

## Danubeparks Newsletter 26.09.2014

### Project ends - Association starts!

The Final Conference of the DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 project was connected to an important event for future cooperation: The first General Assembly of the newly founded DANUBEPARKS Association, including the election of the Management Board.



An institutionalization and stable anchoring of the DANUBEPARKS Network was one of the main aims within the DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 project. The [Association DANUBEPARKS has now been founded](#), based on exchange of experience with other Protected Area Networks, analysis of our members' structures, and intense discussions on the priorities in our future work. It will provide a continuous base for experience exchange as well as a joint communication platform, and should support our upcoming work for the protection of the Danube natural values.



The president and two vice-presidents are Carl Manzano (Donau-Auen National Park, AT), Eszter Buchert (Duna-Drava National Park, HU), and Grigore Baboianu (Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority, RO). Thomas Schneider (Danube Riparian Forest Neuburg-Ingolstadt, DE) will act as Treasurer, while Vlatko Rozac (Kopacki rit Nature Park, HR) was elected as Secretary. Georg Frank, project manager of the two past SEE-projects, was appointed as Secretary General of the new association.



The Final Project Conference on September 11<sup>th</sup> in Budapest gave the possibility to publicly announce the founding of the association and highlight some main outputs of our past years' collaboration. After a project overview from Carl Manzano, we took a detailed look to some highlights: Pal Kezdy from Duna-Ipoly National Park presented the plans for a DANUBEPARKS Visitor Center at the Danube Bend. Tamás Gruber from WWF Hungary shared his experiences on floodplain restoration at the Danube, and Béla Csányi from the Danube Research Institute talked about the Joint Danube Survey, where DANUBEPARKS contributed this year in the morphological analysis. If you want to know more about our activities of the last years, read our [project report](#)!



Edin Lagic, Priority Area Coordinator of PA6-Biodiversity within the EU Strategy for the Danube Region did a strategic outlook to the future together with Alessandra Pala, project manager at the Joint Technical Secretariat of the ETC South-East Europe Programme. Both of them highlighted the vivid and implementation-oriented collaboration within DANUBEPARKS, and expressed their expectations to the future role of the Network: To further work on coherence in nature protection and a strong joint voice of Protected Areas, to cooperate with other sectors and make nature protection's voice heard there, and to use this collaboration for linking the Protected Areas as stepping stones in a habitat corridor of European importance.

## Updates from project activities

### Festival & New members



This year's [International Danube Festival](#) took place in Backi Monostor (Serbia), in cooperation with the Bodrog Festival. This festival draws around 15,000 visitors each year to the small village at a Danube oxbow, with contemporary and traditional live music, an impressive horse parade, and a wide array of artisans. DANUBEPARKS participated with information stands, children programmes, a round table discussion, and a team in the fish soup cooking competition.



At the Steering Committee adjacent to the Festival, three new members were welcomed to the Network: The [Narrow Valley of the Danube in Passau District](#) (Germany), the Iron Gates Natural Park (Romania), and the Small Wetlands of Braila (Romania). We look forward to an intensified cooperation and study visits to those interesting sites!

### Finalist for the European Riverprize!



DANUBEPARKS is one of three finalists for the [European Riverprize!](#) The prize will be awarded in the framework of the [European River Restoration Conference](#) and celebrates successful approaches to river restoration and integrated river basin management. Already the nomination as finalist is an honour to our whole international team!

### Outstanding workshops for future cooperation



The [tourism workshop in Neuburg](#) (Germany) in May 2014 focused on two pilot projects: Carrying capacities and nature tourism for people with disabilities. The excursion was especially useful, as we cooperated with a group of young people with diverse disabilities. The whole group thus gained personal experiences and learnt a lot from our young partners during that day.



In Koshov (Bulgaria), we met in June 2014 to [discuss the new EU funding programmes](#), especially the Danube Programme. The habitat corridor topic is extremely useful for the network, as we have been working on this topic already the last years and some concepts are waiting for implementation. Also, the potential for cooperation with culture stakeholders seems a useful tool for joint education & tourism projects.

## Journey along the Danube: Gornje Podunavlje Special Nature Reserve



Situated in the very north of Serbia, bordering both Croatia and Hungary, Gornje Podunavlje Special Nature Reserve forms the Serbian part of a huge, well-preserved trilateral wetland area. The whole area is characterized by its mosaic landscape of wet meadows, oxbow lakes, and swamps. Gornje Podunavlje is managed by the DANUBEPARKS partner Vojvodinašume, the public forest enterprise.

The floodplain forests are an important breeding area especially for Black Stork and White-tailed Eagle.



Tourists are still rare in the area, so it is your chance to discover it in its authentic way! Backi Monostor is the village with the most developed touristic offers – numerous private pensions will accommodate you, and with the local NGO Podunav you have the chance to visit traditional houses, a local boat-builder, honey producers and Roma families.

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