

IMPLEMENTING THE DANUBE ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Ivan Zavadsky

Director, Environmental Protection
and Risk Management, Ministry
of Environment, Slovak Republic

Milan Matuska

Director, Water Protection
Ministry of Environment
Slovak Republic

The Danube traverses 95% of the Slovak territory and the problems related to the protection of the Danube water quality are similar to those faced by other Danube countries in Central and Eastern Europe. As a result, the Slovak Republic accepts and supports the Danube Environmental Programme initiative (see Botterweg and Turcan this volume) and actively participates in all Programme activities. The Slovak Institute of Hydrometeorology, under the jurisdiction of the Slovak Ministry of Environment, is responsible for administrative, technical and organisational affairs.

The first phase of the Danube Environmental Programme consists of information collection, problem identification and proposals for the solution of identified problems, with the participation of many scientists, researchers and specialists. The results of the first three years of the implementation of the Programme are published in the Strategic Action Plan for the Danube 1995-2005, finalised in June 1997. This document contains instructions on improving water quality and the environment - within a particular time frame - for governments, local authorities, NGOs and the general public. Since many countries are involved in the Programme, national projects, based on the needs of specific countries, are also put into effect.

The second phase of the Danube Environmental Programme consists of activities related to scientific research, data collection, information management and classification, and accident minimisation. Funding is controlled by a Temporary Co-ordination Committee. Certain Slovak representatives have been elected to the Monitoring Team and the Data Management Team.

Within this framework, several projects for the improvement of the Danube water quality and the riparian environment have been realised. In 1997, the Strategic Action Plan was initiated and the Slovak Republic made the following recommendations: integrated pollution prevention; formation of an international training team to train waste treatment plant employees; restoration of the Morava river, the surrounding plains and the ecological balance of local fisheries; groundwater protection in the Silickej plain.

The majority of national plans proposed is based on the transborder character of the situation and involves the implementation of international co-operation in water management. National plans also involve legal and financial measures to ensure environmental protection and sustainable management and development. Problems must be solved based on the distinct characteristics of specific countries, regions or the whole Danube area. Since these problems can be of regional or more general character, national teams have been assembled for tackling them. In the Slovak Republic, the following steps have been accomplished:

- setting targets and perspectives for water quality
- mapping of Danube groundwaters and bio-monitoring of soils
- present and future methods of reducing nutrient loading
- collection of methods for groundwater management
- biodiversity studies
- reduction in phosphorus loading
- monitoring drinking water quality and integrated water management
- assurance of similar water quality control standards in Europe
- study of micropollutants and their effect on drinking water sources
- screening of methods to analyse pesticides
- Danube re-routing negotiations
- mapping and modelling of the Hron
- ecological evaluation of the risks posed by metals and micropollutants
- toxicological and ecological studies of surface waters
- environmental impact assessment
- study for the development of a water quality analysis system

- protection of groundwater resources and re-evaluation of water reserves
- establishment of a warning system between Ukraine and the Slovak Republic

The above projects are funded by the Slovak national budget, the European Union PHARE Programme and the Cross-Border Programme on bilateral relations. The United Nations Economic Committee has put together a team for the monitoring and evaluation of transborder water resources, an initiative which is being implemented through a pilot study in co-operation with Hungary, Ukraine and the Czech Republic. Administratively and financially, this project falls within the realms of the Danube Environmental Programme. Experts from research institutes have taken part in special preparatory courses and seminars for the exchange of information and experiences. This is essential for the successful implementation of international co-operation and countries in transition, like the Slovak Republic, appreciate the financial and executive assistance of the Danube Environmental Programme.

Ivan Zavadsky is a graduate of the Technical University of Bratislava. He is the Director of the Department of Environmental Protection and Risk management of the Slovak Ministry of Environment.

Milan Matuska is a graduate of the Faculty of Civil Engineering at the Technical University of Bratislava. He is the Director of the Department of Water Protection of the Slovak Ministry of Environment and Member of the Hydrological Institute.