

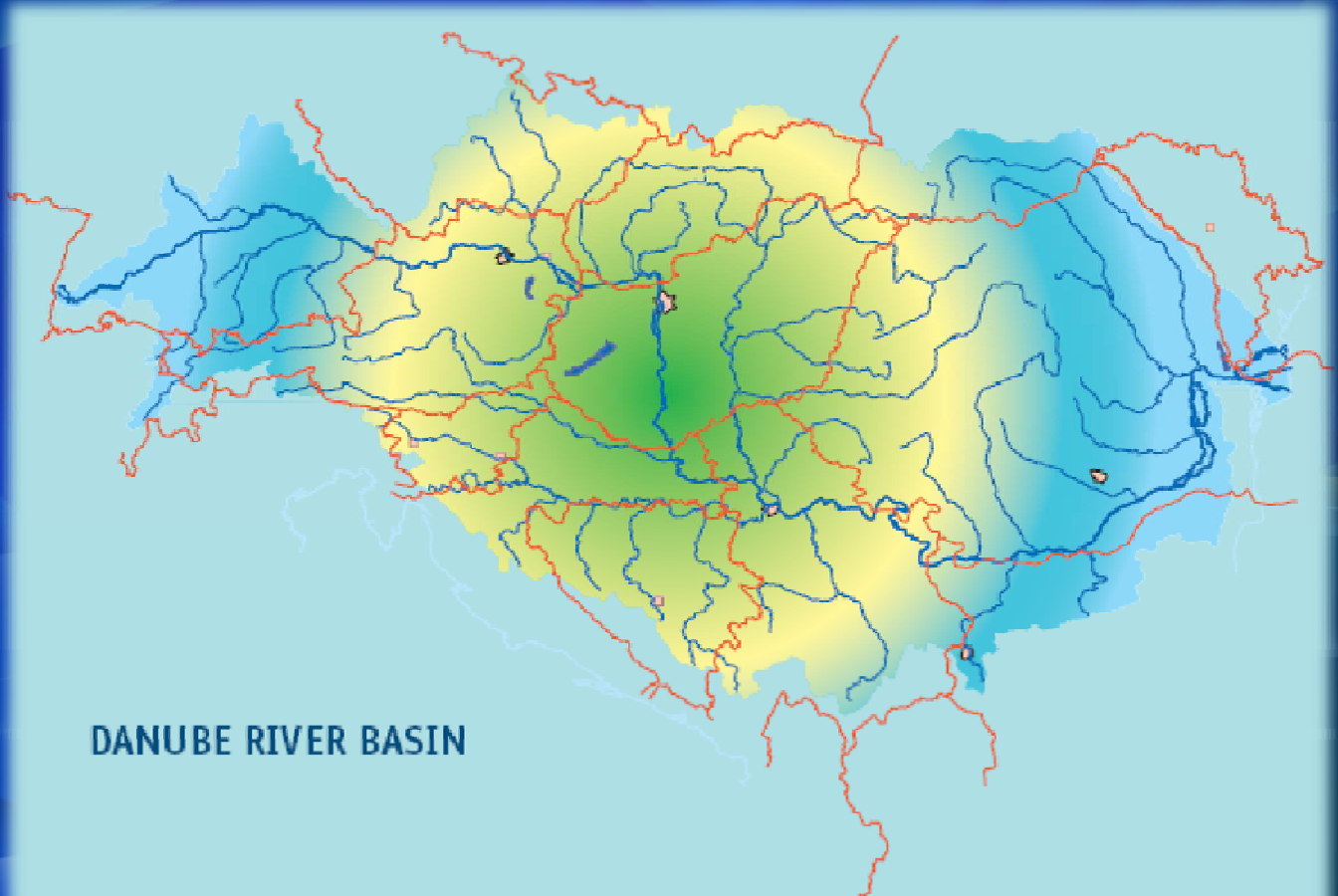
Regional Workshop
Sustainable management of river and lake basins:
Empowering NGOs for a coordinated effective involvement”,
4 November 2010, Ohrid, FYROM

NGO Participation in Danube River Basin Management Plans: the experience of Danube Environmental Forum (DEF)

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The Danube River Basin

- The Danube River is 2.857 km long and its 817.000 km² basin covers 17 countries with about 83 millions inhabitants.



The Danube River Basin

- It contains many ecologically significant areas (e.g. Ramsar sites, Natura 2000, IBA, IPA) and provides important ecological services by supporting an adequate supply of drinking water, agriculture, industry, fishing, tourism and recreation, power generation, navigation, and a final disposal sink for wastewaters.
- However, intensive industrial, agricultural, and urban usage has created water quality and quantity problems, which threaten these vital ecological services and resources.



Outline

- International efforts to manage the Danube basin
- Legal Basis for Stakeholder/NGOs Participation in the Danube Basin
- The Danube River Protection Convention
- Tools for Implementing Stakeholder Participation within the Danube Basin:
 - International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)
 - Danube Environmental Forum (DEF) (NGO)
- DEF activities on Public Participation
- Common problems for NGOs' successful participation in River Basin Management Plans
- Conclusions: Challenges and lessons learned

International efforts to manage the Danube basin

- International efforts to coordinate and manage the Danube basin have been active since 1991.
- Danube countries and the European Commission signed the Danube River Protection Convention (DRPC) in June 1994.
- The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) provided a new opportunity to further improve the Danube's management.



Legal Basis for Stakeholder/NGOs Participation in the Danube Basin

- **International agreements:** Most of the Danube Basin States are party to various global environmental and water related agreements, including the **1971 Convention on Wetlands of International Importance** especially as Waterfowl Habitat, and the **1992 Convention on Biological Diversity**.
- **At EU level:** EU WFD, Article 14(1) on Stakeholder Participation, requiring that “Member States shall encourage the active involvement of all interested parties in the implementation of this Directive, in particular the production, review and updating of the river basin management plans. Member States shall ensure that, for each river basin district, they publish and make available for comments to the public, including users”.
- **At UN level:** the 1992 UN ECE Convention on the Protection and use of Transboundary, Watercourses and International Lakes, the Aarhus Convention, etc.

The Danube River Protection Convention

- The Danube River Protection Convention forms the overall legal instrument for co-operation on transboundary water management in the Danube River Basin.
- The Convention was signed on June 29 1994 in Sofia (Bulgaria) and came into force in 1998.
- It aims to ensure that surface waters and groundwater within the Danube River Basin are managed and used sustainably and equitably.
- The signatories to the DRPC have agreed to co-operate on fundamental water management issues by taking "all appropriate legal, administrative and technical measures to at least maintain and where possible improve the current water quality and environmental conditions of the Danube river and of the waters in its catchment area, and to prevent and reduce as far as possible adverse impacts and changes occurring or likely to be caused."

Tools for Implementing Stakeholder Participation within the Danube Basin

- International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
- Danube Environmental Forum



The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)

- The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) is a transnational body, which has been established to implement the Danube River Protection Convention.
- The ICPDR is formally comprised by the Delegations of all Contracting Parties to the Danube River Protection Convention, but has also established a framework for other organizations to join.
- Since its creation in 1998 the ICPDR has effectively promoted policy agreements and the setting of joint priorities and strategies for improving the state of the Danube and its tributaries.
- This includes improving the tools used to manage environmental issues in the Danube basin, such as:
 - the Accident Emergency Warning System,
 - the Trans-National Monitoring Network for water quality, and
 - the information system for the Danube (Danubis).

The different bodies of the ICPDR

- Ordinary Meeting Group: taking the political decisions;
- Standing Working Group: providing political guidance;
- Technical Expert Groups: preparing the technical background documents:
 - Expert Group on River Basin Management;
 - Pressures and Measures Expert Group;
 - Monitoring and Assessment Expert Group;
 - Expert Group on Flood Protection;
 - Information Management and GIS Expert Group;
 - Public Participation Expert Group;
 - Strategic Expert Group;
 - Danube-Black Sea Joint Technical Working Group.
- The work of the ICPDR is supported by a Secretariat located in Vienna, Austria.

Public Participation in the framework of the ICPDR (I)

- All technical work within the ICPDR is carried out by the Expert Groups. These Expert Groups are essential to the operation of the ICPDR, and rely upon the inputs and contributions of national experts from the **Contracting Parties** and from the **Observers**.
- Environmental protection is a „community responsibility” and the active involvement of the public is a core principle in sustainable water management. This basic fact was already recognized when the Danube River Protection Convention (DRPC) was signed.
- To date, 19 organizations have taken this opportunity and have become observers to the ICPDR. These organizations include NGOs, organizations representing private industry, and intergovernmental organizations.

Public Participation in the framework of the ICPDR (II)

- All stakeholder groups proving a basin-wide interest are involved in the work of the ICPDR.
- The formal cooperation with the ICPDR grants observers the right to participate at ICPDR decision-making meetings and Expert Group meetings.
- The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) opened an opportunity for active public participation at the national level, specifically during the creation of national river basin management plans (RBMPs).
- The ICPDR developed a “Danube River Basin Strategy for Public Participation in River Basin Management Planning 2003-2009” and has consequently developed “ICPDR Operational Plans”.

The Danube Environmental Forum (DEF)

About DEF:

- Founded in 1999
- Danube River Basin-wide platform of environmental NGOs
- Establishing a common approach for the protection of the Danube River
- Facilitating NGO cooperation at basin, sub-basin, national and local level
- Actions in the 14 Danube River Basin countries
- Today has about 100 member NGOs

Mission

to **protect the Danube River** and its tributaries, their biodiversity and resources, through enhancing co-operation among governments, non-governmental organizations, local people and all kinds of stakeholders towards sustainable use of natural ecosystems.

The Danube Environmental Forum (DEF)

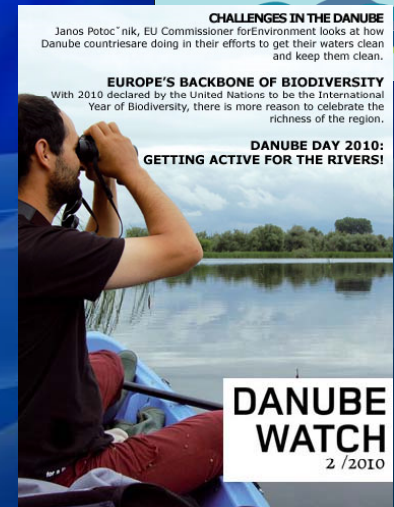
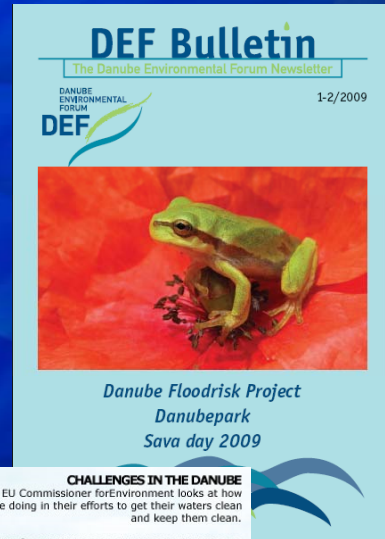
Structure:

- **DEF Members** represent 14 countries the river Danube basin. Their expertise ranges from the fields of science and research, lobbying and policy work to environmental education and capacity building.
- **DEF National Focal Points (NFPs)** are NGO representatives from each country within the Danube region and are the main contacts whose mandate is to represent DEF at the national level of their particular country.
- **DEF Board** is comprised of representatives of National Focal Points (one Board member per NFP). The Board is responsible for preparing strategies, programs and plans for future DEF activities and meets at least once a year.
- **DEF Speakers** (elected by DEF Board members) that represent DEF at international platforms.
- The **DEF Secretariat** (located in Baja, Hungary), maintains information flow among NFPs, promoting cooperation and communication with other networks.

The Danube Environmental Forum (DEF)

Tools:

- Publications in 14 different languages
- Danube Day celebration in 14 Danube countries
- International competition for school children "Danube Art Master"
- National and local nature and water events
- International and national public awareness campaigns



DEF activities on Public Participation (I)

The core of DEF's effort is to reinforce information exchange and cooperation among national and international institutions, the NGO community and the public sector leading to sustainable development of Danube River Basin.

Activities:

- **Facilitating public participation in the realization of the goals of the Water Framework Directive of the European Union (60/2000/EC) within the Danube River Basin**
- **Regular contact and co-operation with the governmental, nongovernmental and inter-governmental bodies active in the Danube River Basin, particularly with the environmental, nature protection and water management institutions in the countries of the area of interest, furthermore the competent Ministries and ICPDR**
- **Long-term protection of the natural values of the Danube River Basin, the ecologically sound maintenance and development of environmental status**
- **Co-ordination and control of tourism targeting the Danube River Basin, supporting real eco-tourism**

DEF activities on Public Participation (II)

Activities:

- **Monitoring** economical development and investments targeting the Danube River Basin, their social control
- **Monitoring** environmental pressures on the Danube river with regard to pollution sources
- **Providing expertise** and support for people living and working in the Danube River Basin
- **Protection of the waters** of the Danube River and its tributaries, facilitating quality improvement
- **Awareness-raising** and education of the young
- **Public awareness-raising** in terms of natural values
- **Saving and revitalization** of folk traditions, support, introduction and revitalization of ecologically sound management forms and methods
- Protection of the landscape

Common problems for NGOs' successful participation in River Basin Management Plans

- insufficient public awareness on environmental protection issues;
- inadequate support from the responsible authorities;
- limited information/capacity within various NGOs;
- insufficient funding.



Conclusions: Challenges and lessons learned (I)

- **EU WFD and other regional laws act as a catalyst for stakeholder participation:** A major challenge for the ICPDR and Basin States will be to ensure that stakeholders are fully engaged in the design, adoption and future revisions of the Danube basin management plan.
- **Strengthened capacity at the international and national level:** Key challenges include the need to adopt or strengthen relevant legislation relating to stakeholder participation, and enhancing capacity at the national level to accommodate stakeholders within the decision-making process. In addition, new funding strategies will be required to ensure that infrastructure for stakeholder participation is in place in time to meet the requirements of the EU WFD.
- **Central role for ICPDR in facilitating stakeholder participation at the basin level.**

Conclusions: Challenges and lessons learned (II)

- **Co-ordination of international, national and local NGO actions:** need to coordinate NGO and donor activities throughout the Basin, and co-ordinate international, national and local efforts.
- **Need to engage stakeholders throughout the process:** while significant commitments towards stakeholder participation have been undertaken at the international and national levels, a number of existing and planned large-scale infrastructure projects offer a stark reminder of the need to fully engage stakeholders within the planning process.



Thank you!

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