construction of a composting toilet and small biological waste water treatment system, the construction of public composting places in three villages, the clean-up of waste from a floodplain area, and the revitalisation of an oxbow and wetland.

The river coalitions significantly boosted regional cooperation, and will serve as the basis for coordinated efforts to improve river conditions. The project disseminated a brochure on river coalitions; and each of the partner organisations held several meetings with local stakeholders, including local governments, schools, NGOs and businesses.

An exhibit on river coalitions was created and lead NGO SOSNA is now touring with it to schools and NGOs in other regions. Holocen prepared educational material entitled "How to Prepare Biological Waste Treatment." Finally, two campaigns were conducted by Tisa Klub: a media campaign about industrial waste, and a campaign raising public awareness about the improper use of pesticides in agriculture.

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NGO PARTNERS AND COUNTRIES: Holocen (Hungary) ● EKE (Romania)

Zeleni Osijek (Croatia) ● Tisa Klub (Serbia)

# Reducing nutrient and toxic pollution at the regional level



**CLEAN CLOVES:** An organic farm in the Czech Republic yielded a model crop of chemical-free garlic.

## The REC

The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) was established in 1990 to assist in solving environmental problems in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) by promoting cooperation among non-governmental organisations, governments, businesses and other environmental stakeholders, and by supporting the free exchange of information and public participation in environmental decision-making.

The REC has been involved in Danube environment-related projects since its inception, and has taken an active role in cooperating with key Danube players to enable NGO involvement in international initiatives related to the entire basin. The REC closely cooperates with relevant stakeholders such as the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and the Danube Environmental Forum.

The organisation took part in the Danube Pollution Reduction Programme (1999–2001) by enabling NGO contributions toward the initiative's goals. Additionally, the REC participated in the ICPDR expert group, which developed the Danube River Basin Strategy for Public Participation in River Basin Management Planning 2003-2009. This document was adopted by the ICPDR in June, 2003.

## The Danube Regional Project

The world's most international river basin, the Danube River Basin has been radically altered over the last 150 years by human activity. It has lost 80 percent of its wetlands and floodplains and continues to suffer from pollution from industry, farming and municipal wastewater.

The Danube Regional Project (DRP) was launched in 2001 in cooperation with 13 national signatories of the Danube River Protection Convention, Danube NGOs, the European Union (EU) and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR). The DRP's main goal is to help the ICPDR and Danube countries to cooperate in fulfilling their commitments to implement the river convention and EU environmental legislation, especially the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

One of the key activities of the DRP is the distribution of grants to NGOs to help them contribute to this work. With these funds, NGOs have worked to:

- **Enhance public awareness and participation** by carrying out publicity campaigns and reaching out to media.
- **Reduce agricultural pollution** through education and promotional efforts focused on best agricultural practices.
- **Raise public awareness** about the impacts of phosphates in laundry detergents.
- **Conserve wetlands** through restoration efforts and through encouraging water managers to include wetlands in their planning activities.



## Grants for the river

The grants component of the Danube Regional Project was designed to enable environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the Danube River countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to contribute to the reduction of nutrient and toxic pollution of watercourses. This project has two main components, national grants focusing on issues of national priority and regional grants promoting cooperation in transboundary projects.

The first of two rounds of grants implementation, running from 2002 to 2006, resulted in:

- USD 207,022 awarded for five regional projects, each involving NGOs from multiple countries. These projects focused on transboundary cooperation, regional networking, stakeholder cooperation, best practices in agriculture and the basin/sub-basin approach to decision making. (Another USD 9,268 was awarded to help NGOs prepare proposals.)
- USD 469,507 awarded for 60 national NGO initiatives which took a multi-stakeholder approach to address different issues related to Danube pollution.

In total, 65 projects of national and regional scale were coordinated and monitored by the REC through its country office network, which covers 11 countries in the Danube basin.

## Regional grants improve water quality

The regional grants programme promotes regional cooperation in environmental projects managed by NGOs from Central and Eastern Europe, with a focus on work that addresses nutrient and toxic pollution in the Danube Basin. Five regional projects were funded under the programme. The grant awards ranged between EUR 32,000 and 50,000.

Regional projects brought together 15 NGOs from the Danube Basin. These groups used approaches ranging from broad promotional efforts to targeted preventive work such as popularising environmentally friendly technologies and campaigning against the

construction of a river canal. Through the regional approach a range of stakeholders were targeted, including farmers, public authorities, school children, enterprises and designers.

The NGO activities consisted of awareness raising, education, organisation of meetings and network building. The work effected a change in attitudes and behaviour among key players in the river basin, and therefore had an indirect effect on the long-term reduction of nutrients and toxics. Other actions, including the rehabilitation of wetlands, establishment of composting facilities and the cleaning up and fortification of river banks, more directly reduced nutrient and toxic pollution in the river basin. The grants brought Danube pollution issues onto the agenda of communities and brought stakeholders to the table, where they could organise and press for solutions to these problems with their local authorities.

REGIONAL GRANTS AWARDED	
PROJECT	USD AWARDED
Addressing Nutrient and Toxic Pollution in the Sub-basins of the Morava, Mura and Ogosta Rivers	45,300
The Prut Basin Wide Approach for Nutrient Reduction and Cross Border Cooperation (PBWA)	35,000
The Support and Promotion of Ecological Agriculture in the Production Areas Located in the Danube Basin	45,000
Danube-Elbe-Oder Canal: Grassroot-National-European Campaign to Prevent the Biggest Wetland Loss Threat in Central Europe	32,484
Networking the River Coalitions for Healthy Watershed	49,970
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>207,754</b>



## Bringing NGOs into the flow

First round of regional grants for the Danube Regional Project



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER



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REGIONAL  
PROJECT

# PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

### PRODUCTS AND ACTIVITIES

## ENHANCING ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING

### **THE DRP, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND WATER POLLUTION**

The UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project (DRP) supports the efforts of Danube Basin stakeholders to reduce water pollution and introduce sustainable management of natural resources. Sustainable pollution reduction can only be achieved with the involvement of those who contribute to, or are affected by, poor water quality. DRP therefore supports a multi-year effort to build the capacities of governments, local communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Danube River Basin for improved public access to water-related information and public participation in water management decision-making. The guidelines for this effort come from the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Aarhus Convention and other EU directives on access to information and public participation.

The project activity, called “Enhancing Access to Information and Public Participation in Environmental Decision-making” has been implemented in five Danube riparian countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Serbia. The experience, lessons learned and best practice models developed in these countries will be of value for water management stakeholders throughout the entire Danube Basin.

Support was given at national and local community level as well as at regional level, in the form of capacity building and experience sharing. The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) has also benefited from the activities through an assessment of its present capacities and mechanisms for ensuring public access to information and participation, as well as recommendations for their improvement.

### **WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM THE EXPERIENCE GAINED?**

Are you at the “front lines” of providing public access to water related information? Is water pollution affecting you and your family’s or your community’s quality of life? Are water management decisions affecting your business or livelihood?

Then we can help, especially if you are:

- > National, regional and local government employees responsible for:
  - Managing water and environmental information
  - Providing public access to water-related information
  - Ensuring public participation, including in the WFD implementation process.
- > Environmental NGOs and community members interested in obtaining information and influencing management decisions concerning water pollution.
- > Industry, farmers or businesses contributing to water pollution and/or affected by decisions concerning pollution management and information provision.

## WHAT ARE THE OUTPUTS?

### REPORTS

National Needs Assessment Reports assess the capacity of governments in the five participating countries as of 2004 for providing access to information and public participation in decision-making concerning water pollution reduction in the Danube Basin. Two reports highlight the experience and lessons learned during Study Tours to the USA and the Netherlands where project participants got familiar with mature access to information systems. In addition, two reports have been prepared assessing the capacity of ICPDR with regard to access to information and public participation and recommending measures for improvement. Overall highlights from the reports include:

- 1. NATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENTS (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, BULGARIA, CROATIA, ROMANIA, SERBIA):**
  - > Overview of national legal frameworks (including implementation and enforcement) and institutional arrangements for public access to water-related information.
  - > Assessment of barriers to providing public access to information.
  - > Identification of priority issues to be addressed by the DRP component.
- 2. ICPDR INFORMATION ACCESS:**
  - > Overview of information on file and ICPDR vehicles for information dissemination.
  - > Suggestions and models for increasing information dissemination and accessibility.
- 3. ICPDR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REPORT AND OVERVIEW OF DIFFERENT INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**
  - > Public participation opportunities under current ICPDR structures and instruments.
  - > Overview of public participation mechanisms at other international river basin commissions and water-related international institutions and regimes.
  - > Analysis of key features, advantages and drawbacks.
  - > Options and recommendations for improving public participation at ICPDR.
- 4. STUDY TOUR REPORTS (USA, THE NETHERLANDS):**
  - > Agenda and participants for each of the Study Tours.
  - > Experiences and lessons learned.
  - > Planned follow-up actions by national participants based on the experience gained.

## OTHER OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES

A number of other useful reference documents were also developed, as well as reports explaining the various activities undertaken during the project:

### 1. MANUALS FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Manuals provide practical guidance to government staff in each country on how to provide active and passive access to water information; examples on dealing with difficult issues and advice on how to involve the public in water related decision-making. The manuals for Romania and BiH also discuss public participation in WFD related decision making.

### 2. INFORMATION DATABASES

The project provided assistance for the development of a national Water Data Base in BiH including information sources, substances, emissions, stakeholder contacts, etc.

### 3. PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVING NATIONAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Legal texts and internal instructions were drafted, e.g. for dealing with information confidentiality issues.

### 4. TRAINING

Government staff and stakeholders were trained to raise their capacities in information provision and access, as well as the use of some of the newly developed tools.

### 5. STUDY TOURS

Stakeholders from the participating countries got familiar with mature access to information systems during study visits to the USA and the Netherlands. Integrated Study Tour Reports highlight the experience gained and how it will impact country activities.

### 6. DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Five local projects, one in each participating country, tested a variety of approaches for informing and involving local communities in the resolution of local pollution problems.

### 7. INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TOOLS

Various tools were established or their functioning improved (e.g. river basin committees, websites) to provide a platform for on-going community and regional discussion and resolution of water pollution issues.

### 8. INFORMATION BROCHURES

Brochures were developed for citizens and NGOs in the five participating countries on their right to access water-related information, what information is available and where, the procedures for requesting information and what to do if a request is refused.

For more information, as well as to view the documents produced by the project, please visit:

- UNDP/GEF DRP: [http://www.undp-drp.org/drp/en/activities\\_3\\_public\\_participation.html](http://www.undp-drp.org/drp/en/activities_3_public_participation.html)
- REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: <http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/PublicParticipation/DanubeRiverBasin/>
- ICPDR: <http://www.icpdr.org>