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### About DEF structure and members

DEF members represent 13 countries from the upper, middle and lower regions of the Danube River Basin. The DEF Network consists of 34 member organisations (as of September 2002) and there are still several other applicants for membership. Members are environmental NGOs working on various programmes, projects and activities. Their expertise ranges from scientific and research activities, lobbying and policy work to environmental education and capacity building.



DEF National Focal Points are NGO representatives from each country within the Danube region and are the main contact points with a mandate to represent the DEF at the national level.

The DEF Board consists of the representatives of national focal points and is responsible for preparing strategies and plans for future DEF activities and projects.

DEF Speakers are elected among DEF Board members. Present speakers are:  
Petruta Moisi (Romania), Email: eco@cceg.ro / cceg@home.ro  
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The DEF Secretariat is currently located in Bratislava, Slovakia, hosted by DAPHNE – Institute of Applied Ecology. The Secretariat maintains information flow among DEF members, organises DEF meetings, participates in the management of DEF projects and provides assistance to DEF members.



### Current DEF project

#### UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project

On December 1<sup>st</sup> 2001, the Danube Regional Project (DRP) was launched – the next phase of UNDP/GEF's long-term commitment to achieving environmental health in the Danube River Basin.

The main goal of the DRP is to strengthen many of the structures and activities already in place in the basin, building on what is there and lessons learned, and facilitating a regional approach. A key focus is strengthening the capacity of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and Danube countries to fulfill their legally binding commitment to implement the Danube Convention. This now includes the development of a River Basin Management Plan in line with the EU's Water Framework Directive. In fact, all eyes will be on the Danube as it is a test case for implementing the new directive throughout Europe.

Key targets include reducing nutrient pollution and supporting trans-boundary cooperation. Already well under way, the DRP is an umbrella for some 80 activities. These are aimed at improving water supply and other water services, strengthening agricultural policy, providing river basin management tools and protecting wetlands, among others.

The project will be carried out over 5 years with a total budget of 15 million USD. The first phase is currently underway.

The DRP is one of three components of the 95 million USD GEF Strategic Partnership for Nutrient Reduction in the Danube / Black Sea Basin – GEF's largest and perhaps most ambitious water-related project in the world. It will support the intermediate goal of the Commissions for the Danube and Black Sea to reduce nutrient and toxic loads to the Black Seas to mid-1990s levels, and their long-term goal to reduce nutrients and toxic substances to the levels necessary to allow Black Sea ecosystems to recover to conditions in the 1960s.

It includes two regional projects – the Danube Regional Project and its sister project based in Istanbul – the Black Sea Regional Project. Both will strengthen the respective Commissions and will assist countries in their efforts to adopt necessary policy, legal and institutional reforms.

The third component is the World Bank-GEF Nutrient Reduction Investment Fund, entailing direct investments aimed at concrete reductions in pollution, primarily nutrients, at the national level that can then be replicated throughout the Danube and Black Sea region.

The DRP is also unique because of its many links to the local level, including activities related to public participation, communications, local pilot demonstration activities and a grants programme for NGOs.

The DEF will support this project via the dissemination of information, communications among various groups of stakeholders, and the provision of educational training courses and other tools. The DRP will provide support to DEF for DEF operations, communications activities and information management. The main DEF activities within the project will be:

- » organizing consultation meetings and training workshops on nutrients and toxic substances,
- » publishing special NGO publications in national languages on nutrients and toxic substances,
- » organizing training courses for the development of NGO activities as well as cooperation on national projects (on nutrients reduction).

## DANUBE ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

NGO platform for the protection of the Danube River



### Mission statement:

To protect the Danube River with its tributaries, their biodiversity and resources, by enhancing co-operation among governments, non-governmental organisations, local people and stakeholders towards the sustainable use of natural ecosystems.



### Why is the river Danube important?

The river Danube is Europe's second longest river with a length of 2,780 km. Its river basin covers 817,000 km<sup>2</sup> and it is shared by 17 countries. With more than 18 million inhabitants in this region, and as it is a natural habitat for a number of endangered flora and fauna species protecting the Danube is of utmost importance. In addition to its natural importance, the Danube has been the cradle to culture and civilization for centuries.



The river has undergone massive changes over the years. Industrial developments, urbanisation, intensive agriculture and river regulations are currently greatly endangering the Danube. The development, restoration and environmental protection status of the Danube differs in each country. However the river knows no boundaries. If we permit the valuable biodiversity of the Danube basin to continue to be damaged, the riches of these ecosystems will remain only as a memory.



Since the Danube flows through numerous countries and the action of one country

has a widespread impact on others, co-operation and communication is vital. A common approach to solving problems will be the only way to stop the destruction and exhaustion of natural resources. It is then that we will be able to help these unique ecosystems to survive.



### What is DEF?

Danube Environmental Forum (DEF) was created in 1999 as a Danube River Basin-wide platform of non-governmental, non-profit, politically independent, environmental organisations, in order to establish a common approach for the environmental protection of the Danube river. Since 1999 the DEF has also had observer status with the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR).



### DEF aims

- » to influence the sustainable development of the Danube River region by ensuring participation of NGOs in present governmental forums, programmes and initiatives and by developing close cooperation with governmental structures
- » to enhance co-operation and to encourage communication among local and national NGOs, with governments, businesses, media and local people by providing opportunities to exchange ideas and information in order to build sustainable bridges of understanding and action between people living in the Danube River Basin
- » to ensure public participation and information flows and to promote mechanisms of partnership in the decision-making processes concerning water management within the Danube region

### DEF's effort is based on:

- » protecting the natural values of the Danube region and promoting and implementing ecological practices for the conservation and management of ecosystems
- » raising awareness and providing access to innovative ideas and effective methods for pollution reduction and the wise use of natural resources in order to effectively conserve biodiversity



### What are DEF's priority areas?

#### Public awareness and environmental education

Environmental education and dissemination of environmental information are very effective tools in influencing public attitudes towards environmental problems. At the same time it helps the public to put pressure on institutions responsible for the implementation of adopted legislation, conventions and strategies.



DEF intends to provide and actively disseminate information about the state of the environment in the Danube River Basin, raise the level of public and NGO awareness, and ensure public participation in environmental decision-making process for water management.

#### Policy

The EU enlargement process and economic transformations in Central and Eastern Europe are bringing new opportunities that will be able to influence conservation activities and the development of the Danube River Basin.



DEF seeks to integrate NGO participation and provide input into existing forums. Through influencing legislation and policies, strengthening NGO co-operation and encouraging the active participation of locals in decision-making processes, DEF aims to protect natural resources and implement sustainable management practices in the Danube River Basin.



### Restoration and management of wetlands

Wetlands are among the most endangered habitats in the world. They play a crucial role in sustaining biodiversity, are very effective at removing nutrients from water, act as a purification system for drinking water, protect land against floods and are considered to be the most productive ecosystems in the world (biomass production). Wetland habitats in the Danube River basin have been drastically affected in the past few decades. Since 1900, 80% of the wetland area in the Danube basin has been lost, mainly due to the straightening of the river, the construction of dams, the change of former wetlands into agricultural lands, and related activities.



The knowledge, experience and capacity of NGOs has a strong potential for the development of small-scale wetland restoration activities in the Danube region. These activities would focus on the identification of priority sites and the practical implementation of management measures. These measures would lead to the preservation of small-scale endangered wetland habitats which support a wide variety of fauna and flora species.

