

View on the JOINTISZA

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Q: Do you have a personal moment or memory that stands out for you related to the Tisza River?

When I was a teenager – unfortunately, many decades ago – during the summers, I spent lots of time at my maternal grandparents’ home in Szeged. During those visits, I enjoyed spending time on the Tisza riverbank. However, my most outstanding memory of the river dates back to the summer of 1970, when a never-seen-before flood swept down the river – causing huge damage in Hungary’s Upper Tisza region. The situation was also very critical in Szeged, as the

water level exceeded the height of flood protection levees over long sections. At the bridgehead near the city centre, close to the Móra Ferenc Museum, the water level was above the sidewalk, almost overflowing the parapet, which had to be supported by rows of sandbags to contain the water. The sight was amazing. I had never seen such a huge, wide Tisza before! The memory still reminds me that such a calm, ‘blond’ river as the Tisza could actually be quite dangerous—and it’s a reminder that proper river management remains an essential task.



*Peak flooding of the Tisza River at Szeged in July 1970 **

Q: What do you think is important to communicate about the JOINTISZA project?

The JOINTISZA project team will prepare an updated version of the Integrated Tisza River Basin Management Plan (ITRBMP) that complies with EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) requirements. The first version of the ITRBMP was adopted by the five Tisza countries in 2011. In this second planning period, the updated plan – besides the WFD-required elements for a river basin management plan – will deal with other issues, as well. It should be mentioned that the ITRBMP deals with issues and problems that have a transboundary character and require joint actions and measures from at least two riparian countries.

Another thing worth mentioning is that, contrary to the first planning process, the JOINTISZA project involves all relevant stakeholders and interested people from the public from the very beginning of the planning process – that is, when surveying their needs and demands prior to the start of the planning. In taking this bottom-up approach, planners aim to make sure that the plan addresses all the relevant issues and concerns of stakeholders and the public.

Q: Please describe some of the ongoing work of project.

JOINTISZA is a 30-month project that started on January 1, 2017, and will conclude at the end of June 2019. I am participating in the project as a Global Water Partnership Central and Eastern Europe (GWP CEE) expert, and am responsible for leading Work Package 6: Synthesis, which involves compiling the final draft of the updated ITRBMP. This year, I worked with project partner organisations responsible for technical issues of the plan – such as characterisation of the river

basin, surface water quality, groundwater and water quantity issues, and flood protection – to harmonise their reports with the final, overall ITRBMP. In addition, intensive work was carried out on two pilot activities for which the GWP CEE expert team is responsible – on how urban hydrology issue can be incorporated into the ITRBMP, and on how the Shared Vision Planning (SVP) methodology can be applied within a pilot action on climate change-induced water quantity issues. Also, two successful workshops were organised – one on SVP training and the other on pilot area adaptation – and an Ad Hoc Task Group was set up to elaborate a guidance paper on climate change-induced water quantity challenges.

Q: What are the most challenging issues related to the development of the ITRBMP? What is being done in the project to address these?

My view is that the most challenging issue is how to assess and take into consideration the impacts of climate change on surface and groundwater resources in the Tisza River Basin. To address this challenging issue, pilot actions will be carried with the active involvement of stakeholders and the public. This work will be supported with modelling after the needs of stakeholders have been addressed in detail.

Q: In your opinion, what will be the most important outcomes and benefits of the updated ITRBMP for the people living in the Tisza Basin?

The project will produce six major outcomes. The most important will be the draft version of the updated ITRBMP. We call it draft version, thought it will be fully elaborated, and one might consider it as final. However, it must be understood that a river basin plan becomes final

only after it is approved. In the case of the updated ITRBMP, the water directors of the Tisza countries will adopt the plan—not the persons involved in the JOINTISZA project. The benefit of

the plan will be a harmonised joint programme of measures that will guide the Tisza countries in acting jointly to improve the water environment and flood safety regime in the Tisza Basin.

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**Photo on page 1: https://mult-kor.hu/20101005_komocsin_elvtars_oroksege_arvizi_naplo_1970bol*