Grants for the river

The grants component of the Danube Regional Project is designed to enable environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the Danube River countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to contribute to the reduction of nutrient and toxic pollution of transboundary rivers. This project has two main components: national grants focusing on issues of national priority and regional grants promoting cooperation in transboundary projects.

The first of two rounds of grants implementation, running from 2002 to 2006, resulted in: USD 672,002 awarded for 60 national NGO initiatives which took a multi-stakeholder approach to address different issues related to Danube pollution. In total, 35 projects of national and regional scale were coordinated and monitored by the REC through its country office network, which covers 11 countries in the Danube basin.

The national NGO grants focused on:
- Agricultural discharge: 35 percent of the projects addressed agricultural issues, for example, promoting organic farming.
- Industrial discharge: 15 percent of the projects addressed industrial issues, for example, promoting clean mining technologies or other industrial issues.
- Municipal discharge: 40 percent of the projects dealt with problems caused by insufficient wastewater treatment and/or unsustainable consumption patterns.
- Land use/wetlands: 12 percent of the projects were aimed at improving natural cleansing functions of wetlands and erosion control.
- Population/urban: 8 percent of the projects were aimed at improving consumption patterns.
- Industrial discharge: 40 percent of the national NGO grants addressed industrial issues, for example, promoting clean mining technologies or other industrial issues.

The second round of national grants implementation, running from 2006 to 2009, resulted in:

- USD 469,507 awarded for 60 national NGO initiatives which took a multi-stakeholder approach to address different issues related to Danube pollution. In total, 45 projects of national and regional scale were coordinated and monitored by the REC through its country office network, which covers 11 countries in the Danube basin.

The national NGO grants focused on:
- Agricultural discharge: 35 percent of the projects addressed agricultural issues, for example, promoting organic farming.
- Industrial discharge: 15 percent of the projects addressed industrial issues, for example, promoting clean mining technologies or other industrial issues.
- Municipal discharge: 40 percent of the projects dealt with problems caused by insufficient wastewater treatment and/or unsustainable consumption patterns.
- Land use/wetlands: 12 percent of the projects were aimed at improving natural cleansing functions of wetlands and erosion control.
- Population/urban: 8 percent of the projects were aimed at improving consumption patterns.

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- Land use/wetlands: 12 percent of the projects were aimed at improving natural cleansing functions of wetlands and erosion control.
- Population/urban: 8 percent of the projects were aimed at improving consumption patterns.
A Bulgarian project resulted in the restoration of natural floodplain forests and the planting of 3,000 saplings on a river island.

**Multigenerational approach**

A multifaceted effort was initiated by Ekotim, a Bulgarian non-governmental organization (NGO) working towards environmental conservation. The group collaborated with local communities, schools, and businesses to implement a comprehensive approach to restoring natural floodplain forests. These efforts were supported by grants and involved the participation of children, students, and volunteers who planted saplings along the restored floodplain.

**Old-fashioned farming**

While many national grant projects focused on awareness-raising efforts, one such program in Hungary involved practical measures to promote sustainable agriculture. In the Bacs-Kiskun region, a project called "FISHY F" was implemented, emphasizing traditional farming practices to reduce pollution. This initiative aimed to protect fish populations by reducing the use of phosphorous-rich detergents in the local markets, which are known to harm aquatic life.

**Reducing nutrient and toxic pollution at the national level**

Various national grant projects across different countries focused on reducing nutrient and toxic pollution. For instance, in the Vah river basin in Slovakia, Ekotim carried out restoration work including the planting of native trees and the establishment of natural floodplain forests. The project involved community engagement and the involvement of local schools in planting activities, demonstrating the importance of education in environmental conservation.

**FOLLOW THE LEADER: Grants supported several model projects**

The success of these projects inspired others to follow suit, leading to a cascade of similar initiatives across the region. The resulting networks and collaborations fostered a culture of sustainability and collective action towards environmental goals.

**MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE:**

This innovative strategy involved crafting messages on paper and embedding them in floating bottles, which were then released into rivers and lakes. These bottles contained educational content and emergency联络信息, aiming to raise awareness among the general public about environmental issues.

**REDUCING TOXIC WATER: Environmental and legal strategies**

In countries like Hungary, legal frameworks were established to combat water pollution. For example, the Hungarian Kornyezetgazdasagtani Kozpont (MAKK) engaged in environmental restoration projects, utilizing chemical-free methods to protect native species and ecosystems. Their work included the establishment of seed banks and the promotion of sustainable agriculture practices.

**New agricultural practices**

Traditional agricultural practices were contrasted with modern, intensive farming methods. Projects in the Czech Republic, for example, emphasized the development of "extensive" agriculture as an economically viable alternative to environmentally harsh practices. These initiatives involved the restoration of natural floodplain forests and the planting of 3,000 saplings, demonstrating the potential for ecological recovery through sustainable land use.

**Governments and NGOs work together**

Governments, NGOs, and communities collaborated on various projects to restore natural ecosystems. For instance, the Slovakian organization Green Balkans partnered with local schools to promote organic farming methods and raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity and sustainable practices.

**Community-led initiatives**

Local communities played a vital role in driving these initiatives. Projects like the one in Finland, which involved the collection of trash along riverbanks, demonstrated the power of community participation in environmental protection. The work was carried out by volunteers who collected 1,400 sacks of trash, highlighting the effectiveness of grassroots efforts in combating pollution.

**TATRY’S INITIATIVES TARGET SCHOOLS**

The Tatra Mountains in Slovakia, for example, saw several educational projects initiated by the green organization Tatry. These initiatives included the creation of an exhibition called "Streams are not Drains," and a project that reached 5,000 students in 13 communities. These efforts aimed to educate the younger generation about the importance of protecting waterways and natural habitats.

**FISHES NEED THEIR ENVIRONMENT**

The restoration of floodplain forests and the removal of invasive plants, as seen in the Prut River Basin in Moldova, was crucial for maintaining healthy fish populations. The projects involved direct participation from the local communities, who were instrumental in deciding where to plant trees and other vegetation.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC ViVaLLe**

Projects focused on sustainable development and economic viability, promoting the idea that environmental conservation can be aligned with economic growth. For example, the implementation of chemical-free farming practices not only protected ecosystems but also contributed to the local economy by reducing costs associated with traditional inputs.

**FACILITATING THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

Local authorities played a pivotal role in facilitating these projects. They provided support through grants, workshops, and training sessions, ensuring the sustainability and scalability of the initiatives. This leadership role was integral in mobilizing resources and ensuring that the projects had a lasting impact.
The Danube Regional Project

The world’s most international river basin, the Danube River basin has been radically altered over the last 150 years by human activity. It has lost 80 percent of its wetlands and floodplains and continues to suffer from pollution from industry, farming and municipal wastewater. The Danube Regional Project (DRP) was launched in 2001 in cooperation with 13 national and other environmental stakeholders, and by supporting the free exchange of information and public participation in environmental decision-making.

The DRP has been involved in Danube environment-related projects since its inception, and has taken an active role in cooperating with key Danube players to enable NGOs involvement in international initiatives related to the entire basin. The DRP closely cooperates with relevant stakeholders such as the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and the Danube Environmental Forum.

One of the key activities of the DRP is the distribution of grants to NGOs to help them contribute to the work. With three funds, NGOs have worked to:

- Enhance public awareness and participation by carrying out publicity campaigns and reaching out to media.
- Reduce agricultural pollution through education and promotional efforts focused on best agrarian practices.
- Raise public awareness about the impacts of phosphates in laundry detergents.
- Conserve wetlands through restoration efforts and through encouraging water managers to include wetlands in their planning activities.

Grants for the river

The grants component of the Danube Regional Project has successfully enabled environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the Danube Basin countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to contribute to the reduction of nutrient and toxic pollution of watercourses. This project has two main components: national grants focusing on issues of national priority and regional grants promoting cooperation in transboundary projects.

The national NGO grants were awarded for applied activities or projects that are seen as having potential for long-term success. The project’s goal was to help the ICPDR and Danube countries to cooperate in fulfilling their commitments to implement the river convention and EU environmental legislation, especially the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

The first of two rounds of grants implementation, running from 2002 to 2006, resulted in:

- USD 277,022 awarded for five regional projects, each involving NGOs from multiple countries. These projects focused on transboundary cooperation, regional networking, stakeholder cooperation, best practices in agriculture and the basin/sub-basin approach to decision making.
- USD 800,578 awarded for 60 national NGO initiatives which took a multi-stakeholder approach to address different issues related to water pollution.

In total, 45 projects of national and regional scale were coordinated and monitored by the DRP through its country office network, which covers 11 countries in the Danube basin.

National grants improve water quality

National-level projects were awarded up to USD 15,000 a piece. The problem targeted was pollution generated by agriculture and municipal wastewater. The grants component of the Danube Regional Project was designed to enable environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the Danube River countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to contribute to the reduction of nutrient and toxic pollution of watercourses. This project has two main components: national grants focusing on issues of national priority and regional grants promoting cooperation in transboundary projects.

About USD 469,507 were awarded to 60 national NGO initiatives which addressed issues such as education, awareness, natural resource conservation, increased bird habitats, reduced silt in water ways, and helped purify the water in reservoirs.

The national NGO grants focused on:

- Agricultural discharge: 35 percent of the projects addressed agricultural issues by, for example, promoting organic farming.
- Municipal discharge: 40 percent of the projects dealt with problems caused by municipalities such as insufficient wastewater treatment and/or unsustainable consumption patterns.
- Land use/wetlands: 12 percent of the projects focused on wetland restoration and raising awareness about clean mining technologies or other industrial issues.
- Industrial discharge: 13 percent of the projects involved activities such as raising awareness about clean mining technologies or other industrial issues.
- Non-point source discharge: 8 percent of the projects dealt with issues such as education, awareness, or other activities to raise awareness about the impacts of phosphates in laundry detergents.

The national NGO grants supported important projects such as:

- Enhance public awareness and participation by carrying out publicity campaigns and reaching out to media.
- Reduce agricultural pollution through education and promotional efforts focused on best agrarian practices.
- Raise public awareness about the impacts of phosphates in laundry detergents.
- Conserve wetlands through restoration efforts and through encouraging water managers to include wetlands in their planning activities.

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