

Danube Declaration

Adopted at the ICPDR Ministerial Meeting
8th February 2022

A Vision for Integrated Water Management in Our Shared Basin:
Building a Sustainable Future in the Danube River Basin



Preamble

We, the Ministers, the Member of the European Commission, and the High Officials as those responsible for the implementation of the Danube River Protection Convention:

- (1) *reassert* the “Convention on the Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable use of the Danube River” as a fundamental framework for cooperation on sound water resources management and their sustainable use in the Danube River Basin.
- (2) *appreciate* the work of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) as a coordinating body ensuring co-operation on transboundary water management and coordinating basin-wide implementation of the EU’s Water Framework and Floods Directives.
- (3) *reiterate* the ICPDR three Pillars of Action: “cleaner, healthier and safer” Danube River Basin, also as a contribution to a healthier Black Sea ecosystem.
- (4) *acknowledge* that the joint implementation of the EU Water Framework and Floods Directives by EU member states together with non-EU member states strengthens the common view on a holistic river basin and flood risk management approach for the entire Danube River Basin.
- (5) *welcome* the transformative framework provided by the European Green Deal, its strategies and other relevant EU processes and provisions, and also appreciate the efforts of non-EU member states in this regard.

Adapting to Climate Change

- (6) *welcome* the objectives and key messages of the updated ICPDR Climate Adaptation Strategy (2018).
- (7) *reaffirm* the “Effects of Climate Change (drought, water scarcity, extreme hydrological phenomena and other impacts)” as a new significant water management issue for the Danube River Basin.

We call for actions to be undertaken in the years 2022 to 2027:

- (8) developing sustainable adaptation measures to urgently enhance resilience of aquatic ecosystems to climate change impacts, supporting water balance activities and enhancing cooperation and exchange of good practices on adaptation measures to climate change impacts.

Addressing Pollution

Surface waters

- (9) *reconfirm* that pollution of surface water bodies by organic materials, nutrients and hazardous substances is a significant pressure that needs to be further addressed at basin-wide level.
- (10) *emphasise* that emerging issues such as pollution by plastics and chemicals of emerging concern are future challenges that Danube countries have to face.
- (11) *recognise* that Danube countries have made significant efforts and investments to implement a number of pollution control and safety measures, substantially reducing pollution and making the Danube River Basin's waters cleaner.
- (12) *appreciate* the transboundary cooperation and the outcomes of basin-wide projects and initiatives implemented on monitoring, controlling, and preventing surface water pollution.

We call for actions to be undertaken in the years 2022 to 2027:

- (13) *commit* to continue maintaining the existing measures and implementing additional necessary actions in the urban wastewater, industrial, mining, agricultural, waste management and other production sectors as appropriate, to prevent and further reduce surface water pollution.
- (14) *are determined* to implement the ICPDR policy recommendations on sustainable wastewater management, sustainable agriculture, managing hazardous substances and riverine litter pollution, in particular from plastic and improving the safety of tailings management facilities at national level, as appropriate, in order to achieve an enabling regulatory framework for pollution control.
- (15) *commit* to support maintaining and, if necessary, updating the Danube Transnational Monitoring Network, the Danube Accident Emergency Warning System, the pollution and accident hot-spot inventories and assessment tools as key technical instruments of the ICPDR for protecting water quality.

Groundwater

- (16) *regard* pollution by nutrients as a key pressure that must be prevented primarily through the implementation of the EU Nitrates Directive and the EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive.
- (17) *recognise* that in addition to the measures addressing pollution of surface water by organic substances, nutrients and hazardous substances measures are needed to prevent further significant pressures on groundwater and significant losses of pollutants into groundwater.

Addressing Ecosystems

Hydromorphological alterations

(18) *highlight* the importance of hydromorphological alterations of freshwater ecosystems in the Danube River Basin from flood protection infrastructure, hydropower, navigation, agriculture, and water supply.

(19) *welcome* the main achievements in addressing pressures from hydromorphological alterations, making the Danube River Basin's water healthier through numerous hydromorphological measures already implemented to improve hydromorphological conditions in the period 2009-2021, as well as several basin-wide collaboration projects related to hydromorphology implemented in recent years.

We call for actions to be undertaken in the years 2022 to 2027:

(20) *support* additional measures planned for the period 2022-2027 by encouraging the upgrade of databases on hydromorphological alterations and the improvement of methodologies for hydromorphological pressures assessments.

(21) *support* implementation of restoration, protection and mitigation measures for habitats, river continuity and transboundary ecological migration corridors and in general the improvement of hydromorphological conditions by highlighting the importance of further synergies between flood and drought mitigation measures, nature conservation and hydromorphological measures (implementation of non-structural measures, e. g. floodplain preservation and restoration) and monitoring of measure effectiveness.

Groundwater

(22) *recognise* that over-abstraction of groundwater remains a key pressure.

(23) *ask* to put in place appropriate controls regarding abstraction of waters including registers and applicable authorisation procedures.

(24) *ask* to ensure that in line with the EU Water Framework Directive, available groundwater resources are not exceeded by the long-term annual average rate of abstraction.

Navigation

(25) *support* the continuation of cooperation and meetings with the Danube Commission on the Joint Statement on Development of Inland Navigation and Environmental Protection and the EU METEET (The Mixed Environment Transport External Expert Team) initiative.

Nature protection

(26) *emphasize* the significant potential for synergies with the EU Water Framework Directive, and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, especially with regard to the targets on protected areas, restoration and species/habitats conservation improvement and stresses the need to strengthen cooperation with nature protection authorities.

(27) *express* full support for the ICPDR Sturgeon Strategy (2017) for the Danube flagship species and for the cooperation with the Danube Sturgeon Task Force, with a view to contribute to the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons, *welcome* the progress made in the assessment of possibilities for opening fish migration routes at the Iron Gate dams, *emphasize* the need for ensuring the necessary financial resources for the implementation of technically and economically feasible solutions and *see the need* to discuss sturgeon migratory routes and habitats upstream of Iron Gates as soon as passability of Iron Gates will be foreseeable.

Hydropower

(28) *encourage* further application of the “Guiding Principles on Sustainable Hydropower Development in the Danube Basin” and the continuation of organisation of ICPDR Hydropower Workshops.

Marine Environment

(29) *encourage* Romania and Bulgaria, the EU member states of the Danube River Basin sharing the Black Sea waters, to continue working on the coordination of the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in the Black Sea Region in close cooperation with the Black Sea Commission.

Addressing Flood Risks

(30) *welcome* key achievements of implementation of the EU Floods Directive, highlighting that flood risk management measures and application of the solidarity principle contributed to a significant reduction of flood risks.

(31) *reconfirm* the objectives of the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan Update 2021, which are broad and robust enough to address all relevant aspects of flood risk management including the impacts of climate change.

(32) *give priority*, within the measures in the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan Update 2021, to measures with positive downstream effects such as natural water retention, warning systems, reduction of risk from contaminated sites in floodplain areas or exchange of information and if possible, combining river restoration and flood protection measures for example through restoration of flood plains.

Cooperation and Public Participation

Cooperation

(33) *commit* to further draw upon the cooperation with and the support of the ICPDR Observers and appreciate to continue the cooperation with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region which is essential for water management and will bring further valuable inputs to ICPDR activities through reinforced synergies between both platforms and encouragement of further cooperation on sub-basin level.

Public Participation

(34) *highly value* the variety of ICPDR public participation and consultation activities, particularly during the drafting of both the Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP) and the Danube Flood Risk Management Plan (DFRMP) Updates 2021, as well as important annual flagship events, including Danube Day and Danube Art Master.

(35) *appreciate* the development and use of ICPDR communication tools and channels, which since 2018 have included social media platforms, thus positioning the ICPDR digitally and increasing the visibility of ICPDR achievements and making a mark on the international communications stage.

Highlighting JDS4 as an example for cooperation, research, and outreach activity

(36) *take note* of the success of the new concept of the fourth Joint Danube Survey (JDS4) in 2019 ensuring active participation of all Contracting Parties and appreciate the valuable scientific results of JDS4 including its contribution to water status assessment harmonisation in the Danube River Basin, as well as its considerable effect on awareness raising for the ICPDR.

(37) *request* the ICPDR prepare a fifth Joint Danube Survey (JDS5) to be held in 2025 and commit to secure the necessary funding.

Our Way Forward

We, the Ministers, the Member of the European Commission and High Officials:

(38) *endorse* the updated Danube River Basin Management and Danube Flood Risk Management Plans and commit to implement the measures foreseen in these two Plans.

(39) *commit* ourselves to make all efforts to ensure national actions and to mobilize all necessary resources in support of the implementation of these two Plans as well as all the elements of this Declaration.