



25 years Vienna International Centre



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

MAKING THE DANUBE RIVER PROTECTION CONVENTION A LIVING TOOL

THE DANUBE RIVER BASIN— THE MOST INTERNATIONAL RIVER BASIN IN THE WORLD

The Danube River Basin is the catchment area of the second largest river in Europe and covers 817,000km² in 18 different countries. This makes it the world's most international river basin. More than 80 million people—with different cultures, histories and languages—from the Black forest in Germany down to the shores of the Black Sea, call the Danube Basin their home.

Since rivers know no borders, it is only through a joint effort of the Basin countries that the environmental problems of the Danube River Basin can be addressed.

The *Danube River Protection Convention* was developed in response to this realization and came into force in 1998. Today, 13 Danube River Basin countries use it as the legal basis for their efforts geared towards the protection and sustainable use of water and other ecological resources. In addition to the European Union, parties to the Convention include: Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

ICPDR—PART OF THE SOLUTION

The *International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River Basin* (ICPDR) was created to make the Danube River Protection Convention a living tool. Since its establishment, the ICPDR has grown into one of the largest and most active international bodies of river basin management expert in Europe. Its ambitious mission is to promote and coordinate sustainable and equitable water management, including conservation, improvement and rational use of waters for the benefit of the Danube River Basin countries and their people.

The ICPDR pursues its mission by making recommendations for the improvement of water quality, developing mechanisms for flood and accident control, agreeing on standards for emissions and by assuring that these are reflected in the Contracting Parties' national legislations and applied in their policies.

The ICPDR is formed by the contracting countries' national delegations, which are made up of representatives from the highest ministerial levels, technical experts, and representatives of the civil society and of the scientific community.

* Ratification process under way.

ICPDR EXPERT GROUPS—WORKING FOR THE DANUBE

In order to make the ICPDR effective and operational, international expert groups have been set up to develop strategies and guidelines for themes of importance for the Danube Basin. Regular expert group meetings on different levels ensure close cooperation and efficient information exchange between the Basin countries.

COOPERATION—THE KEY TO SUCCESS

In order to achieve its goals, the ICPDR cooperates with regional and international organizations, non-governmental agencies, and the scientific community.

Environmental protection is a community responsibility. To encourage public participation in the assessment and governance of environmental measures and in the decision-making process, efforts have been made to strengthen and develop the NGO community in the Danube Basin. These organizations play an important role in environmental awareness raising and the implementation of projects on nature protection, wetland rehabilitation, ecological farming and urban sanitation.

CHALLENGES FACING THE ICPDR

The challenging tasks of the ICPDR are not likely to decrease in the future; rather, they are to grow as the European Union grows and consolidates. In order for the Danube region to thrive, it is critical that socio-economic innovation should be pursued without jeopardizing the Basin's important ecological resources and values. This can only be done if international cooperation in the Danube Basin is further developed and enhanced.

The ICPDR strives to actively contribute towards this goal by launching a number of initiatives, such as the further reduction of the pollution and the restoring of the ecological network, which should make the Danube Basin a showcase for sustainable water management in a changing world.

Permanent Secretariat of the ICPDR

Vienna International Centre

PO Box 500, A 1400 Vienna, Austria

Tel: +(43) (1) 26060-5738, Fax: +(43) (1) 26060-5895

E-mail: icpdr@unvienna.org, <http://www.icpdr.org>