

Living rivers

An integrated river restoration strategy, as one of the main results of the *lifelineMDD* project, will be based on scientific studies of fish and river birds, sediment transport and climate change. This will set the basis for future concerted restoration projects within the TBR MDD.

Living cooperation

A cross-sectoral learning process between nature protection and water management authorities based on pilot restoration actions will raise institutional competences and strengthen cooperation between key stakeholders.

Living minds

Rivers symbolize various values for the community living in its vicinity - human connection with nature, health, but also a sense of pride since the river is a part of the cultural heritage for people living nearby. By implementing innovative approaches and building knowledge on topics of ecological connectivity, nature protection and river restoration can help to establish a network of real advocates for rivers in the years to come.



PROJECT PARTNERS

- World Wide Fund for Nature Austria - WWF Austria, Austria
- University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria
- Regional Management SO, Austria
- Office of the Styrian Government – Department 14 Water Management, Resources and Sustainability, Austria
- Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, Slovenia
- Municipality of Velika Polana, Slovenia
- WWF Adria – Association for the protection of nature and conservation of biological diversity, Croatia
- Public institution for management of protected parts of nature in Varaždin County, Croatia
- World Wide Fund for Nature Hungary, Hungary
- World Wide Fund for Nature Adria – Serbia, Serbia
- Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province, Serbia
- Pomgrad - Water Management Company, Slovenia

ASSOCIATED PARTNERS

- ICPDR - International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, Austria
- Austrian National Committee for UNESCO's "Man and the Biosphere" Programme, Austria
- Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism, Directorate I/6 Flood risk management, Austria
- Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Environment Directorate, Slovenia
- Slovenian Water Agency, Slovenia
- Croatian Waters, Water Management Department for the Mura and Upper Drava Rivers, Croatia
- Public Institution for Management of Protected Natural Areas in the Koprivnica-Krizevci County, Croatia
- Public institution agency for management of protected natural values in Osijek-Baranja County, Croatia
- Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Croatia
- Public Institution Nature Park Kopački Rit, Croatia
- West-Transdanubian Water Directorate, Hungary
- Balaton-felvidéki National Park Directorate, Hungary
- Deputy State Secretariat for Nature Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture, Hungary
- Public Enterprise "Vojvodinašume" Petrovaradin, Serbia
- Provincial secretariat for Urban Planning and Environmental protection, Serbia
- Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia, Serbia
- Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection, Germany

lifelineMDD

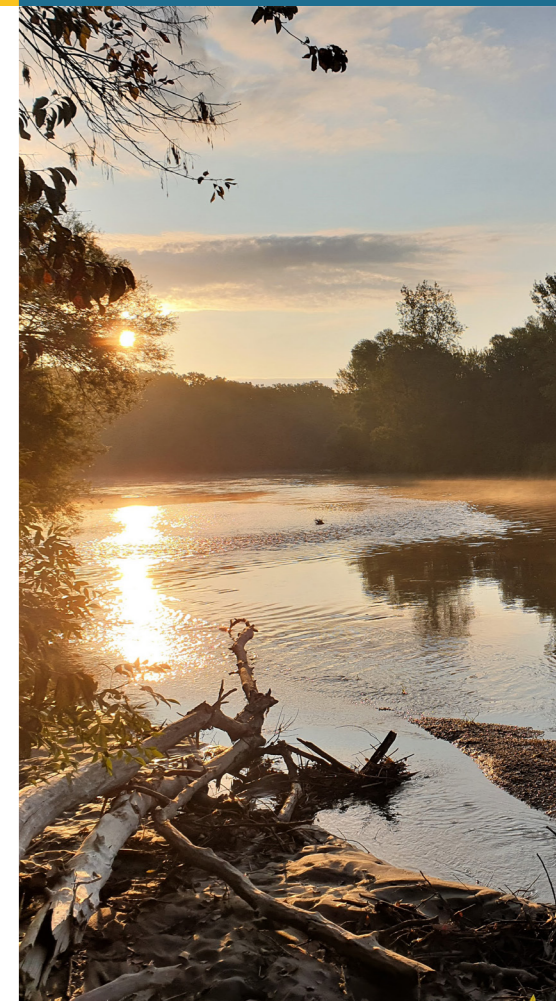
Protecting and restoring ecological connectivity in the Mura-Drava-Danube river corridor through cross-sectoral cooperation



lifelineMDD: Cross-sectoral partnership for ecological connectivity in the TBR MDD

The Mura, Drava and Danube form one of the most valuable river corridors in the Danube Basin, a lifeline for people, species and habitats. Flowing more than 700 kilometres and connecting an area of 930,000 hectares stretching across Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Croatia and Serbia, they connect a unique landscape of the future UNESCO 5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube (TBR MDD). Once designated, it will become the largest riverine protected area in Europe.

However, connectivity within the corridor is reduced due to human-made changes to rivers and their natural processes. Thus, the main goal of *lifelineMDD* is to improve ecological connectivity through a cross-sectoral partnership and the implementation of restoration measures. While the Interreg DTP project *coop MDD* established cooperation between Protected Area managers, *lifelineMDD* will strengthen cooperation by establishing a cross-sectoral stakeholder platform and a joint knowledge base. *lifelineMDD* takes cooperation one step further, crossing over from joint planning to joint scientific work and pilot implementation of field works.



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Living minds

Local support for restoration measures is the key for implementation success. By implementing innovative approaches, the understanding of the importance of a near-natural river landscape for people and nature will be strengthened. Local communities will have the opportunity to **get active for their rivers** and to learn about river dynamics and connectivity through educational and different volunteering activities, such as clearing steep banks, removing embankments or other direct involvement actions.

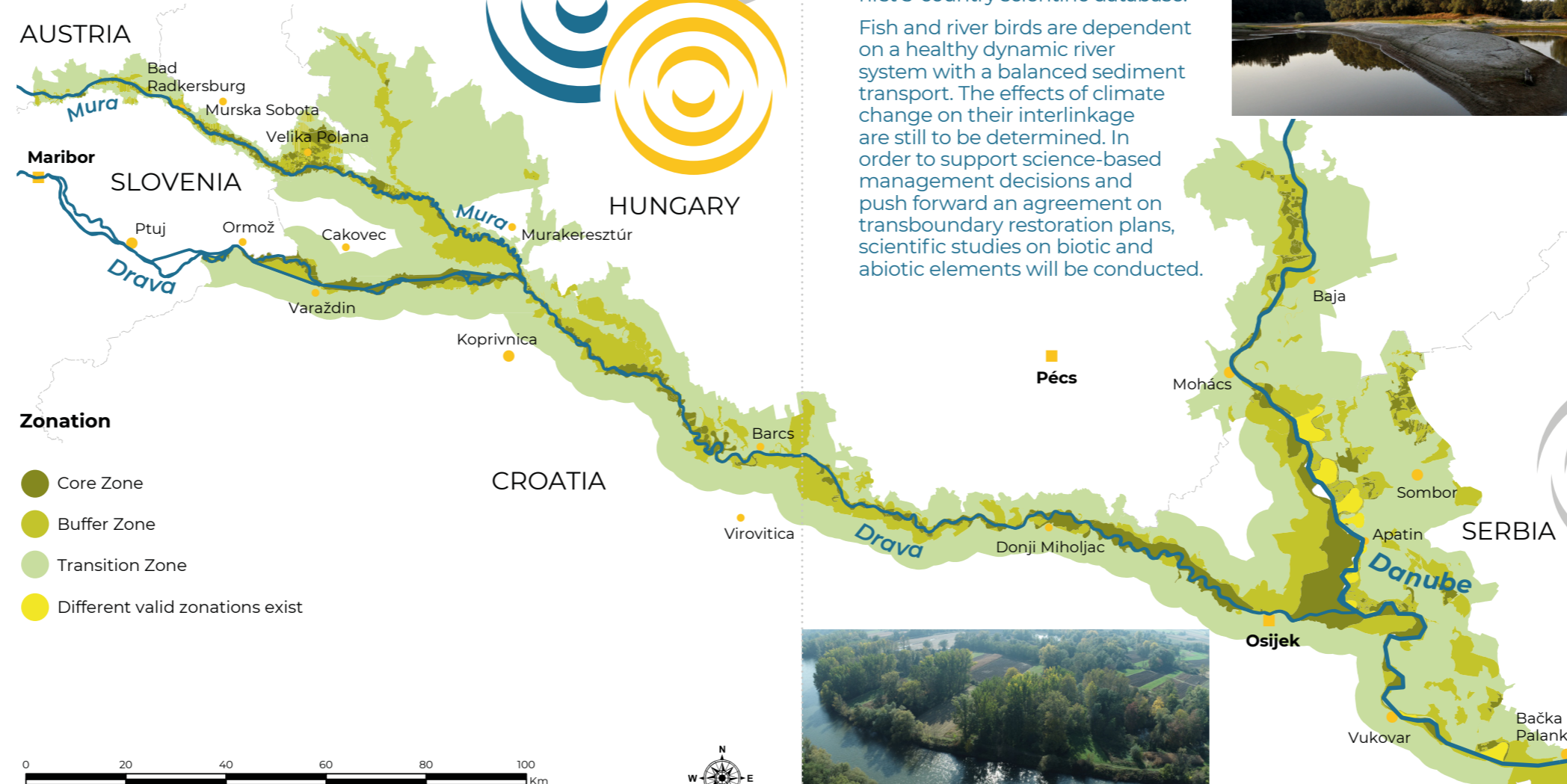
On the other hand, a **train-the-trainer** approach ensures long term knowledge exchange by including teachers, youth workers and nature education guides in educational activities. It will include content know-how, didactic and pedagogical methods and tools, as well as build up general guiding skills for educators.

The first **TBR MDD Nature Academy**, based in RIVERS'COOL Velika Polana, will offer a chance for the local community to learn in nature about nature. The educational programme will focus on biodiversity and ecological connectivity in the TBR MDD, and the benefits that people have from preserving them.



5-country Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube (TBR MDD)*

* nominated to UNESCO by Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Serbia in April 2020



- Zonation**
- Core Zone
 - Buffer Zone
 - Transition Zone
 - Different valid zonations exist

Living rivers

The rivers Mura, Drava and Danube form the **lifeline of the TBR MDD**. This 700 kilometres long unique river corridor is widely known for its rich biodiversity and diverse habitats, but it is also under immense pressure due to human-made changes. To preserve this lifeline, joint solutions and efforts are needed, such as establishing a first 5-country scientific database.

Fish and river birds are dependent on a healthy dynamic river system with a balanced sediment transport. The effects of climate change on their interlinkage are still to be determined. In order to support science-based management decisions and push forward an agreement on transboundary restoration plans, scientific studies on biotic and abiotic elements will be conducted.

Thus, all results of the scientific studies will be compiled into one **synthesis report**, wrapping up challenges detected and solutions recommended as a basis for a joint **River Restoration Strategy**, a commitment to science-based improvement of the river ecosystems.



Living cooperation

River restoration in a transboundary river corridor such as the TBR MDD can be challenging, especially when cooperation among different sectors, but also across the borders is insufficient. One of the main aims of *lifelineMDD* is therefore to **strengthen transboundary cross-sectoral cooperation** between nature protection and water management and to develop an integrated TBR MDD River Restoration Strategy. The main pillars to achieve it are a joint learning process, scientific studies, restoration pilot actions, and experience exchange.



Three pilot restoration projects serve as joint learning cases. Dealing with distinct issues of connectivity and being situated in different river types, they provide excellent practical cases for transboundary cross-sectoral learning, planning and joint review of results in the field.

Austrian Mura Enhancement of an old river branch reconnection

Slovenian Mura Riverbed widening and lateral sediment mobilization

Bačka Podunavlje Biosphere Reserve Improvement of water management and retention in the floodplain and oxbows

The **TBR MDD River Restoration Strategy** incorporates the synthesis report of scientific studies and the **River Restoration Toolbox**, suitable state-of-the-art restoration measures for different ecological river types, and summarizes joint plans for future restoration works in the TBR MDD.

To ensure long-lasting cross-sectoral cooperation and successful implementation of the TBR MDD River Restoration Strategy with the aim of better protection and restoration of the ecological connectivity in the river corridor, a potential framework for **stakeholder platforms** will be developed. Joint efforts and stronger integration of stakeholders in the future, through formal or informal networks, aim to ensure a living cooperation beyond project duration.

