TOWARDS CONTEMPORARY RIVERS IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

SEE River  →  Final Publication
The contemporary river is a river managed in a way that ensures the accomplishment of all conservation and development sectoral goals, initiatives and measures as well as interests of riparian local communities and inhabitants.
Cross-sectoral cooperation as a basis for contemporary river corridor management

In 2008, when the Drava River Vision was adopted in Maribor, Slovenia, in which 10 goals for sustainable future of the Drava River as a contemporary river were determined, probably nobody was aware of its influence and contribution to future river management and restoration processes.

During the following years, we went far beyond the Drava River basin - we decided to meet other South East Europe rivers to bring them closer to their contemporary modes.

Now, in 2014, at the end of the SEE River project as a direct follower of the Declaration, we are proud to present how an established common vision of one river inspired an international interdisciplinary team of experts from 26 public institutions, administrations and NGOs in the field of water management and nature protection, located in 12 South East Europe EU and non-EU member countries, both from the Danube River and Mediterranean Sea drainage basins, to initiate complex processes of contemporary river corridor management on six very different transboundary rivers: Drava, Bodrog, Neretva, Prut, Soča and Vjosa.

In ambitions of irregular scope, the SEE River project was addressing cross-sectoral river corridor management issues in the South East Europe countries. This was a highly challenging professional experience both for institutions and individuals involved. The region is a diversity of cultures, languages, perceptions, capabilities, terminologies, approaches, technical solutions, and therefore also river management related institutional frameworks, administration systems and management practices. Furthermore, social and political circumstances are also an important factor and at this point it must be mentioned that even extreme floods in Western Balkans and events in Ukraine, both in the last year of the project, did not stop the work in the affected regions.

The partnership faced many challenges as a whole and on each pilot site. How to manage such a complex issue, who are the partners and what positions do they possess in their countries? Which sectors are the players, which stakeholders should be involved in individual pilot cases? How to ensure an effective project process and methods applied as well as comparability of the results on local, national and international levels? Such and similar questions were on the daily agenda of partners’ work.

The results represent a pioneering work on cross-sectoral management of river corridors even beyond South East Europe. Five pilot river corridors in the Drava River riparian countries now have sustainable and commonly agreed technical planning documents, which will in a short period also be implemented, at their disposal. Furthermore, five other rivers in the region are equipped with commonly agreed visions, which, with smart implementation, will bring them closer to their contemporary modes. The Drava River got its international action plan, which supports achievement of the ten goals of the Drava River Declaration. Above all, we developed the SEE River Toolkit, a guidance for facilitating cross-sectoral management of river corridors, which can be applied globally and on any river. I am convinced that the partnership did a very good job and that our common work and efforts will for sure contribute to river restoration processes.

We wish to the rivers and their stakeholders in the SEE region and beyond best of luck in their strive for the contemporary mode. We shall be aware that this, according to the learned complexity of the task itself, speeding development and increasing man’s demands will not be an easy task at all. For this reason and in order to contribute to the protection and restoration of rivers, we are also pretty sure that in the future more time and resources shall be invested into the development of capacities and skills for cross-sectoral management of river corridors.

See you soon in the next stage,
“Some of our most precious achievements cannot be put into numbers or charts. The sectors’ grown understanding and respect for each other’s views, deepened trust among stakeholders and experiences shared among us give us new confidence for tackling the future challenges of river corridor management.”

“...multi-stakeholder approaches for managing international rivers. I am convinced that the results are further strengthening the cooperative management of our shared waters in the Danube River Basin.”

“In my view, the project has set up a unique platform for all the key stakeholders to be highly accountable brokers in harmonising both development and conservation interests in river corridor management. I believe that linkages with UNESCO’s interventions along river corridors and beyond will support the long-term impact of achieved results.”
selecting six transboundary rivers

To increase the knowledge and encourage its sharing, six pilot rivers were selected that indicate the diversity of the SEE region’s natural, social, economic and administrative reality as much as possible: the Drava, Bodrog, Neretva, Prut, Soča and Vjosa rivers. Consequently, such criteria for the selection of the pilot rivers demanded an effective and custom-made implementation of the planned approach as well as the development of different methods and relevant tools.

This framework was set up to launch activities of the SEE River project with the focus on the improvement of the cross-sectoral communication and coordination for consensual planning in river corridors.

In order to reach the SEE River project objectives, many sectoral, local, regional and national interests were identified and recognized, to be analyzed in depth, discussed and sometimes also exceeded in later project phases to support sustainable management of the river corridor as a part of river restoration processes. Partners across countries initiated dialogues with cross-sectoral expert organisations, local, regional and national authorities and river corridor stakeholders, including organisations and individuals. Through well-planned processes, partners combined approaches and working methods by executing detailed preparatory works, desk analyses, field work and research, as well as sectoral and stakeholder analyses.

The SEE River project was initiated on the basis of the Drava River Vision Declaration (2008), signed in Maribor in 2008, which set ten long-term goals that reflect the priorities of contemporary Drava River management. Through discussions on administrative and expert levels, it was decided that the above-mentioned goals were to be developed within a new, special project. In addition, the need for similar initiatives on other transboundary rivers in countries of the SEE region was identified through the partner network.

The project aimed at empowering cross-sectoral stakeholders of the territories along SEE River corridors to gain knowledge for planning and implementing river management processes by building consensus on both conservation and development issues in river corridors. The main objectives of the project were to contribute to river restoration processes by gaining knowledge on river corridor management, exceeding sectoral, local and national interests in order to ensure good water status and flood protection, preserve nature, biodiversity and ecosystems, and to enable development at the same time. As the main result of the project, the Toolkit for Facilitating Cross-sectoral River Corridor Management was prepared.

Setting project aims and objectives

The project aimed at empowering cross-sectoral stakeholders of the territories along SEE River corridors to gain knowledge for planning and implementing river management processes by building consensus on both conservation and development issues in river corridors. The main objectives of the project were to contribute to river restoration processes by gaining knowledge on river corridor management, exceeding sectoral, local and national interests in order to ensure good water status and flood protection, preserve nature, biodiversity and ecosystems, and to enable development at the same time. As the main result of the project, the Toolkit for Facilitating Cross-sectoral River Corridor Management was prepared.

Establishing the partnership network

To achieve such demanding goals, a strong and extended project partnership included 26 national and international organisations from several expert fields, which implemented project research, field work, cross-sectoral communication and active involvement of stakeholders. Knowledge, skills, methods and techniques for facilitating informed decision-making through stakeholder dialogue were shared among partners. Together, steps were planned for implementing structured processes to reach consensus of cross-sectoral stakeholders on future management of 6 river corridors in South East Europe.

Planning and implementing top-down and bottom-up approaches

issues and questions in the SEE River project were addressed by combining top-down and bottom-up approaches, including an analysis of the existing decision-making and policy-planning procedures in the partner countries and gathering good practices of cross-sectoral river management. Additionally, an analysis of concrete needs of river corridor management practitioners was made — both internally, through the SEE River Toolkit Preparation Workshop, as well as externally, by conducting structured interviews with representatives of river corridor stakeholders from different administrative levels and sectors in all partner countries.
Knowledge and experience sharing

The creative processes in all 10 pilot areas caused many innovations in cross-sectoral river corridor management techniques. The progress and experiences from the pilot areas were monitored and regularly recorded and shared among partners through internal knowledge exchange, boosted especially by intensive partnership meetings, transnational workshops and study visits. Through such exchange, the individual pilot processes were continuously updated and improved and the challenges that occurred along the way were tackled in cooperation with the interdisciplinary international project team.

Capacity building and dissemination

The knowledge gained on planning and managing river corridors in a cross-sectoral way was disseminated to administrative actors and experts involved in river corridor management at capacity building events in 10 SEE countries. The approaches and the benefits of the methods developed and used by the SEE River project will be further promoted, disseminated and facilitated through the SEE River network of experts, committed to ensuring a sustainable future of the rivers, its riparian lands and communities.

Stakeholder involvement as a principle of work

The SEE River project introduced a working method as an open process, based on constant and close cooperation with stakeholders. Several activities in different expert fields were developed with the purpose to encourage and ensure stakeholder involvement in all phases of the project. The application of such a method enabled an improved understanding of different attitudes, opinions and knowledge of all stakeholders involved, as well as those of partners.

Many activities for stakeholders on local, regional, national and international levels were performed, including personal interviews, targeted meetings and discussions, organised consultations, workshops, study visits and capacity building seminars. The stakeholder involvement process was supported through constant communication, targeted at individual pilot rivers areas as well as at project promotion in general.
2) Reached consensus on future management of the Drava River corridor:

- reached consensus on future management of five river corridors in the Drava riparian countries through preparation of background documents for strategic long-term planning and implementation in Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary, prepared together with and endorsed by river corridor stakeholders, and
- reached consensus and prepared action plan for the future transboundary cooperation in managing the international Drava River corridor, prepared in cooperation with local, regional and national stakeholders from all five riparian countries.

3) Established cross-sectoral transboundary stakeholder networks for future cooperation in managing five SEE rivers:

- stakeholder networks created in 11 countries on five river corridors, and
- consensus reached on future transboundary cooperation actions on the Bodrog, Nereživa, Piotr, Soča and Vjosa rivers.

4) Increased knowledge and skills of SEE experts on:

- best practices in integrative river corridor management,
- facilitating and negotiating cross-sectoral cooperation,
- understanding sectoral views and facilitating communication among sectors, and
- building stakeholder dialogue through informed decision-making.

5) Increased trust and knowledge of stakeholders and administrative actors:

- over 600 stakeholders engaged in consultation and participation processes on all six project rivers, with increased trust between them achieved in all regions,
- among them, over 300 administrative actors, involved in river corridor management in all project countries with increased knowledge, capacity and skills for cross-sectoral river corridor management.

6) Future cooperation on cross-sectoral river corridor management achieved through established SEE River network:

- over 30 follow-up projects initiated in all project countries, and
- future cooperation programme of the SEE River network agreed between 26 partner organisations.

The main results and achievements of the SEE River project are:

1) SEE River Toolkit for Facilitating Cross-Sectoral River Corridor Management - a practical handbook for river corridor management practitioners that includes:

- practical guidance on how to design and implement processes of cross-sectoral cooperation to achieve consensus on conservation and development interests in river corridors,
- a roadmap towards cross-sectoral river corridor management,
- methods, techniques, tips and tricks for facilitating cross-sectoral cooperation,
- practical applications of the SEE River approach implemented in ten pilot areas on six South East Europe rivers, and
- lessons learned and consequent recommendations.

From the Toolkit for Facilitating Cross-sectoral River Corridor Management to increased knowledge and experiences

The results of the SEE River project will help improve existing processes and practices of river corridor management in the SEE area and beyond. Using the SEE River project paths and methods developed, the consensus on future sustainable river and riverside development as one of the bases of river restoration will be easier to reach. Potential gaps between water management, nature protection and diverse development interests will be easier to bridge. Consensual multi-sectoral planning processes in river corridors in SEE countries and beyond will achieve a new, higher level.

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1 PROJECT

- 210 Facebook followers
- 20,800 website visitors
- 687 stakeholders involved
- 12 action plans
- 5 International workshops
- 26 project partners
- 1 agreement on further cooperation
- 1 Toolkit for river managers
- 1 wedding
- 6 newsletters
- 6 dances
- 8 study visits
- 1 TooKIts FOR RIVER MANAGERS
- 8 newborns
- 5 letters of coffee
- 317 liters of coffee
- ∞ friendships
- 6 rivers
- 14 languages
- 14 countries
- 26 national and local workshops
- 14 training sessions
- 96 project team members
- 1,489 newsletter subscribers
- 782,452 individuals reached
- 34 National and local workshops
- 10 capacity building sessions
- 5工具箱FOR河管理
- 1 Message-based in a box for rivers
- See river in numbers
SEE RIVER IN TIME

4-6 NOVEMBER 2012: FLOODS IN SLOVENIA
Countries affected: Austria, Slovenia and Croatia; Total damage estimation: 381 million EUR;
Historical record: maximum water flow of 3,164 m³/s on the Drava downstream in Ptuj, Slovenia.

1 JULY 2013 - CROATIA JOINS THE EU
Drava becomes an EU river in its total length

FEBRUARY 2014: CRISIS IN UKRAINE STARTS
Despite critical political circumstances and armed conflicts the work continues on the Prut and Bodrog rivers.

13-18 MAY 2014: FLOODS IN WESTERN BALKANS
Affected countries: Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia; Slovenia and Romania also affected;
Flooded area: 40,000 km²; Damage estimation: 3.4 billion EUR; Consultation of people dead or reported missing.

2013

January
• Toolkit international workshop in Đurđevac, Croatia

February
• National workshop on River Prut in Moldova

March
• Toolkit international workshop in Glasgow, UK

April
• National workshop on Drava River in Austria, Croatia and Hungary

May
• 2nd toolkit international workshop in Split, Croatia

June
• National workshop on Drava River in Slovenia, Italy and Hungary

July
• National workshop on Drava River in Slovenia

August
• International workshop on River Drava in Hungary

September
• International workshop on Drava River in Croatia

October
• 3rd local workshop on Drava River in Slovenia

November
• Toolkit international workshop in Galati, Romania

December
• 2nd toolkit international workshop in Sarajevo, BiH

2014

January
• 3rd toolkit international workshop in Split, Croatia

February
• Toolkit international workshop in Vienna, Austria

March
• 3rd toolkit international workshop in Split, Croatia

April
• 1st toolkit international workshop in BiH

May
• 1st toolkit international workshop in Sarajevo, BiH

June
• International workshop on River Prut in Moldova

July
• 2nd toolkit international workshop in BiH

August
• International workshop on River Prut in Serbia

September
• 1st toolkit international workshop in BiH

October
• Final meeting of SEE River project partners in Ptuj, Slovenia

November
• Toolkit international workshop on River Prut in BiH

December
• Final meeting of SEE River project partners in Vienna, Austria

2012

1 OCTOBER 2012: START OF THE PROJECT

October
• Kick-off meeting in Vienna, Austria.

November
• Pre-meeting of the project quality management board in BiH, Italy

FEBRUARY 2014: CRISIS IN UKRAINE STARTS

February
• 1st toolkit international workshop in Bosnia and Herzegovina

1 JULY 2013 - CROATIA JOINS THE EU

January
• Toolkit international workshop in Bled, Slovenia

2014

30 NOVEMBER 2014: END OF THE PROJECT

November
• Final meeting of SEE River project partners in Vienna, Austria

30 November 2014

• Toolkit international workshop in BiH

• International workshop on Drava River in Croatia

• Final meeting of SEE River project partners in Ptuj, Slovenia

3rd edition of ERC integrated with SEE River project final event in Vienna, Austria

16
DRAVA RIVER PILOT AREAS

“SEE River was a very ambitious concept to be executed by a complex partnership in a big region with a partly incomparable diversity of local problems and stakeholder attitudes. However, trying the impossible inspired us and allowed for some real innovations.”

“The nature of the project and strong stakeholder involvement presented a great challenge to create an interesting yet professional appearance of the main communication tools and project results that would promote activities and ensure strong involvement of experts and other individuals in all 6 SEE river corridors.”

“WWF Austria contributed through its year-long and SEE region-wide experience in river restoration, integrated river corridor management, stakeholder cooperation and its knowledge of the Drava River within the Transboundary UNESCO biosphere reserve ‘Mura-Drava-Danube’ to the project design, various meetings, the Toolkit, Drava Analysis and Action Plan, and it provided information about the river catchment manager model. WWF Austria will promote the use of the Toolkit and the experiences gained in its future work on other rivers and within its network. WWF is committed to continue the SEE river partnership and network. New joint projects, meetings and events are planned to ensure the sustainability of the project findings.”

TANJA NIKOWITZ
WWF Austria, Associated Strategic Partner

PRIMOŽ SKRT
SEE River Communication Manager

ALEXANDER ZINKE
Coordinator for Drava Pilot Areas Activities
Drava River pilot area, Italy

VISUALISATION AS A DECISION SUPPORT TOOL

The SEE River project set up a solid base for real engagement of the relevant stakeholders for a sustainable management of the Drava River corridor and the development of useful tools to support the river corridor management process.

Main results

Specific studies to anchor the river vision, identify the river corridor, evaluate flood risk mitigation and find possible land use exchanges were conducted for the pilot areas along the Drava River and the Fischleintalbach. Within the SEE River project, methods for river corridor management were elaborated and applied. An analysis and comparison of various flood protection solutions was completed and protection measures for streams were proposed. The way was paved to reflect on how to implement the planned hydro-morphological enhancement. As a result of the workshop activities, we enhanced the overall decision-making process and the associated communication flow.

How they were achieved

Since a visualisation of the planned river corridor modifications is essential to align different perceptions of stakeholders and decision makers about future river corridor modification scenarios, a suitable visualisation tool as a support for decision making in river corridor management of the Drava River in Italy was elaborated. A study trip to Styria (Austria) provided valuable know-how to representatives from municipalities and public authorities, as well as land owners and farmers concerning the implementation of measures. The promotion of a transparent management process increases the acceptance of decisions.

The future

The results achieved and the methodological approach used to achieve these solutions will serve as a model and will be transferred to other river corridor management processes in South Tyrol. They will also be the basis for carrying on further activities on the Drava River. The knowledge gained will be disseminated through various capacity building initiatives useful for other river corridor management processes. The participative approach is a particularly important and mandatory component of contemporary river corridor management, while no measures can be implemented without transparent evaluation of the expected performance.

DID YOU KNOW?

Five springs feed the Drava River in its source area. In summers with particularly scarce rainfall, the Drava River sometimes dries up from its source to its junction with the Rio Sesto in San Candido. As the main tributary, the Rio Sesto features higher discharges; nevertheless, the name of the Drava River remains the same.

PILOT AREA PARTNER:
1) Department of Hydraulic Engineering, Autonomous Province of Bolzano - South Tyrol

“THE DRAVA RIVER CONNECTS DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE. LET’S RESPECT THIS VALUE AND MANAGE THE DRAVA RIVER IN A CONTEMPORARY WAY.”

RUDOLF POLLINGER
Head of the Department for Hydraulic Engineering, Autonomous Province of Bolzano - South Tyrol

SIZE: 0.2 km²; 0.5 km²
RIVER SECTION LENGTH: 1 km; 4 km

The Drava River connects different countries, communities and people. Let’s respect this value and manage the Drava River in a contemporary way.”

RUDOLF POLLINGER
Head of the Department for Hydraulic Engineering, Autonomous Province of Bolzano - South Tyrol
Drava River pilot area, Austria

ON-GOING IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF MEASURES

Stakeholders engaged in the project agree to continue the successful work of developing a safe, ecologically precious living environment along the Drava River for the next decades - with many measures to be implemented.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Almost 30 of the 70 river kilometres, thus around 43% of our Drava River pilot corridor, have to some extent already been restored during the last 20 years.

PILOT AREA TEAM:
1) Regional Government of Carinthia, Department 8 - Environment, Water and Nature Protection
2) REVITAL Integrative Naturraumplanung GmbH
3) Zinke Environment Consulting for CEE on behalf of Federal Ministry for Environment

**ON-GOING IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF MEASURES**

**Main results**

Together with stakeholders and experts, we evaluated the measures implemented over the past 20 years and their impact on the development of the Drava River. We gained many important results for future work as well as inputs for the process of working together. Although the measures have been effective, there are still some pending problems with respect to river bed erosion, flood protection and ecological improvement. Through the SEE River project, the spirit of working together on this important lifeline of the Drava River was strengthened, while further improvements are possible with the new concept of measures yet to be implemented.

**How they were achieved**

During the last two decades of working along the Drava pilot corridor, we gained knowledge, experience and detailed data on technical and ecological topics. This huge pool of information is kept for future work in a database called DRADA. In parallel to these "hard facts", we also improved our soft skills of working together with people from the region. The process of developing new measures over the next decades will be based on higher levels of confidence and mutual trust.

**The future**

Due to the SEE River project, our team working together for the Drava River got new power. New technical facts were gathered and ideas developed. New skills and techniques for working together in a successful partnership were gained. Well-equipped with these tools, the most important measures from the pool of project ideas called the concept of measures will be implemented during the next three to five years. The planning of flood protection measures together with the ecological and recreational improvement of the Drava River in the municipalities of Oberdrauburg and Berg im Drautal will be the first two future activities.

**“OUR LIFELINE DRAVA - SHARED RESOURCES AND COMMON VALUES.”**

HERBERT MANDLER
Regional Government of Carinthia, Department 8 - Environment, Water and Nature Protection

Size: 247 km²
River section length: 80 km

Nearly 30 of the 70 river kilometres, thus around 43% of our Drava River pilot corridor, have to some extent already been restored during the last 20 years.
Main results

The main intermediate result of the work process in the pilot area was the definition of the pilot river corridor as a basis for future work with sectors and stakeholders involved in the area. Later, based on the common work with stakeholders, maps of environmental hotspots and sectoral development interests were made. As a result of the participatory process in the region, a guiding vision of Drava 2030 was defined as a basis for articulating a consensual river corridor development concept, equipped also with an action plan defining the concrete steps towards the contemporary river.

How they were achieved

The pilot area project work consisted of indoor and outdoor environmental and social analyses, execution of a series of thematic workshops with stakeholders, targeted meetings with mayors of city communities of Maribor and Ptuj and representatives of local communities in the pilot area, as well as regular Slovenian partner team meetings. Strong cooperation with regional development agencies was established and project solutions were integrated into the 2014-2020 Drava region development programme.

The future

The river corridor development concept and projects, defined and proposed in the process on the pilot area, will be developed and implemented through the regional development plan and through a combination of funding programmes. Local action groups to steer and participate in the projects defined in the development concept have been initiated in order to implement and sustain the agreed measures.

SEVERAL SECTORAL INTERESTS ALIGNED IN ONE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Advanced cross-sectoral communication and stakeholder involvement process on national, regional and local levels related to the pilot area contributed to the adjustment of sectoral development interests in the pilot river corridor, resulting in a consensual river corridor development concept and consequent action plan towards a contemporary river.

THE DRAVA RIVER IS THE MOST POWERFUL CONNECTING ELEMENT OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN THE AREA. THEREFORE, IT IS NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH THE URBAN REGION OF PODRAVJE, WHICH WOULD BOOST INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL ISSUES AND REGIONAL PROJECTS RELATED TO THE DRAVA RIVER.”

DID YOU KNOW?

There were more than two hundred gold miners before the First World War in today’s Slovenian and Croatian sections of the Drava and Mura rivers. Gold is still present. Thus, it is still possible to find enthusiasts searching for small shining pieces of gold along the Drava River corridor.

Drava River pilot area, Slovenia

Size: 160 km²
River section length: 47 km

Advances in cross-sectoral communication and stakeholder involvement process on national, regional and local levels related to the pilot area contributed to the adjustment of sectoral development interests in the pilot river corridor, resulting in a consensual river corridor development concept and consequent action plan towards a contemporary river.
Drava River pilot area, Croatia

STAKEHOLDER AGREEMENT ON FUTURE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A strong network of stakeholders, established during the SEE River project, will follow the ideas elaborated together and “flow” together with the team into future projects.

Main results

Based on collected data and partner cooperation with Croatian Waters and State Institute for Nature Protection, the National Drava River Corridor Analysis Report was created and discussed with our stakeholders as a basis for further planning and decision-making process. Through workshops, we also gained useful inputs for the SEE River Toolkit, which our stakeholders will be able to use in their future work related to the Drava River corridor. Furthermore, the stakeholder network platform was established, and as a final result of our work the Stakeholder Agreement on future cooperation on the Drava River corridor was achieved.

How they were achieved

Presentations of experts from different sectors, questionnaires, meetings, individual interviews, international workshops, seminars, and a significant number of stakeholder inputs, such as project proposals, development visions, map drawings and other valuable information contributed, first of all, to improved cooperation and communication with stakeholders. All this led to successful development and promotion of all our results. Using the multimedia approach through press releases, promotion materials, web releases and pilot area video presentations, the SEE River project was promoted in the best possible way.

The future

Expectations from our action plans are ambitious. We hope that some of them will develop into good and solid projects. Based on the Stakeholder Agreement and hand in hand with our stakeholders, we will try to do our best in sustainable integrated river management, nature protection, and tourism development, as well as all other issues related to the Drava River. All documents, results from performed workshops and guidelines will also help us make the spatial plan of the Drava River and will certainly boost the spatial planning process in the Drava River corridor in Croatia.

DID YOU KNOW?

There is a legend about the Drava monster (Dravski neman), which lives in the water, hiding in the dark places along the river. Supposedly, several pictures were taken near Legrad in mysterious circumstances. You can go on an organised monster hunt if you are brave enough.

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Drava River pilot area, Croatia

“Gether with 6 4 rivers!” - A Slogan that sums up the SEE River Project Experience in the Croatian Pilot Area.

BRANKA SPANIČEK AND MAJA TURINSKI

PILOT AREA PARTNERS:
1. Institute for Spatial Planning of the Region of Koprivnica-Križevci County
2. Hrvatske vode, Legal Entity for Water Management
3. State Institute for Nature Protection

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Mike Chen

"Gether with 6 4 rivers!" - A Slogan that sums up the SEE River Project Experience in the Croatian Pilot Area.

BRANKA SPANIČEK AND MAJA TURINSKI

PILOT AREA PARTNERS:
1. Institute for Spatial Planning of the Region of Koprivnica-Križevci County
2. Hrvatske vode, Legal Entity for Water Management
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Due to river engineering works, the Hungarian Drava has become only half as long as it was originally, at the end of the 18th century. Currently, tectonic movements are very intense in some locations. The uplift of the area is estimated at 2.5 cm/year. As a consequence, the Drava River is slowly drifting into the Croatian territory.

**Main results**

Diverging ideas and contradicting stakeholder goals were facilitated towards consensus during a series of workshops and regular meetings with stakeholders. Discussions among participants led to a better understanding of each other’s particular ideas and the economic, social and physical constraints that should be taken into account while pursuing goals. During the course of the workshops, considerable trust has been built regarding the usefulness and efficiency of the SEE River project methodology. The main result achieved in the Hungarian Drava pilot area is the shared interest in implementing complex river corridor restoration projects that contribute both to conservation and development goals.

**How they were achieved**

The two main tools were the multi-faceted analysis of the river corridor and the stakeholder participation process. These two were applied in parallel and in synergy. Information, aspirations and views revealed by stakeholders became the main aspects of the analysis. Technical, scientific or methodological results of the analysis were able to provide reliable arguments in the course of the dialogue. Analyses helped keep expectations within a realistic framework, and the participatory procedure ensured that proposed solutions will have maximum support of involved parties.

**The future**

There are three stepping stones that the SEE River project has left behind for the future. The Stakeholder Agreement that outlines the priorities of the region: halting of the riverbed erosion, promotion of environmentally sound agricultural land use on the floodplain, complex river corridor revitalisation including river restoration works, development of tourism, and nature conservation. The Action Plan that lists the priority activities and responsibilities for the next four years and beyond. The Stakeholder Organisation that will be the forum for the stakeholders and focal point of integrated river corridor development in the Hungarian Drava corridor - and, hopefully, a partner for transboundary cooperation among all Drava countries.

**“PEOPLE IN THE HUNGARIAN DRAVA RIVER CORRIDOR HAD TO PAY A HIGH PRICE FOR LIVING IN THE SHADOW OF THE IRON CURTAIN FOR HALF A CENTURY. ISOLATION, DEPOPULATED VILLAGES, POOR INFRASTRUCTURE, LOW ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IS THE HERITAGE THEY HAVE TO Cope WITH. THE DRAVA RIVER AND ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IS THE ONLY ASSET THEY STILL HAVE. IT SEEMS TO ME THEY ARE DETERMINED TO PRESERVE IT.”

MIKLÓS SZALAY
Budapest, Hungary
"I am particularly happy both for contributing to the integrated management of the Neretva River and learning about problems and their solutions for other river corridors in SEE. I would also like to emphasise the improvement of skills required for the coordination of interests and harmonisation of different demands of the project partners within work packages."

"Based on its regional reputation regarding water management, the IJC contributed to achieving project outcomes with professional knowledge and capacity. The IJC will make efforts to use the project results in decision-making processes related to the management of river corridors in Serbia. Moreover, the establishment of the Kolubara River Declaration will be initiated. It is expected that each SEE River project partner will continuously implement measures adopted in pilot area action plans. It is also expected that those measures and lessons learnt will be put into practice in other river corridors."
Main results

On the Bodrog River, the objective was to identify the main characteristics regarding spatial planning and land use management as a basis for seeking consensus on future objectives in the area. An inventory of relevant national legislation and EU Directives and a specific assessment of their impact were done. A stakeholder network was established in Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine, a common international vision was agreed upon and actions were identified that will lead to realizing the vision. In the framework of the Bodrog River pilot activities, project outputs are creating conditions for better future solutions of the specific problems in the Bodrog River riparian countries.

How they were achieved

A combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches ensured valuable synergies. Through support of local communities and governmental institutions, we aimed to find solutions to potential conflicts arising from the use of the common river corridor and to boost collaboration among sectors and stakeholders. Stakeholder workshops were organized in all three riparian countries with national participants and inputs were combined and vision agreed at the international stakeholder workshop in Slovakia. The exchange of views between stakeholders at local, regional and national levels was promoted to explore the development of ideas for future management in the river corridors, related to different sectors: nature conservation, flood protection, tourism, agriculture, river navigation, forestry, fishing, etc.

The future

The project contributed to bridging gaps among different sectors and their policies. During national and international workshops, the priorities of individual measures for improvement of management of the international Bodrog River corridor were discussed, selected and harmonised. Based on analyses and consultations of stakeholder groups in the Bodrog River countries, new projects for the new EU 2014-2020 financial period will be initiated. The main effort for the proposition of the follow-up projects was focused on trans-border cooperation.

CONTRIBUTION TO BRIDGING GAPS AMONG SECTORAL INTERESTS

In the process of the SEE River Project common in the process of the SEE River project, common agreement on river corridor management was achieved for harmonising development and conservation interests along the Bodrog River corridor.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Bodrog River crosses the Slovakian-Hungarian border at the lowest point of Slovakia - at 94.3 meters above the sea level.

PILOT RIVER PARTNERS:
1) Slovak Hydro-meteorological Institute, Slovakia
2) National Institute of Environment, Hungary
3) Blue Rivers, Ukraine

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Main results

The SEE River project provided a new approach for sustainable management in the Neretva River corridor based on open communication with all actors who live in the corridor and involved them in the process. A top-down and bottom-up approach was applied, with participation of representatives from different sectors, such as water management, spatial planning, nature conservation, environment protection, energy, agriculture, tourism and forestry. Different administrative levels, such as municipalities located along the Neretva River, utility companies, universities, NGOs active along the river, and ministries on local, cantonal, entity and state levels were also included.

How they were achieved

The common vision, representing the Draft Neretva River Framework for future sustainable development of the Neretva River, has been agreed during the national stakeholder workshops in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Top-down and bottom-up approaches were applied with workshop participation of representatives from different sectors, such as water management, spatial planning, nature conservation, environment protection, energy, agriculture, tourism and forestry. Different administrative levels, such as municipalities located along the Neretva River, utility companies, universities, NGOs active along the river, and ministries on local, cantonal, entity and state levels were also included.

The future

The next step is to strengthen the multi-sectoral stakeholder network and common future perspectives in each of the countries within the river corridor. Local stakeholders from both countries should agree on the possible solutions for the recognised existing problems along the river corridor as a plan for future activities.

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In the dense water system network, the Neretva River holds a significant position among rivers of the Dinaric Alps region with regard to its diverse ecosystems and habitats, flora and fauna, cultural and historic heritage, but also as an “area of Outstanding Natural Beauty” and, most importantly, due to its clean, fresh drinking water. It is also the largest karst river in the Dinaric Alps in the entire eastern part of the Adriatic basin, which belongs to the Adriatic river watershed.

The first common vision and objectives for transnational river corridor

The SEE River project encouraged the development of the first common vision and objectives for cross-sectoral transnational Neretva River corridor management supported by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia stakeholder network.
**did you Know?**

Recently, it has been discovered that the Prut River hosts a big population of the largest - and at the same time the most endangered - mayfly species in Europe, the Tisza mayfly (Palingenia longicauda).

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**Prut River pilot corridor**

**INCREASED INTEREST OF STAKEHOLDERS FROM RIPARIAN COUNTRIES**

The SEE River project provided the opportunity for encouraging and facilitating dialogue with main stakeholders involved in the Prut River management, identifying the key problems and goals and finding common solutions about future transnational river corridor management.

**Main results**

A clear and priority future activity has been identified and this represents the strengthening of cooperation in terms of legislative acts in relation to the Prut River quantitative and qualitative management. The identification of challenges and obstacles was set up in order to find solutions for the main gaps and problems related to the integrated and sustainable management of the Prut River, taking in consideration the present benefits and also the benefits for future generations.

**How they were achieved**

An awareness and communication strategy was developed, including three main types of activities: consultation, stakeholder involvement and dissemination. Each of these activities had different application periods and resource allocation schemes. The main aim of this strategy was to produce a coherent and appropriate frame necessary to communicate the needs, constraints and opportunities obtained from the integration of European directives in the water field. Stakeholder engagement was conducted in three phases in accordance with the objectives and purpose of the project communication and stakeholder participation strategy. Stakeholders came together at three national workshops in all three riparian countries, concluding with an international workshop in Moldova in July 2014.

**The future**

The Prut River is facing many challenges, including administrative and legislative issues. The river corridor approach developed within the SEE River project increased the interest of the Prut River stakeholders in all riparian countries. The results of the project will upgrade the activities of bilateral commissions between the Prut River riparian countries. Proposals for specific working groups related to different thematic areas as the basis for future Prut River management will be elaborated.

**“LET’S BRING TOGETHER IDEAS, PEOPLE AND PROJECTS SUPPORTING THE DYNAMICS AND BIODIVERSITY OF THIS LOWER PRUT GREEN CORRIDOR AND RELATED ECOTOURISM PERSPECTIVES!”**

GABRIELA COSTEA
PhD, Natural Sciences Complex Museum Galati, Romania

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**Pilot river length: 967 km**

**Pilot river basin size: 27,820 km²**

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Currently, it has been discovered that the Prut River hosts a big population of the largest - and at the same time the most endangered - mayfly species in Europe, the Tisza mayfly (Palingenia longicauda).
**DID YOU KNOW?**

Due to its emerald-green water, the river is promoted as "The Emerald Beauty". It is said to be one of the rare rivers in the world that retain such a colour throughout their length.

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**INSTITUTIONALISATION OF STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**

Activities led to concrete steps towards better cooperation in the Soča River pilot corridor and enabled the establishment of a formal stakeholder body.

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**Main results**

The primary goals were raising awareness on cooperation and engagement of stakeholders. A common vision for the Soča River was developed in a way as a moral agreement in which the need for recognition of the Soča River as a symbol, brand and opportunity was exposed, as well as the urge to see the river as shared responsibility and obligation to manage it in a sustainable way. There are two major results. The new Decree for water flow regime on upper Soča River was prepared at the time of the project and has been approved by 3 municipality councils. The second is the institutionalisation of stakeholder cooperation in the framework of the Soča River Foundation, a body that gathers stakeholders from the river corridor with the purpose of enabling sustainable development of the Soča River.

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**How they were achieved**

The Soča River is highly significant for numerous stakeholders with sometimes opposing interests. Large importance means high interests and with the right approach it is not difficult to convert individual interests into awareness and eventually into cooperation and engagement that result in win-win situations for all - including the river. Many meetings, round tables and individual interviews were organized, including the celebration of Soča River Day as the main event. The bottom-up approach and stakeholder engagement were a very strong tool on the Soča River. The SEE River project activities also used the synergies with other ongoing projects in the region to support the activities, together forming a cluster for cooperation on the Soča River.

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**The future**

As a transnational river, the Soča River requires international management. Therefore, activities will continue also on the Italian side in order to find a partner similar to the Soča River Foundation in Slovenia. The foundation has been set and new financial perspectives are a great opportunity to follow the idea and support the process with the aim of permanent stakeholder engagement. The goal is to support sustainable development along the river in order to ensure that the Soča River will become a contemporary river. The Soča River Foundation is the place to support such efforts in the future.

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**PILOT RIVER PARTNERS:**

1) Soča Valley Development Centre, Slovenia
2) Institute for Water of the Republic of Slovenia, Slovenia
3) Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, Slovenia

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**"LIVING TOGETHER, SHARING THE SAME SPACE, RESPECTING EACH OTHER. SOČA CATCHMENT - ONE RIVER, ONE ECOSYSTEM."**

-MIRO KRISTAN-
Soča Valley Development Centre
Participatory methodology was the key element for achieving significant results for the Vjosa River. All project activities were implemented under the supervision of the project team within the AGS assisted by independent experts. Collection of information and data, using communication channels, assessment and a complementary study created the bases for discussion and other actions. Individual consultations, sharing reports and draft documents as well as organising workshops and meetings were some of the actions for assuring participation of many institutions and stakeholders. Using electronic communication channels and TV media was very effective in enlarging the participation and disseminating the project outputs.

A detailed assessment of the Vjosa River, accompanied by maps including ongoing activities and future projects, was elaborated, considering its corridor, protected areas, nature monuments, industrial sites, hydro-power utilisation, flooding areas, urban and tourism areas. A stakeholder network was established and put into function, including the official commission for transboundary waters. A strategic platform for the Vjosa River management was prepared with a clear vision and objectives through interactive participation of institutions and stakeholders. NGOs and other stakeholders campaigning for the preservation of the Vjosa River were reactivated.

Reports and documents on the Vjosa River produced during the SEE River project form a solid foundation for the elaboration of the management plan with the active participation of the network of stakeholders and institutions already established and in function. Based on communication with relevant authorities in Albania, legal and administrative conditions have been created for official and technical communication with the Greek counterpart so as to reach the agreement on common management of the Vjosa River on the transboundary level. This model can be used for other national and transboundary rivers in Albania.
The SEE River project is a project about the future - the future of rivers and their stakeholders, and the future of cooperation that will contribute to lasting benefits for both.

That is why, from the very start of the planning phase of our project, we were determined to launch a permanent cooperation of organisations and individuals from involved sectors with influence on river corridor management in order to ensure long-term change of management practices in river corridors and contribute to river restoration.

The future of our achievements will be sustained...

- by integrating the prepared background and planning documents into sectoral plans or policies on local, regional and national levels, which was ensured through well-planned and facilitated work on all ten pilot areas that included the main policy-level actors,
- by partners, representing the relevant local, regional and national authorities and other public institutions, ensuring the implementation of agreed measures as well as the use of the SEE River approach and principles of work through our own work and daily practice,
- by achieving the engagement of stakeholders, involved in the consensus-building activities in pilot areas, taking over the responsibility for implementation of the agreed actions through over 30 initiated follow-up actions, prepared to be implemented during the next five to ten years,
- by empowering the stakeholders along all six rivers through the process of building stakeholder dialogue, thus building strong social capital that we will be able to utilise in years to come to further facilitate integrative management of river corridors in South East Europe and beyond,
- by setting up a permanent network of SEE River experts, skilled in facilitating cross-sectoral cooperation and in transferring the knowledge to other river corridor practitioners in other regions and countries with the help of the SEE River Toolkit, and
- by further providing a meeting point of river corridor professionals and other stakeholders through sustaining the SEE River webpage, as well as Facebook and LinkedIn profiles, through which the stakeholders from all SEE and beyond can get in direct contact with the SEE River network of experts to assist them with their own concrete challenges of cross-sectoral river corridor management, supporting the river restoration processes.

Ensuring consensus of all stakeholders for sustainable river corridor management is not an end goal, it is an ongoing process. With the SEE River project, the partners have set the basis for future work. Therefore, with the SEE River project ending, the work on and with the rivers and their stakeholders is in fact starting in full swing.
SEE RIVER PROJECT PARTNERS

SEE RIVER GENERAL INFO:
Project Name: Sustainable Integrated Management of International River Corridors in SEE Countries
Duration of the project: October 2012 to November 2014
Value: 2,107,354.30 EUR
Funding: South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme
Website: www.see-river.net

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