



**coop MDD**  
**PROTECTED AREAS FOR**  
**BETTER MANAGEMENT OF THE**  
**“AMAZON OF EUROPE”**

**Transboundary Management Programme for the 5-country  
UNESCO Biosphere Reserve “Mura-Drava-Danube”**



## COOPERATION FOR NATURE WITHOUT BORDERS!

The Mura, Drava and Danube form a highly valuable and free-flowing river corridor in Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Serbia: the “Amazon of Europe” – **a truly European treasure!**

Rivers don't know national borders. As their waters flow and transport sediment across borders, species like the White-tailed Eagle also cross national boundary lines on their search for food every day. River management in one country influences flood protection in the other. Natural habitats including floodplain forests and spawning sites are spread across pentilateral Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube (TBR MDD). As such **their protection and restoration also needs to be done on a transboundary level.**

Through coop MDD, we will work towards **harmonization of Protected Area Management** and develop a joint Management Programme for the future TBR MDD. This will guide our coordinated protection, restoration and education actions for many years to come.

Through pilot projects such as the development of local action plans, sectoral stakeholders will be involved in future management. The establishment of River Schools contributes to awareness-raising about the natural values of the TBR MDD with the local population. Only with active cross-sectorial and transboundary cooperation will we succeed in preserving our natural treasures for future generations!

Magdalena Wagner  
coop MDD Project Manager

# PROTECTED AREAS FOR SUCCESSFUL TBR MDD MANAGEMENT

The future Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube (TBR MDD) will protect core and buffer zones in all five countries through existing Nature Parks, National Parks, and Natura 2000 areas. To prepare for future joint management, all those Protected Area Administrations are part of the coop MDD project. The Management Programme jointly developed within coop MDD will include **Guidelines for Dynamic River Corridor Development, a Transboundary Action**

**Plan**, and a joint concept for **River Schools**. This will harmonise river management in the TBR MDD and its surrounding floodplain forests and meadows. It will also discuss uses like agriculture, hunting, fishing, or tourism.

By defining the goals and principles of management as well as concrete actions, the basis for future cooperation among the Protected Areas in the TBR MDD is set!



“I work on the Hungarian Mura Section, bordering Croatia and Slovenia, since 1999. The joint cooperation by coop MDD seems to be a great opportunity to learn and do research about the natural values together, to improve the acceptance of the area’s protected status and to strengthen the environmental protection and nature conservation approach.”

András Lelkes, Mura-Menti LPA / Balaton NP

## Protected area network in the focus of coop MDD





Native floodplain forest only rejuvenates on pioneer habitats created by dynamic rivers.



Natural rivers provide relaxation for local people and are basis for nature-friendly tourism.

## PROTECTING THE “AMAZON OF EUROPE”

In the lower course of the Mura and Drava Rivers, as well as in the connected Danube sections, a true European treasure has been preserved despite numerous man-made changes. The **free-flowing river sections** offer space for **natural processes** like flooding, continuously changing gravel islands or steep banks, oxbows and jungle-like floodplain forests.

**Rare species** that depend on such dynamic habitats, like the Little Tern or German Tamarisk, still find their homes here. White-tailed Eagles have their highest breeding density in Continental Europe in this region, and the nearly extinct Ship Sturgeon **has a last chance for survival here.**

Intact floodplains offer local **people flood protection and drinking water.** On natural river banks people relax during their free time, or make use from the abundance of fish. Within the TBR MDD - world's first five-country Biosphere Reserve that will be established in this region in the next few years - this precious river corridor shall be protected and restored by joint efforts for future generations!



Undisturbed natural floodplains are necessary to protect iconic species like White-tailed Eagle and Danube Sturgeon



## RIVER SCHOOLS

The protection of an international and amazingly dynamic river corridor within one joint Biosphere Reserve works only if the local population supports this idea.

The network of River Schools to be built within coop MDD will focus on awareness-raising with the local population about the values of our joint river ecosystem. These **outdoor learning centres all along the Mura, Drava and Danube** will be used for natural science classes with schools, as resting places for tourists, or for specialized

excursions for local stakeholders. The natural values of the TBR MDD and the corridor function of the rivers will be presented in all of them, while each River School will also highlight a special topic – floods, life on a border river, or specific endangered species.

By involving local schools and education institutions early in the planning phase, an important step towards empowerment for the protection of our joint river corridor will be made.

10 Protected Areas    225 000 ha of Natura 2000 sites

10 Local awareness-raising events

8 River Schools    8 Local Action Plans

1 Transboundary Management Programme





## PROJECT PARTNERS

- WWF Austria – World Wide Fund for Nature Austria
- Office of the State Government of Styria, Department 13 – Environment and Spatial Planning, Section Nature Conservation
- Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation
- Municipality Velika Polana
- Public Institution for Nature Protection of Virovitica-Podravina County
- Public Institution for Nature Protection of Osijek-Baranja County
- Public Institution for Management of Protected Natural Areas in the Koprivnica Križevci County
- Balaton-felvidéki National Park Directorate
- Vojvodina Šume Public Institution
- Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province
- WWF Adria - Association for the protection of nature and conservation of biological diversity

## ASSOCIATED PARTNERS

- Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Division I/8, National Parks, Nature Conservation and Species Protection, Austria
- DANUBEPARKS – Danube River Network of Protected Areas
- Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Environment Directorate, Slovenia
- Medjimurska Priroda – Public Institution for Nature Protection
- Public Institution for Management of Protected Natural Areas in Varaždin County
- Public Institution Nature Park Kopački Rit
- The City of Sombor
- UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe
- International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
- EuroNatur Foundation
- Duna-Dráva National Park Directorate
- Austrian National Committee for UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme

## PROJECT INFORMATION:

Coop MDD is co-funded by the European Union within the Danube Transnational Programme. It will last from January 2017 to June 2019, and has a budget of 2,15 M € for a total of 11 full partners during those 2,5 years.

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## MURA-DRAVA CONFLUENCE NEAR LEGRAD

The confluence of Mura and Drava is a perfect example of the future TBR MDD, containing some of the last remaining free-flowing river sections in Central Europe.

Mura, Drava and Danube host a large variety of the most threatened habitats in Europe like alluvial forests, wet grasslands, gravel islands and sand banks, side-arms and meanders, steep banks and oxbow lakes.

These habitats offer home to numerous species, including several highly threatened ones like White-tailed Eagle or Little Tern.

