



CASE STUDY

Hungary/Romania: River basin management of the Körös/Crisuri River

The EU Water Framework Directive requires all EU member states to achieve satisfactory water quality of all waters by 2015. Although each country is individually responsible, cooperation over transnational water resources is required. In the Körös/Crisuri river basin, a project was initiated using the expertise and experience of Hungary and Romania, involving all key stakeholders. The key lesson is the importance of public participation.

Background

The Körös/Crisuri River is one of the main sub-basins of the Tisza/Tisa River, being the largest (157,186 km²) and longest (966 km) tributary of the Danube. The springs of the Körös/Crisuri, sub-basin of the Tisza/Tisa shared between Hungary and Romania, are located in the Carpathian Mountains at the Northwest of Romania. Its waters cross Hungarian border when entering into the Pannonian plain. The catchment area covers about 30,000 km², about half in each country. The yearly volume of the water resources is estimated at 3,437 million m³ for the whole basin.

The EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD) was adopted in 2000. It requires all EU Member States to achieve and/or maintain a good chemical and ecological status or potential for surface waters, and a good chemical and quantitative status for ground waters by 2015.

These provisions were accepted by the countries of the whole Danube River Basin as well. One of the milestones of the implementation of the WFD is the elaboration of the water management plan by 2009. Administratively, each country is responsible for the development of a river basin management plan for its territory.

At the same time, basin-wide coordination is necessary for international river basins. The Körös/Crisuri river basin (a sub-basin of the Tisza River) is also shared by two countries: Hungary and Romania. A joint pilot project was launched in 2005 to implement the provisions of the WFD and to help the later elaboration of the coordinated River Basin Management (RBM) Plan.

The results of the Körös/Crisuri project give a sound base for the future preparation of a harmonised Körös/Crisuri river basin management plan.

Actions taken

One of the main goals of the project was to strengthen the Hungarian and Romanian cooperation between organizations in charge of environment and water management

including public participation, data exchange and structuring, and preventing accidental water pollution. The responsible ministries and regional organizations, hydrographic institutions with relevant databases and consulting companies were involved in the project from both countries. The stakeholders, including the public and civil organizations, were also involved in the discussions of the planned improvements. The objectives of the project were achieved mainly through a joint collaborative work between French, Hungarian and Romanian experts, the overall works being supervised by the ICPDR through the steering committee. The major outputs of the project are the following:

1. Elaboration of a harmonized accidental pollution prevention plan;
2. Elaboration of a programmes of measures (PoM's) following the logic of a management plan for the Crisuri Repede/Sebes Körös sub-basin;
3. Preparation of a guidance document gathering the main methodologies used for the main steps leading to the development of a management plan.

The experiments and outputs of the Körös/Crisuri project could be used for other rivers shared by Hungary and Romania (e.g. Szamos/Somes, Maros/Mures), and by all the countries of the Tisza and the Danube basin. The forwarding of the results of the project to the regional levels is ensured by the International Commission on Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), which is the ideal channel for information dissemination in this geographical area.

As all RBM plans should be elaborated by 2009, this pilot project can be helpful for planning. The implementation of the project developed a functioning structure of the co-operation of the two countries` experts and authorities.

Outcomes

The results of the Körös/Crisuri project gave a sound base for the future preparation of a harmonized Körös/Crisuri sub-river basin management plan. The output of the project is homogeneous in every detail, and can be equally useful in both Romania and Hungary. During the project implementation many information and data were exchanged and a common platform was elaborated for data management based on GIS, including maps, which can be sustained in the frame of further transboundary cooperation.

Public participation issues were also addressed in the project frame, which is as essential part of the process. The project also emphasized the necessity to coordinate measures regarding accidental pollution prevention and response activities.

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Lessons Learned

It was learned that with respect to accidental water pollution prevention, the efficiency of data exchange and harmonization should be strengthened. This should be actioned not only at international level but as well between administrative regions of a same country.

As to implementation of WFD, although that several technical efforts have happened, but due to the different GWB delineation processes in Hungary and Romania the harmonization of the transboundary GWB's is still need further inputs, and political agreement.

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Related IWRM Tools

Basin Management Plans

Information Gathering and Sharing Networks

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