



Results overview for the Drava river basin (Hungary)

This fact sheet summarises the results of the Water and Wetland Index for the Hungarian part of the Drava river basin. Information about the project and the different issues presented in this fact sheet can be found in the WWF Report “Water and Wetland Index - Critical issues in water policy across Europe” (2003).

Water Resources in the Drava river basin (Hungary)

The Drava is one of the largest tributaries of the Danube in Hungary. This 715 km long river comes from the Italian Alps through Austria, Slovenia and creates the border between Hungary and Croatia. Two thirds of its catchment area lies outside the country. The Barcs-Ortilos section of the river is almost unregulated, and remains in a nearly natural state. Downstream from Barcs however, the river is regulated. The most significant problems affecting the river and its basin are: straightening of natural curves, deepening of the riverbed, quickening of the flow, drastic decrease in groundwater in the lower catchment area, artificial separation of the oxbows, closing down of side branches and the extreme daily water level fluctuation due to hydroelectric power plants upstream.



Application of Integrated River Basin Management principles

Public participation in water management

Information provision

The availability of information concerning decision-making processes in water management is scarce. Hopefully, with the accession into the European Union, the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) at a regional level will improve the present situation.

Existence of arrangements¹ 😞

Adequacy² 😞

Public consultation

The responsible authorities send out documents for consultation only in some cases and, when this happens, they only provide them to relevant stakeholders. The public is usually excluded from this process. Documents are not distributed in time, so there is insufficient time to give considered answers by the consultees.

Existence of arrangements 😞

Adequacy 😞

Active involvement

Workshops and meetings mainly serve to give information by the official bodies (one-way communication). The opportunity to influence decision making processes by the public is rare.

Existence of arrangements 😞

Adequacy 😞

¹ This assesses the existence of arrangements (e.g. the celebration of information days, the existence of public consultation procedures, the existence of water management plans, etc).

² This assesses the adequacy of the existing arrangements and their implementation on the ground. It is based on the opinion of WWF, partner NGOs and other water stakeholders.

Integrated management of water resources

Transboundary cooperation

The international integration of water management is being realised in the framework of Hungarian and Croatian water management and policy agreements. Cooperation is satisfactory only in some areas (flood and pollution monitoring and warning). There is an urgent need for transboundary cooperation concerning nature protection issues.

Existence of arrangements	☹️
Adequacy	☹️

Integration of competencies in water management

The local environmental, nature protection and water management authorities belong to one ministry. Although for example permission for any interventions in the basin must be agreed upon by multiple local authorities, in reality the cooperation between the official bodies is insufficient. The required integration hopefully will be achieved in the WFD implementation process.

Existence of arrangements	☹️
Adequacy	☹️

Integration of water policy with sector policies

Water needs of the different water-consuming sectors are harmonised in a river management plan elaborated by the local Water Authority. However some issues like wetland habitats, tourism and recreation are overshadowed.

Existence of arrangements	😊
Adequacy	☹️

Wetland management

Integration of wetlands into water management

In theory, both the governmental and professional sectors value the key role of wetlands in the creation and maintenance of good ecological status of rivers. Despite this, the ecological based river management principles are not put into practice at a regional level.

Existence of arrangements	😊
Adequacy	☹️

Wetland protection policy

The National Park has developed a management plan for the protected wetland habitats in the region. Non-protected but valuable freshwater habitats in the catchment need more attention in the wetland policy.

Existence of arrangements	😊
Adequacy	☹️

Wetland restoration policy

Restoration projects in the region initiated by the Water Management bodies are very poor. However the local National Park has habitat management and rehabilitation plans as well as activities on the Drava. Similarly, civil society organisations are active in the region.

Existence of arrangements	😊
Adequacy	☹️

Response to key pressures and impacts on freshwater ecosystems

Water quantity problems

Approach to the problem

The governmental bodies and authorities acknowledge the water quantity problems caused by industry, agriculture and households in the river management plan in force, but there is no strategy to handle them. A solution to these problems is outlined in the WFD national implementation strategy, which works on a national level only for the time being.

Adequacy



Legal & regulatory instruments

Water abstraction/consumption is regulated through bans, quotas, permits or licensing, but regulations obliging the sectors to use technology that reduces water abstraction and use is very poor.

Adequacy



Financial & economic instruments

During the last few years in Hungary there has been a significant increase in the funds for the modernisation of production methods and technologies. These are aimed at the reduction of over-consumption of water, but the access and use of these funds is made difficult by the fact that the Drava region is an economically and socially deprived area.

Adequacy



Information & voluntary instruments

The information given to civil society and professionals is not adequate at the regional level. The greatest progress can be observed in the information and preparation of regional non-governmental water suppliers (regional water management societies).

Adequacy



Water quality problems

Approach to the problem

The governmental bodies and authorities acknowledge the water quality problems caused by industry, agriculture and households, but the enforcement of the solutions to these problems is weak.

Adequacy



Legal & regulatory instruments

Despite the fact that Hungarian regulations have strong sanctions concerning pollution, in reality the imposed punishment is too little.

Adequacy



Financial & economic instruments

Although the canalisation and management of industrial and household sewage water is developing and the agricultural water treatment is supported by the government, the current capacity for managing and treating wastewater is still insufficient. In the sanctions against pollution there is a huge gap in the charges/taxes on the use of pesticides and fertilisers. Or the removal of production subsidies for farming methods that cause environmental harm to freshwater ecosystems.

Adequacy



Information & voluntary instruments

The information given to civil society and professionals is not adequate on the regional level.

Adequacy



River fragmentation due to infrastructure

The Hungarian law, which includes several of the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams, applies to this region as well and is taken into account in the current regional river management plan. Moreover, officially the construction of new dams is seriously regulated and bound to environmental impact studies. As at a national level, the weak point of the strategy is that, in practice, it doesn't provide sufficient measures to maintain the river's natural flow and high ecological values. Although there is no dam in the Hungarian stretch of the Drava, the damaging effect of other dams upstream cannot be neglected.

River fragmentation and dams



Although non-structural solutions and measures are formally considered in the flood management strategy and the Hungarian stretch of the Drava has some unregulated reaches, there are still areas where river regulation practices and gravel extraction activities are contradicting the environmentally-friendly statements of the official policy.

River fragmentation and flood defence



Legend:

Good



Fair



Poor



Very poor



Further information

The WWI for Hungary was completed by WWF Hungary.

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