Cooperation in the Danube Basin: ICPDR – EUSDR Joint Event

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Enhancing Regional Cooperation in DRB: Stronger Together

Specific Event: Water, Emergency, Disaster Risk Management

3 April 2025 / Mostar (BiH)

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Challenges and Basin-Wide Activities

Transnational Monitoring

Climate Change Strategy

Greener Navigation

Tailings Management

Joint Danube Survey

Accident Warning System

Sustainable Hydropower

Sustainable Agriculture

Stakeholder Involvement/ Public Participation

Holistic river basin approaches integrating emergency response and risk management

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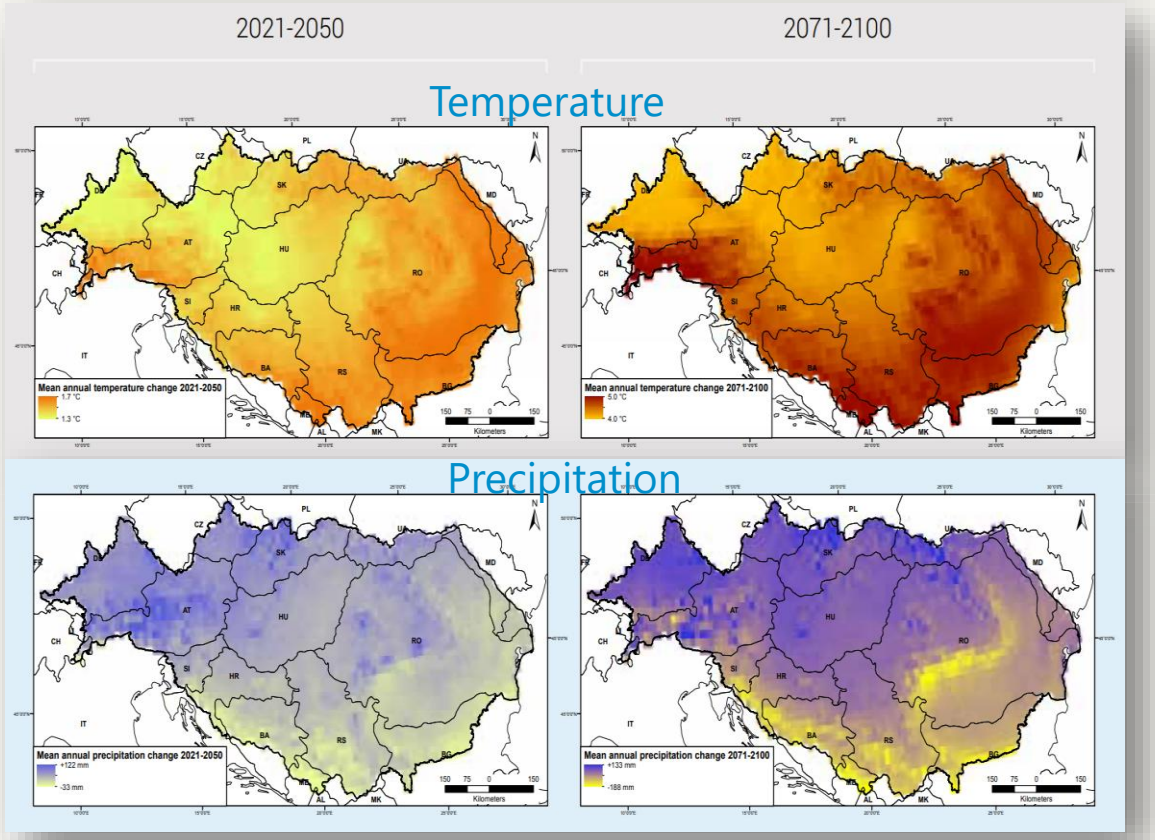
Climate Change Scenarios for the Danube River Basin (DRB)

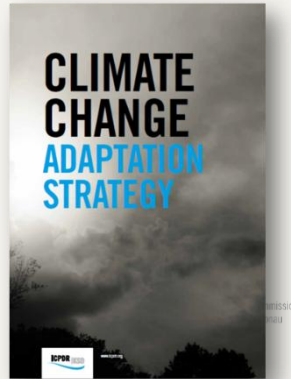


RCP 8.5 of EURO-CORDEX (as of 2018)

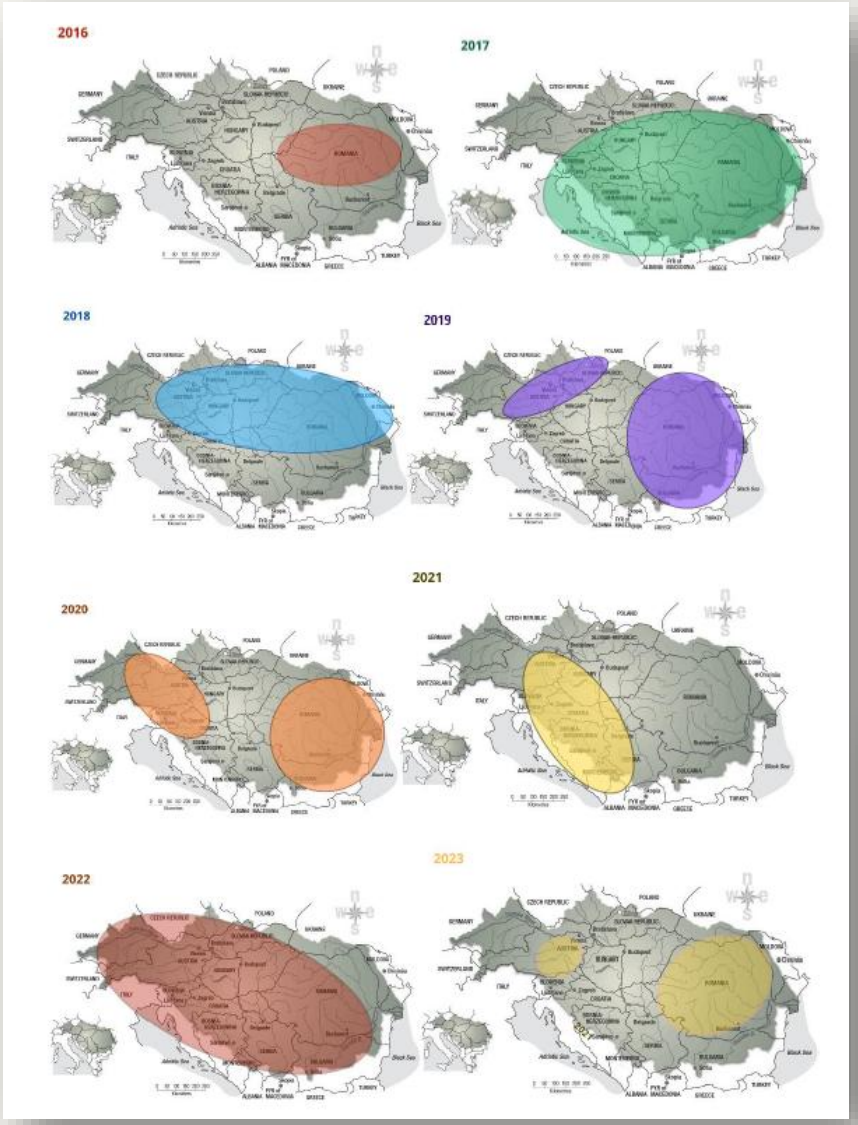
Future climate patterns

- Dramatic temperature increase
- Strong precipitation gradient from NW/SE
- Increased intensity/alteration of extremes
- Increased peak river flows by 10-30% for the upper and middle Danube
- Increased drought duration, frequency & magnitude during summer months

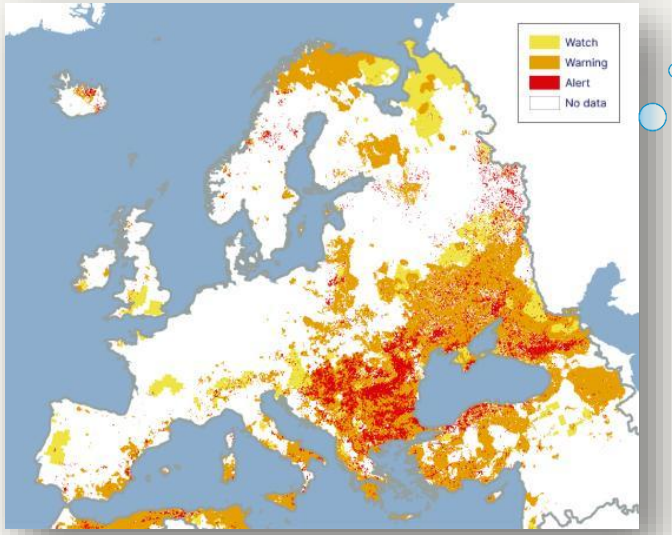
The ICPDR Response:



Drought events in the DRB



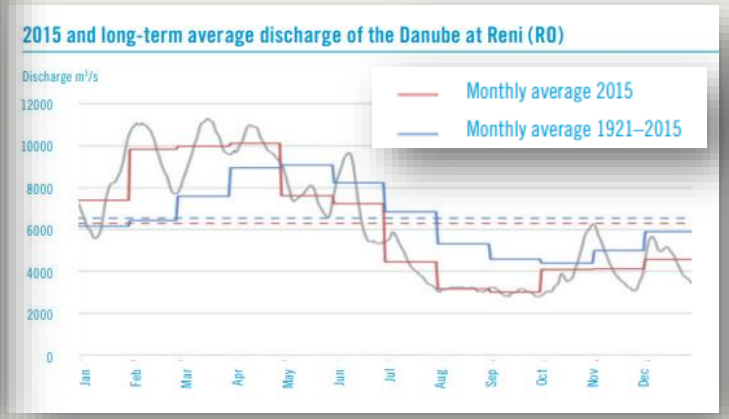
Combined Drought Indicator for August 2024



EDO (JRC)

Economic damages are significant

Drought in 2015



ICPDR Overview Report on Droughts and Low Water Levels in place (2024)

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Flood Events in the DRB

Implementation of the EU Flood Directive

- Preliminary flood risk assessment (2011 / 2018 / 2024)
- Flood risk and flood hazard maps (2013 / 2019/ 2025)
- Flood risk management plans (2015 / 2021 / 2027)

Basin-wide objectives of DFRMP linked to measures

- Avoidance of new risks
- Reduction of existing risks
- Strengthening resilience
- Raising awareness
- Solidarity principle

Total Economic Impact – Examples

- 2006 (DRB): € 0.6 billion
- 2010 (DRB): € 2 billion
- 2013 (DRB): € 2.4 billion
- 2014 (Sava): € 3.8 billion
- 2023 (SI): € 10 billion

ICPDR Alarm and Emergency Warning System

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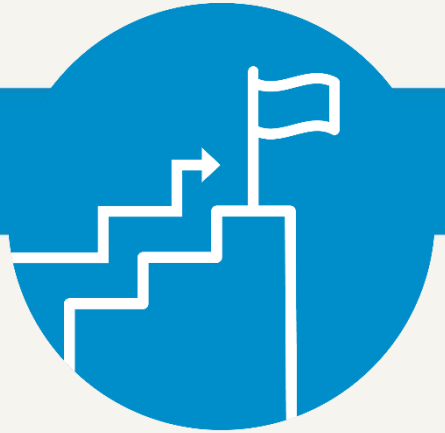

Danube Region faces many transformative challenges

- Geopolitical, economic, social components
- Need to align institutional objectives with common territorial priorities and addressing cross-sectoral topics

ICPDR and EUSDR AT Presidency

- Organisation of an interactive, **joint special session** within ICPDR OM-27
- Foster out-of-the-box thinking, mutual inspiration and actionable steps towards achieving common goals more effectively
- **Representatives of ICPDR, EUSDR and ICPDR Observers**

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Appr. 150 participant - 10 December 2024 in Vienna / Austria

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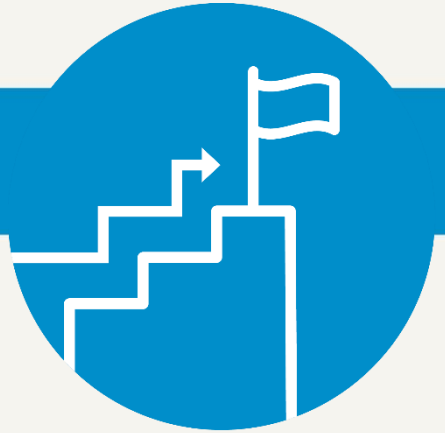

5 Topics for group work

- Transformative economies & industries
- Transformative climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Transformative societal values
- Transformative quality of government and governance
- Transformative EU 27+

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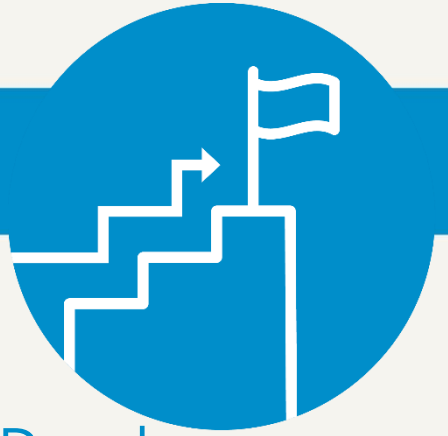

Transformative economies & industries

While Europe is losing its role when it comes to global competitiveness, the Danube Region is not among the leading regions in Europe and risks to fall further behind.

Current Challenges

- Digital and Green Transformation
- Water Security / water supply (related to industries)
- Capacity building/ regional development

Concrete Ideas

- Exchange experiences and expose results of flagship projects
- Promote water efficiency to improve competitiveness/ inform industries about water dependencies and risks

Concrete Ideas (3-5)

- Joint Conferences of ICPDR & economic stakeholders (highlight linkages between econonomy and water security)

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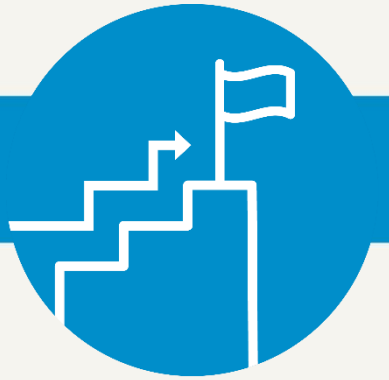

Transformative climate change adaptation and mitigation

Climate change effects become increasingly notable all over Europe. More efforts required to adapt to climate change and mitigate it, where possible.
Small scale local actions need to be replaced by large scale interventions for which costs and benefits are separated by long time-lags and in parts even by spatial-lags.

Current Challenges

- Droughts / Floods happening in shorter intervals & increasing water scarcity
- Impacts on environment & people
- Proactive drought management
- Lack of collaboration between ministries/institutions/sectors towards a joint vision
- Frequent change of staff

Concrete Ideas

- EUSDR PA4 PA5 – ICPDR Joint Synergy Paper / update them
- Joint work on drought and floods
- Connect more and better to local level (bottom-up/top-down)

Concrete Ideas

- Joint capitalisation of project results
- Increase cooperation with sectors
- Projects to meet social interests on the ground

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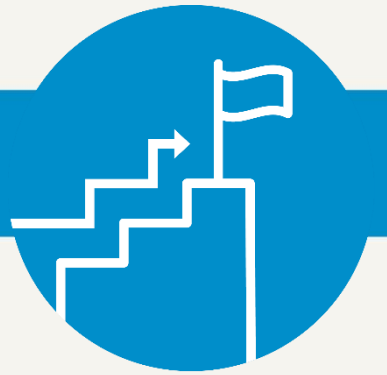

Transformative societal values

European society is changing, this involves large debates about different expectations to life between generations. We see e.g. Euroscepticism and impacts of demographic/geopolitical changes

Current Challenges

- Meeting expectation and capabilities of different generations
- Not enough time to enter into the details
- Need of scientific progress without loss of knowledge
- Specialisation under appreciated/lack of researchers
- Demography - Lack of workforce, loss of specialized knowledge

Concrete Ideas

- Enhancing use of citizen science while maintaining necessary scientific standards
- Use clear messages for avoiding confusion
- Promoting new methods - AI, eDNA - without down-leveling standards

Concrete Ideas

- Intergenerational listening to reflect values to be implemented in youth meetings

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Transformative quality of government and governance

High quality governance helps translate regional investment and support into economic growth; strengthening the institutional capacities to involve civil society is key to strengthen democracy, trust in public institutions and effective policy-making.

Current Challenges

- Rising authoritarian and non-democratic tendencies, coupled with economic, climate & demographic threats
- How to factor in the general public in governance/political processes; mediation / link between local people and government is missing
- Tokenism of political commitment: it being only symbolic

Concrete Ideas

- Repeat formats like today – more time needed to get to know each other - even better

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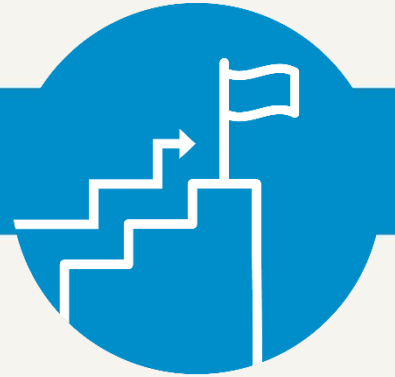

Transformative EU 27

The EU itself is facing a transformation process e.g. driven by the prospect of future enlargements.
A gradual EU accession process offers cross-border regions of current EU and accession countries to become frontrunners for EU integration.

Current Challenges

- Insufficient knowledge transfer
- Contact point identification
- Projects: regional and local scale

Concrete Ideas

- Better involving communities in projects and processes
- Ensure transparency through elaborating a proper network
- Simplification: reduction of administrative procedures related to participation

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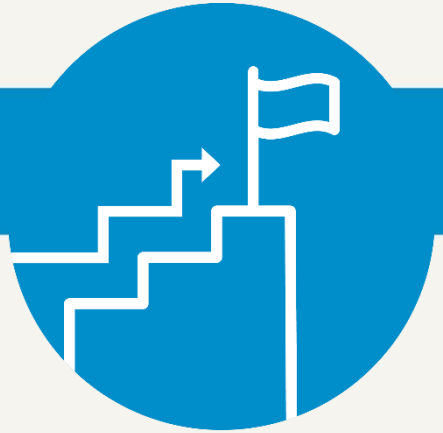

Overall Conclusions

- Very inspiring event
- The exchange between the ICPDR & EUSDR is very important to jointly achieve strategic goals beyond the usual cooperation topics
- Discussion were in a format of ‘out of routine’ and perceived as intense, high quality and serious
- Cooperation was highlighted across all borders
- There is a demand for a continuation - we need to get to know each other better
- Similar formats shall be repeated
  - Options have been discussed with experts
  - In-person and online
- Regular meetings in smaller thematic groups (to be identified) are encouraged

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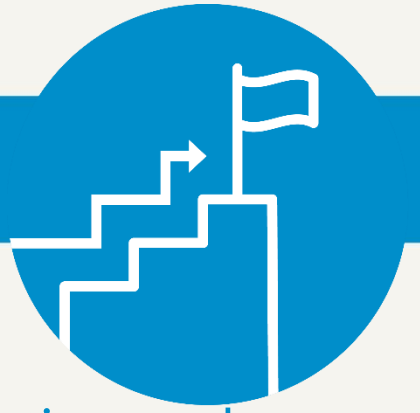

Detailed Conclusions

- Transformation is important and requires new stakeholders, more cooperation and crossing traditional borders
- Transformation brings challenges along for organisations working on integrative issues, which need the valuable cooperation
- The process requires quality and good communication on key topics
  - Quality means work and support
  - Although, all of this is a challenge for the institutions, it needs to be ensured and maintained
- It is key to connect to the local level in the DRB in order to understand as well as meet social interests
- Cooperation with all relevant sectors is key

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Thank you very much for your attention!

Take-away Joint ICPDR – EUSDR Session:

What do I take away from this afternoon session?

What are my learnings?

(73 responses!)