

Danubeparks Newsletter 04.04.2012

Dear Partners and Friends of DANUBE PARKS,

Many of you have followed our activities in the last years or have participated in the various events and activities. As you, therefore, might know, the first transnational project of the DANUBE PARKS Network, co-financed by the ETC-SEE programme, ran from April 2009 to February 2012. The end of our first project is the time to look back and summarize the most important successes, but also highlight the plans and challenges for the future.

DANUBE PARKS Evening Event

The first joint project was finalized with a [public evening event](#) in Vienna on February 27th. Information about the activities and achievements of the DANUBE PARKS Network was provided by the project manager and network spokesman and can be found also in the [Project Report 2009-2012](#).



International Danube stakeholders then discussed the opportunities and challenges for biodiversity protection, but also integrative development along the Danube River. To make clear the needs for the future, pointy caricatures were painted and handed over to stakeholders as a reminder of their tasks in the future.

Impact on policy level

The Network of Danube River Protected Areas elaborated a number of transnational strategies and transnational implementation concepts within the first three years of Danube-wide collaboration.



The [White-tailed Eagle Action Plan](#) was presented to the Council of Europe / Bern Convention in December 2011, and as a result adopted and published by this international body. Protected Areas are key areas for the White-tailed Eagle. Facing the high responsibility for this flagship species, the Danube Protected Areas have stressed their willingness to take over a leading role in the implementation of the Action Plan in the future.



The [Danube-wide monitoring of indicator species for river dynamics](#) – Little-ringed Plover and Sand Martin – was successfully implemented in spring 2011; the striking results are now published in a brochure. As a useful tool to monitor the ecological status of a river, within the follow-up project STEP 2.0, the Danube-wide monitoring should be repeated, this time as part of the Joint Danube Survey implemented by the ICPDR. With this collaboration, the scientific data collected by the DANUBEPARKS Network becomes part of a political tool and raises its impact.

Local action for an integrated habitat network



DANUBEPARKS has implemented various pilot projects on local level, bound together by experience-exchange and strategies on transnational level. The pilot projects range from reforestation with native trees, grassland restoration by removal of invasive species and management by mowing as well as monitoring and conservation of flagship species such as White-tailed Eagle.

Regarding river restoration, embankments have been removed, side arms connected, and channels cleaned from sediments to allow natural flows again. Within tourism, all Protected Areas have raised their capacity by the Joint Ranger Training and other workshops; many have introduced new offers like boat or bike tours.



As one effective tool, [cross-border management plans](#) have been developed to enforce the network of valuable habitats, where the efficiency of protection measures is raised by common management principles and actions. This is especially important in border zones, so joint conservation concepts have been developed for the areas of Austria-Slovakia, Hungary-Croatia, and Hungary-Serbia. Additionally, a restoration concept has been developed for the Romanian-Ukrainian Danube Delta.

Joint voice for common goals

With a joint approach regarding important management and restoration topics in riparian Protected Areas, the basis for common communication has been laid. Efforts to reach the relevant stakeholders have been started by closer cooperation with international Danube stakeholders such as ICPDR, WWF DCP, EUSDR, and DCC. In the future, this should be enforced, and further complemented by closer integration of forestry and navigation stakeholders, as well as stronger representation of the network on EU policy level.



The communication towards the wide public resides on several events as well as information material. The International Danube Festivals with changing locations ([2010 – Duna-Dráva National Park](#), [2011 – Donau-Auen National Park](#)) were the yearly crystallisation moment, where culture, culinary, music & dance came together and celebrated the joint natural and cultural heritage. Another effort was put into the further development of visitor services. With new tools such as an [online tourism platform](#), the services of the Protected Areas are now more easily accessible.

In the future, this effort will be strengthened, by strengthening the international perspective in visitor programmes and further enforcing high quality criteria in the offers.

DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0

A lot has been achieved, but numerous results need follow-up work in order to fully develop the impact they might have on the development of the Danube River and its hinterlands. Therefore, the DANUBEPARKS Network has submitted a follow-up project within the 4th call of the ETC-SEE programme, DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0.



The main aims are to stronger anchor the network on various levels – internally by capacity-building for the project managers, regionally by enlargement of the network, externally by stronger focus on policy work – and to implement the activities outlined in various strategies that have been developed. The results and experiences of the first project in this way lead directly to the goals for the second one.

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