

Towards Win – Win Solutions

Public Participation in River Basin Management in Hungary

Workpackage 4: European background
HARMONICOP Project

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1. Water Management in Hungary

1.1. Country profile

Hungary is located in Central Europe, in the Carpathian Basin surrounded by the Carpathians, the Alps and the Dinaric Mountains (Figure 1). The territory of the country is 93,030 square kilometres, covering about 1% of Europe. The total length of the borders of the country is 2,216 kilometres, of which 655 kilometres is the common border with Slovakia, 137 kilometres shared with the Ukraine, 448 kilometres with Romania, 166 kilometres with Serbia, 355 kilometres with Croatia, 100 kilometres with Slovenia and the border with Austria stretches on 356 kilometres.

Almost three quarters of the territory of the country is a low plain, one fifth is hilly with the maximum altitude of 400 metres, and approximately 5% of the total territory of the country is mountainous, altitudes varying between 400 - 1000 metres.

The highest peak in the country is the Peak of Kékes in the Mátra Hills, rising to 1014 metres. The lowest part of the country is located in the valley of the River Tisza, south of Szeged, in Gyálarét (78 metres). The Great Plain (Alföld) and the Small Plain (Kisalföld) are flat, the Zala and Somogy hills, the Tolna saddles in Transdanubia are hilly areas, while the mountains are represented by the Sopron and the Kőszeg mountains, the Mecsek, the Transdanubia and the Northern mountain ranges.

Facts about Hungary:

Name: Hungarian Republic

Location: East-Central Europe (borders with Austria, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia)

Area: 93,030 square km

Population: 10,300,000 (21 percent under 14 and 60 percent between 15-59)

Density of population: 110 (per square km)

Form of government: Republic (parliamentary democracy - 4 year election periods)

Capital: Budapest (2 million inhabitants)

Number of counties: 19

Number of towns: 169

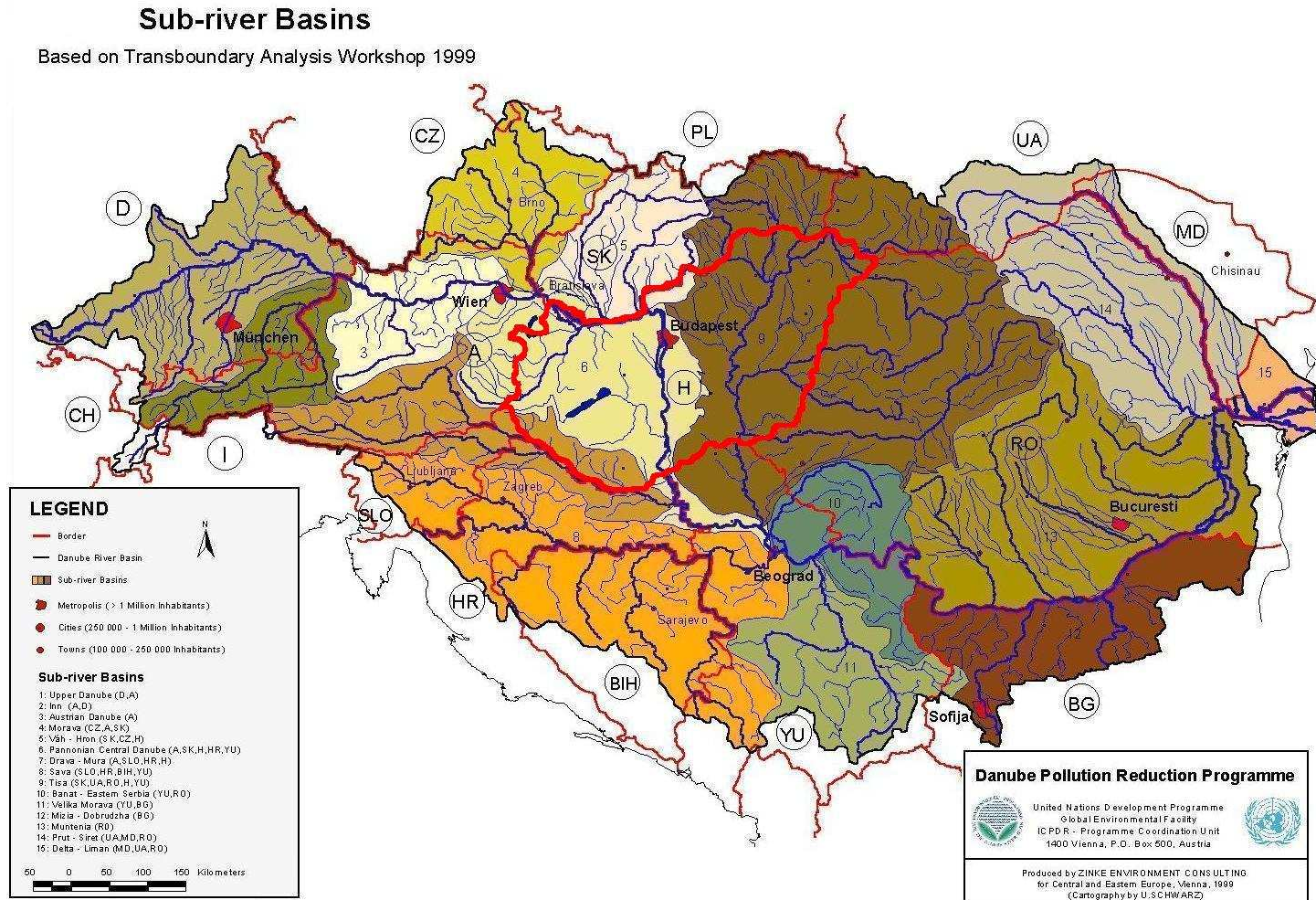
Number of villages: 2,904

Climate: Continental with Mediterranean and Atlantic influences

Average temperatures: January -2C, July 23C

Language: Hungarian

Figure 1
The Danube River Basin



1.2. Water resources and water uses

1.2.1. Hydrology

The particularities of geography and climate have resulted in particular hydrological conditions in Hungary. Water has always played a decisive role in the life of the Hungarian people, which prompted the early development of a hydrographic observation and data processing network.

Readings on the Danube river gauge at Budapest have been taken regularly since 1823. The national hydrographic observation network was established in 1886, the results of which have been presented since 1895 in uninterrupted sequence of Hydrographic Yearbooks (from 1998 also on CD ROM).

Over the past 150 years, human activities had a significant impact on runoff conditions in Hungary.

Cuts have shortened the course of the River Tisza by close to 500 kilometres. Embankments have prevented river floods from spreading annually to one-fourth of the country, while from another fourth the excess runoff is drained by means of artificial facilities (Ijjas – Szlávik 2000).

Without these measures one-half of lands would be inundated periodically or permanently. Without controlled releases the water level in lakes Balaton and Velence would rise continuously and inundate vast areas.

Over large parts of the country the runoff coefficient is very low, it's magnitude depending in many places on the capacity and operation of the artificial drainage facilities. Dry and wet periods alternate. In areas, where the abundance of water has caused problems for several years, draughts have caused heavy losses subsequently. The low runoff coefficient has water quality impacts as well (less water will wash less pollutants from the catchment).

1.2.2. Water quality

Monitoring

Data on sporadic water quality observations are available from the last century in Hungary. The present water quality monitoring network was established approximately 30 years ago.

By the early 1990s the quality of surface waters was monitored at 300 stations. The number of stations has recently been reduced to one-half of the former. Parallel thereto the frequency of monitoring was increased, the sphere of the parameters monitors expanded and the quality of observation improved. The recent changes in monitoring of water quality reflected efforts of international standardization, at meeting the information demand of water quality control in Hungary and in the Danube Basin.

Assessment

The beginning of quality monitoring on groundwater, data back to the mid-1980s. General water quality along the Hungarian section of the major streams is classified satisfactory. The quality of water is highest along the upstream sections of the rivers Dráva and Tisza. Bacterial parameters give rise to some concern in the Danube. A number of minor streams carry highly polluted water. The minor lakes include a few in which the water quality is very poor in some periods.

The groundwater close to the surface is polluted. The bank filtered and karstic water, as well as the water stored in deeper aquifers is still generally of good quality. An ambitious action program is being implemented for the protection of developed and potential future vulnerable sources of supply. Paramount importance is attributed to the international water quality protection research project under the Environmental Strategic Action Program (SAP) supported by the PHARE Program (Ijjas – Szlávik 2000).

Over the past decades Hungary has participated actively in international research on water quality. Most prominent among the international research projects in Hungary were concerned with water quality control in Lake Balaton and in the Sajó river catchment (the principal sponsor of the former was the IIASA, that of the latter the UN).

1.2.3. Water uses

Ecosystem management

The wetlands with their wide spectrum of life forms had not always received adequate attention during the past decades in Hungary. The public, and for that matter not even the professionals in the water related areas, have not realized their value, though a detailed survey on the wetlands was made as early as 1967.

Thanks to the more recent changes in attitude, growing efforts commensurate with the economic situation in the country have been undertaken at protecting the aquatic environment. The legal groundwork thereof has been established by the new law on nature conservation, in which the competencies have also been allocated.

The importance of the aquatic habitats must be recognized. With domestic and international support (e.g. the PHARE program) research work is under way on the preservation and protection of aquatic habitats in Hungary (e.g. the Hortobágy National Park, the flood plains along the Danube and Dráva rivers, the oxbow lakes in the Tisza Valley, etc.). It is of interest to note that water management measures, human activities (construction of the hydraulic structures) have created rich aquatic habitats deserving protection, such as the Tisza Lake (Ijjas – Szlávik 2000).

Public water supply

In terms of the distribution capacity and the number of population served, the general level of public water supply in Hungary is considered satisfactory. The difficulties and shortcomings of operation resulting from pollution of the sources of supply, quality deterioration in the network, network losses and change in ownership present problems. Discontinuation of state subsidies resulted in steeply rising water rates, owing to which former wells were re-commissioned and new wells were drilled. The groundwater close to the surface is, however, severely polluted, which may pose health risks.

The most important task in the field of public water supply is the protection of existing and future sources of supply, in the interest of which a national action program has been launched (Ijjas – Szlávik 2000).

Public waste disposal

Although the first sewage treatment plant in Hungary was built as early as 1895, the rate of sewage treatment development has been considerable lower than that of water supply.

One of the main problems in the field of water management is that the difference between levels of public water supply and sewage treatment-disposal ("the utility gap") has grown very wide.

Industry

In the wake of restructuring the economy a number of industries went bankrupt. As a consequence thereof water consumption decline and less pollutant found access to the wastewaters. Industrial water management should be regulated to encourage water uses and wastewater treatment compatible with the requirements of sustainable development without crippling the surviving industries.

Agriculture

The climate in Hungary is characterized by the alternation of wet and dry periods. Unwanted abundance of water in the former, and scarcity thereof in the latter cause concerns. Parts of the country receive no, or but little rain for several months during the growing season. Over 90 per cent of the country's area is prone to droughts.

Arable lands covered 4,8 million hectares, permanent grassland for 1,15 million hectares and permanent crops for 260.000 hectares in 1998, of which 311.000 ha were developed for irrigation. The majority of the latter, 218.000 ha, were provided with irrigation water via the state owned projects - referred to as the principal facilities, which were managed by the district water authorities. The principal facilities comprised irrigation canals of 1.125 km total length and double-use canals of 3.546 km total length. The water volume used for irrigating one hectare ranged between 1.170 and 2.080 m³ on the average between 1992-96.

As from 1990, the water provision rate is expected to cover the full costs of the service, except for maintenance. The state grants 40 per cent support to irrigation section projects.

The changes that have taken place since the early '90s in Hungary, have redistributed the land ownership pattern. Several irrigation and drainage developments adjusted to the needs of the large industrialized farming operations meet no more than those of the new owners.

The main State body responsible for administration in agriculture is the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development whose activities cover agriculture, food industry, forestry, hunting and fisheries.

Hydropower

The water power potential of Hungary is a rather modest one, the total capacity of the presently operating hydropower stations being less than 1 per cent of the total generating capacity installed in the country. Regardless thereof, one of the outstanding water management problems of the country, which has received also international publicity and which affects also the image of water management in Hungary, is related to the multi-purpose Danube Project. Of the two dams and power stations envisaged only the power station on the Slovak side was completed.

Navigation

Conditions favouring water transportation exist in several parts of Hungary, yet only 4-5 per cent of the cargo volume is transported presently on water. The drastic reduction of state subsidies has placed navigation at a disadvantage relative to the other means of transport. The total length of waterways in Hungary is 2.260 km, of which a 417 km long section is of international significance. Several bottlenecks hinder navigation on the Danube upstream of Budapest, which must be eliminated somehow.

The growth of economy, rising standards of living and shorter working hours are expected to enhance the demand for pleasure boating. The infrastructure thereof ("public access" to the waters, marinas, etc.) is still missing (Ijjas – Szlávik 2000).

Professional fishing and fish-farming

Hungary has only inland water fisheries. The fishing sector does not play an important role in the national economy. The total catch in 1995 was 22.866 tons, in 1998 was 16.816 tons, mostly carp. The volume and range of domestic fish processing is small owing to a lack of capital. The employment of this sector is only 250 people.

As a trading partner of the European Community, Hungary represents 0.1% of total EC imports (independently of origin) of fisheries products, and 4% of EC imports of fisheries products from the candidate countries alone (in terms of value). With regards to EC exports, Hungary receives 1.05% of EC total exports of fisheries products and 12.6% of EC exports of these products to the candidate countries for EU membership (in terms of value).

Dredging and mining

Regulatory measures to control dredging for gravel on the banks and the bed of streams, further for river training purposes are essential to protect the sources of supply and the beds in Hungary. In the surroundings of some water bodies preservation of the ecosystem and habitat is also an important consideration. Opening, operating and re-cultivation after closure of gravel pits in locations remote from the rivers must also be regulated, these affecting severely the quantity and quality status of groundwater. After careful re-cultivation, these pits can be developed to serve waterside recreation and leisure-time activities. The quality of water in these gravel-pit lakes is, however, extremely vulnerable, so that such recreational uses must be prevented from surpassing the environmentally and ecologically acceptable level.

Flood control and land drainage

Close to one-fourth of the country's territory is exposed to flood hazards. In the protected flood plains 2.1 million people live and 2.000 industrial plants operate in over 700 communities. Flood control to these areas is provided by levees of 4.180 km total length, of which only 58 per cent have dimensions complying with the provisions presently in force. Another cause of concern is that in recent years lack of funding has prevented maintenance work on the embankments, as a consequence of which even the safety of those embankments having adequate dimensions has become questionable.

Close to one-half of the country's territory consists of lowlands, which have no natural drainage, and from which the accumulating snowmelt and storm runoff must be removed by means of artificial measures. These areas are drained by 11.600 km state-owned, 17.900 km association and local-government owned and 13.000 km privately owned canals, which convey the runoff to pumping stations of 800 m³/s total installed capacity. The lowland drainage networks are presently in a poor state of maintenance, because owing to the present long spell of dry years these works have been neglected and the changes in property conditions have obscured the ownership of a considerable part of these structures.

Of the small streams in Hungary, sections of 5.429 km total length are maintained by the state water agencies, while water management associations and the local-governments are responsible for maintaining 14.915 km thereof.

The most important tasks in the domain of controlling water related losses include performance of the outstanding maintenance works, clarifying the ownership conditions, upgrading the riparian landscapes and erosion control.

1.2.4. Water balance

The overall conclusion arrived at from the foregoing is that the surface and subsurface water resources in Hungary are large enough on the long-term average to meet the demands as regards both quantity and quality.

The magnitude of the surface water resources is determined by the fact that 95 per cent thereof originate abroad and that reservoirs have been built beyond the borders. The demands for surface water arising in Hungary, especially those in the Tisza Valley, can be met by water routing and transfers alone. Considerable efforts have been made at ensuring the desired level of supply to the large lakes, even by drawing on groundwater resources (Ijjas – Szlávik 2000).

Controlling the impacts of pollution accidents in transboundary streams presents major problems. Economic recession has decreased the number and severity thereof appreciably. The supplementary water resources needed to control eutrophication are often absent; river training works to accelerate flow are often omitted, or limited in their extent because of the very high costs involved.

Disregarding a few parts with unfavourable hydro-geological conditions in the country, groundwater resources are available in volumes sufficiently large to meet the demands. Major drops in the water table in the surroundings of high-rate abstractions are evidences of water uses surpassing the rate of recharge, for controlling which legal measures must be introduced. Groundwater quality varies with the depth of the aquifers, but can be upgraded to drinking standards by simple treatment methods.

The water resources available almost everywhere in Hungary are large enough to meet the water demands. The majority of the problems and difficulties encountered in meeting the needs of society for water are associated with quality. Over 95 per cent of the surface water resources originate abroad, making both quantity and quality management difficult, in that the methods of international water management must be resorted to. The normally good relations of Hungary with her neighbours in water affairs have contributed to settling such problems.

Controlling the water level in the great lakes (Balaton, Velence), dropping groundwater levels and piezometric heads in the subsurface aquifers (in the Danube-Tisza divide, in the Transdanubian karst range, etc.) are the major quantity concerns in water resources management. Besides meeting the traditional water demands, special demands (e.g., those related to ecology, recreation, landscape aesthetics, a pleasing environment, etc.) will require growing attention in the future.

The water demands of agriculture, power generation and industry can generally be met presently. In the absence of medium and long-term development plans in the various sectors of economy, the future demands are difficult to project. Recent economic difficulties of the users have discouraged water consumption considerably in agriculture and industry alike. Efforts must be made at reorganizing and developing agriculture and industry in a manner that is compatible with the needs of ecology. Limitations must be imposed on unauthorized irrigation abstractions from groundwater on the Danube-Tisza Divide.

1.2.5. Regional and sectoral stresses on water

In Hungary several regional water management problems affecting large areas have been encountered in recent years, of which the following are among the major ones:

- The groundwater table has dropped in the area of the Danube-Tisza Divide, under the combined impact of the sequence of dry years and over-abstraction.
- Mine drainage has lowered the karst water table in Transdanubia.
- The ecosystems in the severed laterals of the Danube and Tisza, and several protected wetlands are endangered.

A number of water resources management problems arose in the various sectors of economy:

- Several thousand illegal, uncontrolled and unexplored communal solid wastes dumping sites containing also hazardous substances present a grave hazard to the aquatic environment.
- Cottage industries have been started all over the country, the operation of which is impossible to control and which discharge potentially hazardous substances into waters.
- Striving for higher profits, the newly founded industries pay little attention to minimizing the risks to the environment.
- Several industrialized animal farms disposed of the liquid manure produced in an unsatisfactory manner, causing soil and groundwater pollution.
- Property conditions in agriculture are unclear in a number of places. The water management associations have no information on several owners of property in their area. Drainage and irrigation of the lands split up into small holdings are unsolved.
- Many of the new landowners have no farming practice and their farm water management awareness is inadequate to serve as a groundwork of farm water management based on ecological systems.
- Organized tourism is not truly concerned with the preservation of ecological values, and especially the unorganized, spontaneous type of tourism is liable to cause considerable harm to the aquatic environment. "Public access" to several water bodies is unregulated.

1.3. Political context

1.3.1. Institutional and legal framework

Legal framework

Legal regulation of water related activities has a long traditions in Hungary. The first water law entered into force in 1885, the second in 1964, while the third in 1996. A permit was required for any water management activity since 1885. These permits have been registered ever since in the Water Book. The water laws represented advanced legal instruments in their time and this is why they remained in force for extended periods of time. Water pollution was prohibited by the law of 1885 already. The water laws have always responded to the felt necessities of society, economy and politics of a particular period. Comprehensive legislation on water pollution control was accordingly introduced as late as 1964.

Enactment of the water management law in 1995 was prompted by a number of circumstances, including the change in political and economic regime, privatisation, the transition to a market economy and harmonization with the EU. Water management is presently regulated by a host of laws, law decrees and standard specifications, of which the laws on water management, environmental protection, nature conservation, regional development and forestry are the salient ones. In the formulation of these account has already been taken of the conditions of a market economy and of the requirements of harmonization with the EU.

Legal environment and public administration

Water management and performance of the functions of water administration are the tasks of the water agencies established for this purpose. Via the integrated system of professional administration, guidance and enforcement this organization ensures that the water-related needs of society are satisfied. Water management activities are performed also by the local self-governments and the organizations thereof (Ijjas – Szlávik 2000).

Hungarian Parliament has created the legal bases of modernizing and developing further water-related regulation, when it adopted *Act LVII of 1995* on water management. According to Chapter II, Article 5, Paragraphs (1) and (2):

- (1) The locally competent water administration agency shall establish a Local Water Management Board for the purpose of coordinating the water management projects and objectives of local importance.
- (2) The Local Water Management Board shall be composed of the representatives of bodies and organizations listed in a separate act of legislation, further of the representatives of the parties interested in the particular issue considered.

The *Local Water Management Board* is competent in the same area as the district water authority which has established it. The most important tasks - as mentioned in the ministerial order on the composition and by-laws of the board - include the formulation of the local water management policy, preparation of the regional land drainage and regional water resources allocation plans, development of water projects and programs of regional significance, including the preparation of the financial plans of these programs. The Local Water Management Board operates in close cooperation with the development planning committees of the county and the region.

Parallel to the law on water management, Parliament has adopted also *Act LIII of 1995* on environmental protection. The two pieces of legislation are harmonized, this being a prerequisite of progress towards the goal of “sustainable development” adopted at the 1992 *UN World Conference “Environment and Development”* in Rio de Janeiro.

The objectives of the law are set forth in the general provisions, according to which the aim of the law is to ensure:

- Exploration of the state of the environment, performance of the functions related to environmental protection of the state agencies and the self-governments,
- Public initiatives and participation in environmental protection activities, in particular those aimed at harmonizing the functioning of economy and socio-economic development with the requirements of environmental protection,
- The development and perfection of the institutional background of environmental protection, and
- Establishing the public administration framework of environmental protection and conservation.

In the interest of creating a broad public and scientific basis of environmental protection, a *National Environmental Board* is established as the advisory body of the Government. The measures ensuring comprehensive institutional information of the public include:

- Information as necessary, but at least on one occasion annually, of the public on the state of the residential environment,
- The institution of public hearings, which the environmental inspectorate is obliged to organise following the presentation of the environmental impact assessments on communal or regional development projects affecting the population. The results of the hearing must be forwarded to the competent authority and disseminated to the public.

The citizens have the right of calling into life non-governmental organizations in the domains of water management and environmental protection on a professional basis (The Hungarian Hydrological Society) and on local-regional basis, often related to a particular water body (the lakes Velence and Balaton, the Ráckeve-Soroksár Danube Arm, etc.).

Important public forums of the population, the self-governments and the farmers are the associations. The 76 water management associations, the members of which are the locally interested self-governments and farmers, cover the entire area of the country.

The public utility associations established with the aim of implementing a particular water supply, or sewerage-sewage treatment project looking back on a history of close to 40 years. Both types of association are organized and function according to democratic principles, the regulatory measures being contained in the law on water management.

The fundamental state functions laid down in law include regular information of the public, further the education of subjects related to water management and environmental protection at the various levels of the school system. (Ijjas et al, 2000)

Information is disseminated over the broadcasting and television networks, in the press, further at regional, or national events organized by non-governmental organizations of national scope, by information bulletins and leaflets.

Public awareness of water and environmental protection issues has grown appreciably in recent years, but has not become truly effective, in that owing to the economic depression problems other than pollution control and environmental protection were of concern to the population.

One of the most important methods of conflict resolution is the involvement of the public into the processes of decision-making. This has been recognized already, though the mechanisms of effective public participation and conflict handling have found no widespread application yet.

It has not been realized still that even though involvement of the public in decision-making is an expensive practice, the results offset the efforts and costs thereof.

Hungary has made major efforts at harmonization. The new acts of legislation on water management, environmental protection, nature conservation and regional development have been formulated with due regard to the EU directives. The sectors of economy and the infrastructure, including water management, have been transformed by observing the EU principles on market economy and environmental protection. The new law on standardization has opened the way for harmonizing the system of standardization, though the implementation of the EU directives and standards has not been completed yet.

Institutional framework

The institutional background of water management has developed successively over the centuries and is identical in its main features with other authority functions.

The functions of the *first-instance water authority* are performed by the district water authorities organized on the catchment principle. The functions regulated in detail comprise:

- the conceptual permitting procedure,
- the implementation permitting procedure,
- the operation permitting procedure, and
- the regular supervision of water uses and other interference with water conditions.

The first institution in Hungary to deal specifically with the water management functions of the state on a national level was founded in 1686. The river engineering sections, which may be regarded the predecessors of the present district water authorities have been established in the last third of the past century. The first water management association was organized in 1846. The 12 district water authorities were organized on the catchment principle in 1953 as the basic agencies of state water administration. This date marks the introduction of water management by catchments in Hungary.

Several institutions are dealing with local water management administration in Hungary. The 12 district water authorities and the 12 environmental inspectorates are the most important ones. The boundaries of both are identical and follow those of the catchments, the areas of which range from 4.000 to 13.000 km².

As regards the catchments, water and water related environmental administration show several specific features in Hungary. One of these is the number of international catchment, which lend particular importance to international river basin management. Another is the number of sub-catchment tributary to the large streams (the Danube, the Tisza, the Dráva, etc. rivers) which are difficult to delineate. These sub-catchments are shared by several district water authorities. There are further some catchments with very vague natural boundaries (for instance the lowland catchments, like that of the Hortobágy-Berettyó Principal Canal), where the catchment boundaries have been drawn along these artificial water courses and may therefore change with time.

The state water agency has been reorganized repeatedly in recent years. Presently the Ministry of Environment and Water and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development are in charge of the majority of water affairs through the agencies supervised by them.

Although problems rooting in split responsibilities have been encountered, international experience has demonstrated the possibility of solving these by careful coordination also under this pattern of organization. Additional difficulties in Hungarian water management arise from the still insufficiently clear demarcation of state and private property, further from the fact that systems of state- and non-state functions and the methods of performing these have not yet crystallized out completely. The criteria of privatisation, decentralization and market-oriented methods should be developed and perfected further.

The 12 district water authorities-DWAs (Table 1.) are regional state (budget financed) agencies supervised by the *OVF* in performing the state functions of water management. Since their establishment in 1953, these have been operating continuously in virtually the same form as legal successors of the reclamation and river engineering offices created in the last third of the past century. The district water authorities have been organized on the catchment principle. Their tasks include:

- keeping records on, protection and allocation of, the water resources in their respective areas,
- management, operation, maintenance and development of the state waters, beds and hydraulic structures,
- operation, maintenance and development of the local hydrographic network,
- performance of flood- and drainage emergency control, further of water-pollution accident control functions on (and with) the state hydraulic structures,
- coordination and supervision in their respective areas of the state, self-government, association and private (citizens, farms, industries, etc.) water management activities (special water administration),
- exercising the powers of the first-instance water authority (permitting and supervision).

Table 1. District Water Authorities

Water Authorities	Center	Area, km²	Full time workers (1995)	Counties on the area of the Water Authority
Danube Basin				
Nord-Transdanubia	Győr	6.370	456	Győr-Moson-Sopron, Komárom-Esztergom, Vas, Veszprém
Middle Danube Valley	Budapest	8.337	529	Budapest, Pest, Nógrád, Heves
Lower Danube Valley	Baja	5.489	387	Bács-Kiskun, Baranya
Middle-Transdanubia	Székesfehérvár	12.814	464	Fejér, Veszprém, Tolna, Somogy, Baranya, Bács-Kiskun
West-Transdanubia	Szombathely	7.587	293	Vas, Zala, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Veszprém, Somogy
South-Transdanubia	Pécs	9.976	233	Baranya, Somogy, Tolna
TISZA Basin				
Upper-Tisza Region	Nyíregyháza	5.456	430	Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Hajdú-Bihar
North-Hungarian	Miskolc	10.223	587	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Heves, Hajdú-Bihar, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok
Trans-Tisza	Debrecen	6.912	473	Hajdú-Bihar, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Békés
Middle-Tisza Region	Szolnok	7.132	528	Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Heves, Békés, Csongrád, Bács-Kiskun, Pest, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén
Lower-Tisza Region	Szeged	8.455	434	Csongrád, Bács-Kiskun, Békés, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok
Körös Region	Gyula	4.108	515	Békés, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Hajdú-Bihar

Within the *Ministry of Environment and Water (KöVVM)* the *Environmental Protection Agency*, supervised by a deputy undersecretary of state, specifically the *Department of Environmental Elements* is responsible for protecting the volume and quality of water resources. The *Chief Environmental Inspectorate* is subordinated to the *KöVVM* and performs - among others - the pertinent second-instance functions and supervises the activities of the local Environmental Inspectorates.

The 12 local environmental inspectorates (KF) have been established to perform the functions of local state administration related to water quality. Their areas of operation are identical with those of the DWAs. The inspectorates operate the water quality laboratories forming the backbone of the water quality monitoring network and carry out the official analyses (the results of which serve, for instance, as the basis of levying the wastewater fines).

International waters

The boundary water agreements of Hungary

Hungary has concluded *boundary water agreements* with all neighbouring countries. The origins of these agreements date back to the Trianon peace treaty, during the negotiations on which the representatives of the successor states have - realizing the physical-geographical conditions in the Carpathian Basin - adopted the proposal of the Hungarian delegation to set up international committees to control any future water-related and forestry activities, which have potential impacts in another state (Ijjas – Szlávik 2000).

The concept of “mutual interest” was defined in Article 294 of the Trianon peace treaty and under Article 293 the “*Permanent Technical Water Committee*” (in French the “*Commission Technique Permanente du Regime des Eaux du Danube - C.R.E.D.*”) with competence to the Danube Basin was set up. The peace treaty has prohibited any change in the natural flow (*régime des eaux*) without previous authority approval, or agreement in the commission (Ijjas et al. 2000).

C.R.E.D. was authorized to initiate agreements between the interested countries, to supervise the implementation of agreements signed and to ensure implementation if necessary. It should be noted that the principles expressed in the peace treaty were compatible with the provisions then in force in Hungary, that is *Article 42 of Act XXIII of 1885*.

With the aim of ensuring safe operation of the river systems bisected by national boundaries, several bi- and trilateral water committees were set up under the auspices of C.R.E.D. The committee dissolving the water associations along the eastern border has prepared the general Hungarian-Rumanian water agreement in 1924. The first boundary water agreements with Austria and Czechoslovakia were signed in 1927 and 1937, respectively. Repeated negotiations have failed to produce an international water agreement with the Serb-Croat-Slovenian Kingdom. The water problems in the NE part of the Carpathian Basin have prompted the establishment of a *Hungarian-Rumanian-Czechoslovakian Tripartite Technical Committee*.

Up to the conclusion of new agreements the provisions of the boundary stream agreements in force up to 1938 were generally observed. The negative experiences gained during the flood on the Tisza have prompted new agreements with Rumania and the Soviet Union. The agreement on “The measures aimed at preventing flood losses and controlling flow conditions along the Hungarian-Soviet boundary section of the River Tisza” was signed accordingly on June 9, 1950 at Ungvár, while the “Agreement on the streams forming, and crossed by the national boundary between the Hungarian People’s Republic and the Rumanian People’s Republic” was signed on December, 1950, in Bucharest. The agreement of 1937 with the Republic of Czechoslovakia remained in force under Article 10 of the Paris peace treaty. Subsequently an agreement was signed on April 16, 1954 in Prague on “Settling the technical and economic issues on the boundary streams between the Hungarian People’s Republic and the Republic of Czechoslovakia”.

Boundary water agreements with Austria and Yugoslavia were delayed to the mid-fifties. The “Agreement between the Governments of the Hungarian People’s Republic and the Yugoslav Federal Socialist Republics on water management issues” was signed on August 8, 1955, in Belgrade. This was followed by the “Agreement on water management issues in the boundary regions between the Hungarian People’s Republic and the Republic of Austria”, signed on April 16, 1956, in Vienna.

Some of the agreements have been amended and also new boundary stream agreements have replaced former ones. For instance, the Hungarian-Czechoslovak agreement was renewed in 1976 while the Hungarian-Soviet one in 1981. The Hungarian-Rumanian boundary stream agreement was amended in 1969 and again in 1986. The boundary stream agreements with Austria and Yugoslavia remained in force.

The political upheaval of the early nineties in the countries of Central-Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union have also changed the parties to the boundary stream agreements. The Ukraine, Slovenia, Croatia and Slovakia gained independence, new governments took over in Hungary and Rumania. In the wake of these changes a revision of the former boundary stream agreements and negotiations on new ones was warranted.

Over 95 per cent of the surface water resources of Hungary originate abroad, large parts of the catchment areas of the main streams and their tributaries being situated beyond the borders. For the purposes of catchment management planning, the area of Hungary has been subdivided into 33 sub-catchments, more than one-half of which is bounded by a boundary stream, or part of which is situated on the area of a neighbouring country. A case is known, where a large part of the subsurface aquifer extends under the area of a neighbouring country.

The instruments available to water management in international catchments are much smaller in number than in catchments situated with their entire area within a single country. The most important, and often only, instruments of international catchment management are the international agreements, which owing to her particular conditions are especially important to Hungary.

There is a long tradition of water management cooperation between Hungary and her neighbours. Under the conditions prevailing over the past decades, cooperation on the boundary streams could be considered in general outstandingly successful. The recent changes in Hungary and her international setting have, however, made the current reassessment and reorganization of cooperation also in water affairs inevitable.

Other international accords relevant to water management

Owing to the situation of Hungary in a catchment covering several countries, she has considerable interest in international accords, which contain guidelines to water management in shared catchments and provide guarantees against harms caused by the partner countries.

a.) Convention on the protection and use of transboundary water courses and international lakes (The Helsinki Convention)

The convention signed on March 17, 1992, in Helsinki established a legal framework of paramount importance for multilateral cooperation in water management. Among the definitions presented in the convention, special mention must be made of the one on “transboundary impacts”, which is understood as “any significantly harmful impact on the state of boundary waters, which is caused by some human activity on the territory of another party”.

The Helsinki Convention is therefore a legal instrument pointing even beyond the European Region to Hungarian water management.

b.) Agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of the Danube (Sophia Danube Convention)

The convention was signed on June 29, 1994, by the states sharing the Danube Basin and the European Union, which makes it especially important to Hungary as regards cooperation with the EU. For the convention to enter into force, at least nine confirming declarations must be deposited.

The convention covers the entire Danube Basin and is thus not restricted to the Danube as a stream alone. According to the relevant definition, any sovereign state, the territory of which covers at least 2.000 km² of the Danube Basin is regarded a Danube state.

The aims of cooperation include the conservation, improvement and reasonable use of the surface and subsurface water resources in the river basin. References to national legislation and “economic and technical possibilities” have been omitted. The requirement of sustainable use means that meeting the needs of the present generation must not jeopardize the same of future generations.

c.) The environmental protection programme of the Danube Basin

The programme was launched upon the initiative of UNDP and other donor organizations in 1992, in Brussels. The steering body of the programme acts as a Task Force. The environmental protection representatives of the countries involved have adopted - with non-legal character - in 1994, in Bucharest, the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) of Environmental Protection in the Danube Basin compiled under the programme on the protection of the aquatic environment. The research activities conducted under the Programme are supported by the European Union as well. After the entry into force of the Sophia Danube Convention, the activities under its scope will be transferred from the environmental protection programme to the International Secretariat of the Sophia Convention.

d.) The convention on the protection of wetland habitats (The Ramsar Convention)

Hungary has joined in 1979 the convention signed in 1971 at Ramsar, Iran, and assumed thereby the obligation of complying with its provisions.

e.) The convention on the protection of migrating and wild animal species (The Bonn Convention)

Hungary has joined the convention in 1983. The provisions on the protection of the water surfaces needed for migrating birds are those to be complied with primarily.

f.) Convention on the study of transboundary environmental impacts

Hungary has joined the convention in 1991, as one of importance when considering the environmental impacts of water projects.

g.) The Framework Agreement on Climate Change.

The agreement was ratified by the Hungarian Parliament in 1994, as one of importance when considering the impacts of climate change on water management.

h.) The International Network of River Basin Organizations (INBO) (The Morelia Declaration)

At the constitutional meeting in 1996, the International Network of River Basin Organizations has adopted the so-called Morelia Declaration, which advocates the implementation of the recommendations adopted at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro), and the International Conference on Water and Environment (Dublin), setting forth also the principles of international cooperation. These principles are to be applied also in international river basins.

Hungarian professionals take active part in the activities of the UN Economic Commission of Europe, several recommendations of which have been adopted in Hungary. As mentioned in Chapter 30 already, the geographic-hydrographic particularities of Hungary lend special importance to international agreements (Ijjas – Szlávik 2000).

1.3.2. River Basin Management in Hungary

Hungary has a long tradition in water management planning. The Water Sector has made a substantial contribution to socio-economic development. Water management systems must now address new challenges. As part of the present transition in socio-economic and political structures, there is an increasing need for the co-ordination of newly emerging and often conflicting water related interests such as privatised agriculture, new local authorities and nature conservation organisations. There is a demand for regional water management plans that are based on broad consent which can provide a stable framework for investment projects and for regional development.

The previous Water Management Act contained provisions for RBMP and the Water Management Policy Document of Hungary in 1993, stipulated development of new regional water management planning procedures.

Following West European examples, the water administration organisations of Hungary have decided to promote the practice of RBMP as a tool for finding consensus among users and for devising commonly accepted long term policies that are environmentally sound and also feasible from the water management point of view.

In autumn 1993 a committee has been set up by the National Water Authority (OVF) with the responsibility to draft general guidelines on RBMP. The drafting committee completed its work until the end of 1994, by issuing a probationary guidelines with recommended content elements of the plans, and with the procedural system to follow (KHVM 1994).

River Basin Management Planning Pilot Study for the Hortobágy-Berettyó Basin

The RBMP Pilot Study for the Hortobágy-Berettyó Basin was awarded on August 1994 to a consortium of ESBI-ETV (leading partner, Hungary), ESB International (IRELAND) and SENATOR Consult (Hungary). The study was financed with funds from the EU Environmental Sector Programme of PHARE. The Project was aimed at the elaboration of a RBMP pilot study on the Hortobágy-Berettyó Basin. A secondary aim of the project was contribution to the development of the new Hungarian RBMP Guidelines by providing up-to-date planning expertise and by documenting experiences gained during the planning process in a comprehensive Final Report.

As a pilot study, the Hortobágy-Berettyó RBMP was intended also to be a trial case for the application of the new Guidelines. Lessons from the Hortobágy-Berettyó RBMP case study were reported by Mansfeld (1995).

Contents of River Basin Management Plans according to the Hungarian Guidelines

According to the Hungarian Guidelines RBM plans represent a vision of water management within river basins. A RBMP sets water management and environmental objectives and guides all uses, and, indirectly, the water environment as a whole, to comply with these objectives. The existing status of the water environment is compared with the objectives and from this comparison, management options are developed.

The major elements of the RBM planning process according to the Hungarian guidelines comprised:

- production of a draft Consultation Report version of the RBMP;
- holding of internal consultation within the Regional/National Water Authorities and adding amendments to the Report;
- production of the Consultation Report version of the RBMP;
- holding of external consultations for organisations and individuals involved in the future of the water environment, adding amendments to the RBMP;
- production of the Final Plan;
- regular monitoring and reviewing of the RBMP.

The contents of a typical Consultation Report have been included:

- introduction to the Water Authority and RBMP process;
- overview of the river basin;
- the Water Authority's "vision" for the river basin;
- a description of the uses/resources of the river basin;
- objectives and current status of the river basin management;
- issues/problems within the river basin; and
- proposed options/actions for solving problems, resolving conflict and meeting future objectives.

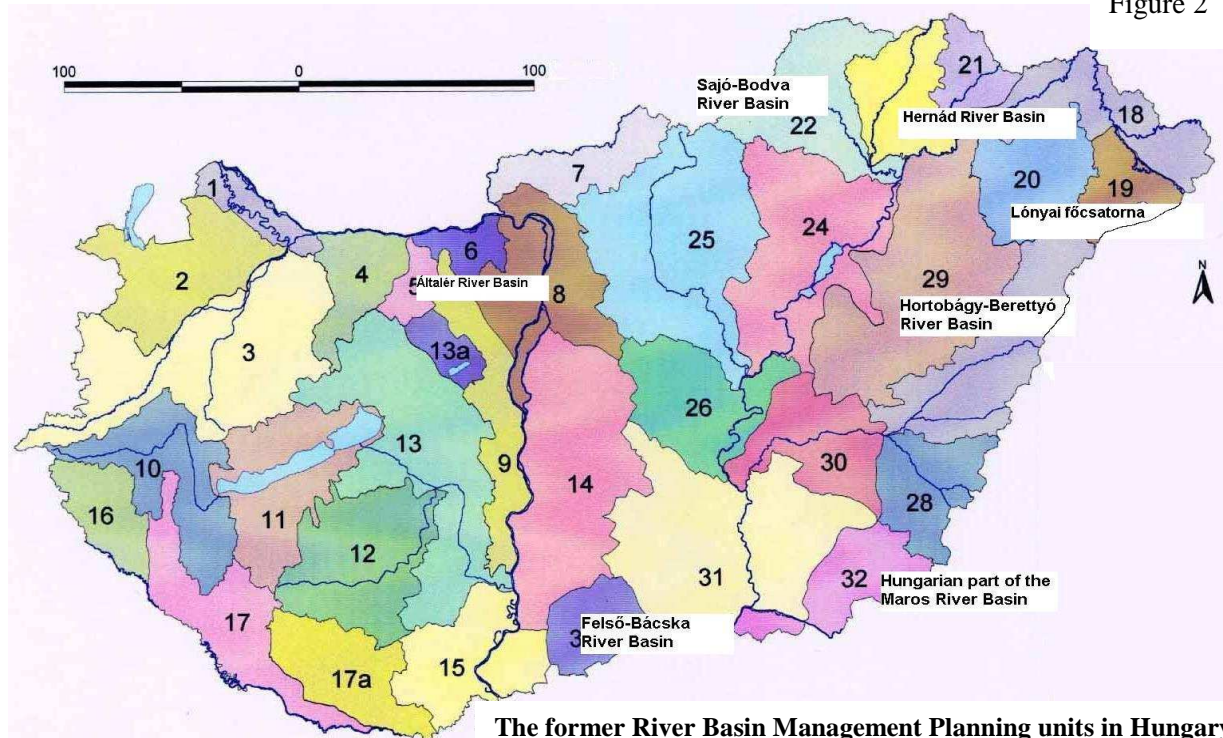
River Basin Management Planning Units in Hungary

For planning purposes, 33 river sub-catchment area districts were identified in 1996 by the Ministry of Transport and Water Management. Half of these districts are situated totally within Hungary, the other half are transboundary of character. On the basis of guidelines, developed in the same year, 7 river basin management plans were completed. The subdivision of Hungary and the location of the 7 pilot projects is presented in the figure2.

. The seven river basins and the period of planning are the following:

- Hortobágy-Berettyó River Basin; 1995-'98 (29)
- Hungarian Part of the Maros River Basin; 1997-'98 (32)
- Felső Bácska River Basin; 1997 (33)
- Sajó-Bodva River Basin; 1998 (22)
- Hungarian Part of the Hernád River Basin; 1997-'98 (23)
- Általér River Basin; 1998 (5)
- Lónyai-főcsatorna; 1998 (20)

Figure 2



The former River Basin Management Planning units in Hungary, 1994 - 1998

1.3.3. River Basin Management Planning in the Danube Basin according to the Water Framework Directive

Producing a single RBMP for the Danube

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) foresees the objective of producing a single River Basin Management Plan for the Danube as an international River Basin District .

The 22-23 November 1999 Sinaia Plenary of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) entrusted an Expert Group dealing with the implementation of the WFD. The Group requested the European Commission delegation to take over the chair. The ICPDR will provide the platform for the co-ordination necessary to develop and establish the River Basin Management Plan for the Danube basin.

The Plan will be based on the WFD and it will also meet the requirements set out by the Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube and also the other international agreements and conventions.

The Danube Protection Convention lays down detailed rules for an up-to-date water protection system. These rules are to be applied by the contracting parties themselves and - in line with international cooperation on other European river systems (e.g. Rhine and Elbe) by an 'International River Commission'.

In its first meeting on 17-18 February 2000 meeting at Budapest, the Ad Hoc Expert Group convened experts from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, European Community, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Romania and Slovak Republic as Contracting Parties, as well as representatives from UNDP/GEF, PHARE PCU, NGOs (Danube Environmental Forum; WWF International) and the Szentendre Regional Environmental Centre. The Group requested the European Commission delegation to take over the chair.

The Group discussed the issues of WFD with the understanding that the ICPDR will provide the platform for the coordination necessary to develop and establish the River Basin Management Plan for the Danube basin. Once such a plan has been prepared it will be the responsibility and competence of governments of Danube basin countries to provide the necessary agreement.

There are different possible strategies/approaches that can be adopted to meet the requirements of the WFD regarding River Basin Management and RBM Planning. The diverse conditions and needs in the Danube basin require different specific solutions. This diversity should be taken into account in the planning and execution of measures to ensure protection and sustainable use of water in the framework of the river basin management. Decisions should be taken as close as possible to the locations where water is affected or used.

The WFD recognises the river basin as the fundamental and natural unit for the protection of the aquatic environment. It requires the identification of River Basin Districts (RBDs), which can cover one or more river basins, and the preparation of legally binding River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) for each RBD. The Danube Basin is identified as the River Basin District.

Analysis of the relevant international River Basin Management programmes in the Danube Basin

The Danube River Pollution Reduction Programme (DRPRP) and the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for the Danube River Basin presents a group of hot spots and projects and measures that respond to identified pollution and transboundary effects in the Danube River Basin and the Black Sea. The list of projects for the pollution reduction has been agreed within the countries as well as in the sub-basin areas and in the whole basin area.

Projects for pollution reduction are presented for 15 identified sub-basin areas. The parts of three sub-basin areas are covered by Hungary: the Pannon Danube Area is identified as sub-basin area 6, the Drava Basin Area as sub-basin area 7 and the Tisza basin as sub-basin area 9. According to the DRPRP and the SAP, the sub-basin areas allow to better express local, regional, national and international river basin management needs in relation to the entire Danube basin.

Hungary is open concerning the approach taken in the Danube basin (as a specific, large and most international River Basin District in Europe) to ensure the co-ordination required on Danube basin wide level. The co-ordination with all the Danube States is considered very important and the key question is:

what has to be co-ordinated

- on a Danube Basin wide level,
- on a multilateral, international sub-basin level (Tisza River Basin, Drava River Basin),
- on a bilateral, international sub-basin level (Raba, Ipoly, Sajó, Bodrog, Hernád, Körös, Maros River Basins etc.), or
- on national level (national River Basin Management Units)

Common principles are needed in order to coordinate the Danube basin countries' efforts to improve the protection of the waters in the Danube basin in terms of quantity and quality, to promote sustainable water use, to contribute to the control of transboundary water problems, to protect aquatic ecosystems and wetlands directly depending on them, and to safeguard and develop the potential uses of waters in the Danube basin.

2. Public Participation in River Basin Management in Hungary

2.1. Access to information and public participation

Access to environmental information and public participation in environmental administrative decision-making are basic principles laid down in the Hungarian Act on Environment. Access to all kinds of public information is regulated by Act No. LXIII of 1992 on the protection of personal data and access to data of public interest. According to the act, state and municipal agencies are obliged to provide all kinds of information of public interest upon request. Exemptions are made regarding qualified data, such as those related to national defense or national security. Business secrecy is no exemption under law. There is no detailed "right to know" legislation, just broad legislation for state and municipal agencies.

As regards public participation, under the Act on Environment, environmental NGOs have a standing before administrative agencies and courts in environmental cases. The scope of environmental cases has not yet been clarified, and there are different judicial practices related to this issue (Regional Environmental Centre 2003).

2.2. Public Participation in Hungary

2.2.1. History of public participation processes in water management in Hungary

During the 1980's the Hungarian water resources development agencies experienced much criticism from environmentalists and others who felt they would be affected by proposed water resources projects (Ijjas 1992). These critics often felt that the water resources agencies

- had not provided an opportunity for them to influence the outcome of planning studies;
- had not given adequate consideration to the environmental and social impacts of proposed water resources projects.

Citizens have given up their passive role and have been claiming for participation in decision-making. Consequently, the professional manager had to learn to adapt to and reconcile divergent interests and opinions.

During the late 1980's citizens and environmental groups participated in the planning process through public hearings, but

- these hearings usually had little influence on the direction of the planning and
- the public hearings were often held at a late stage in the planning process and at this stage the criticism was not taken seriously.

Direct participation of the public has increased in importance as a part of water resources planning in Hungary in the early 1990's, when the political and economic transition started. Public demands for increased involvement had become so strong that many projects and programs were slowed down, halted, or subjected to intense adverse publicity (e.g. the large Slovak – Hungarian Danube project).

Planners have recognized that big or complex projects need the support of many groups of stakeholders to be acceptable. It was concluded (Ijjas 1992) that

- effective public participation is the way to gain public acceptance of worthwhile projects, or, alternatively, to recognize early which projects are not likely to be acceptable;
- one effective approach to reducing conflict is to involve the public from the initial stage of the planning process;
- the bureaucratic planning and decision making is no longer feasible in water resources development without adequate public participation;
- the bureaucratic organizations may be able to preserve their integrity only by encouraging full public participation in their activities.

It was also concluded that

- one of the first problems is to decide whose goals should be considered and
- this was relatively easy to determine in a one-party state with a central planning system, although the goals of the elit could not totally ignore the needs of the people;
- however in a democracy, planning goals should reflect the goals of society at large and
- the public involvement methods selected should match the goals of the planning.

The first intensive courses and education modules on public participation in water resources planning were introduced in Hungary during the late 1980's and early 1990's. The course contents were based on the literature published in the US (Montanari 1978, Ortolano 1976, Ortolano – Wagner 1977, Willeke 1974, 1976, Priscolli 1975, 1988, Astrack, Baumann, Reynolds 1984, Canter-Cnox 1985, Sewell, Biswas 1986, Whyte 1986, IPMP 1990).

2.2.2. Legal background

As the political/economic transition started in Hungary in 1990, environment was high on the political agenda. It had been hoped that Hungary, with a relatively strong and complex economy, and a great deal of foreign interest in investment opportunities, would serve as a model for the rest of Central and Eastern Europe in matters relating to environmental protection and public participation (Fülöp 1994).

Constitution

Rather than adopting a brand new constitution, as has been done in most countries of Central and Eastern Europe, or revitalizing an old one, as has been seen in the Baltic States, Hungary has chosen to continue its pre-transition constitution in 1949 into force, although thoroughly amending it in 1990. Recognizing the shortcomings of this process, however, the political forces shaping the country have discussed drafting an entirely new constitution, with a goal of adoption soon after mid-decade.

Basic Rights and Obligations

a. Right to Healthy Environment

Chapter I, Article 18 of the Constitution of the Republic of Hungary states: "The Republic of Hungary recognizes and implements everyone's right to a healthy environment." Article 70/D, concerning the rights of persons living within Hungary to the highest possible level of physical and mental health, places an obligation on the state to provide for protection of the man-made and natural environment.

b. Right of Expression

Article 61 guarantees the right of free expression.

c. Right to Information

Article 61 (1) of the Constitution states that everyone has the right of access to information of public interest.

d. Right of Free Assembly

The right of peaceful assembly is guaranteed by Article 62 of the Constitution.

e. Right of Association

Article 63 of the Constitution guarantees the right of association for purposes not prohibited by law.

f. Right to Petition

Article 64 provides:

In the Republic of Hungary everyone has the right to submit written petitions or complaints either alone or together with others.

g. Government's Relationship to the Citizens

Article 2 (2) of the Constitution states:

In the Republic of Hungary all power belongs to the people. The people exercise their sovereignty through elected representatives or directly.

Further, Article 19 (2) acknowledges that the Parliament exercises rights derived from the sovereignty of the people.

Chapter VII, Article 35 (1) states:

The Government shall:

- a. protect the constitutional order, protect and ensure the rights of citizens;
- b. provide for the enforcement of the laws;
- c. direct the work of the Ministries and other bodies directly subordinate to it, and coordinate their activities...

Article 36 of the same chapter states:

In the performance of its functions, the Government cooperates with the social organizations concerned.

Right to Petition Constitutional Court for Review

Article 32/A of the Constitution establishes the Constitutional Court. Any person may initiate proceedings before the Court pertaining to matters within its jurisdiction. Art. 32/A (3).

a. of Law or Rule

The Constitution provides members of the public the right to challenge the constitutionality of any newly enacted or existing law before the Constitutional Court. Article 32/A; see also Act XXXII of 1989.

b. of Action of Official

Persons also have the right to initiate other proceedings before the Constitutional Court such as may be prescribed by law. The Law on the Constitutional Court (Act XXXII, 1989) grants the Constitutional Court jurisdiction to decide cases where a fundamental constitutional right of a person is violated by the act or omission of another. Art. 1 (d) (Fülöp 1994).

2.2.3. Participation of NGOs in Hungary

The environmentalist groups have considerable influence on the public and the successive governments in Hungary. Some environmentalist organizations have played unquestionably important roles in protecting the aquatic environment and ecosystems. At the same time extreme views have been voiced and in some government orders on the aquatic environment, political, rather than environmental or water resources management considerations predominate.

Reviewing the history of the past 15 years it is concluded that the professional in state water administration and water management in general have performed their functions correctly, keeping public interests in view, but have failed in recognizing in time the characteristics of the democratisation process, have not involved the public into the decision making processes and have omitted image building in water management (PR work), which became the source of several problems. The public administration institutions, self-governments and private companies operating in the field of water management conduct presently a successful public policy, take efforts at maintaining good relations with NGO’s critical of water management activities. The institutional, legal forms of these relations are being developed (Ijjas -Szlávik 2000).

Having outlined the structural, political, economic and legal framework for eco-efficiency in Hungary, companies were asked to rank the influence of stakeholders on their environmental efforts. Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2 : Stakeholders’ influence on corporate environmental efforts (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2003)

Stakeholders' influence on corporate environmental efforts		
Weak influence	Moderate influence	Strong influence
Banks, insurance companies	Local authorities	Legal authorities
Public	Environmental organisations	Managers
Industrial associations		Owners
Scientific institutes		
Neighbourhood		
Employees		
Competitors		
Consumers		
Consumer's organisations		
Media		

The table shows that company leaders perceive only three main groups with real influence on their environmental efforts: legal authorities, managers and owners. These leaders do not feel any kind of (environmental) pressure at all from the majority of stakeholders.

Trade associations

Industry is being restructured in Hungary. The associations and interest representing bodies of the individual branches of industry contribute to water conservation and to the protection of the aquatic environment. The Cosmetics and Detergents Manufacturers' Association has, for instance, decided to promote the spreading use of phosphate-free and low-phosphate detergents, further the production of environmentally acceptable washing powders and the development of environmentally sound washing habits in general (Ijjas 1998, 1999).

Industrial associations may contribute to the universal compliance with environmental provisions in a particular branch of industry, avoiding thus unfair market advantages to manufacturers, who save on production costs by neglecting environmental protection.

The associations may also assume important roles in spreading clean, controlled technologies, further in quality assurance according to the standard series ISO 9000 and 14000, the evidences of which are already observable in some fields. The associations of the water industry have already registered major advances in environment-compatible water abstraction, water use and effluent treatment.

Professional and scientific associations

Traditionally good relations have existed in Hungary between the institutions of public water administration and the national and international professional and scientific organizations. Good examples of cooperation between the professional and scientific bodies can also be quoted. For example, the Hungarian representatives/officers of the international water management organizations re-convened annually under the auspices of the Hungarian Hydrological Society to coordinate their activities. They organize several joint events, or invite each other to their events. The international water management organizations provide also assistance in inter-governmental cooperation by identifying and analysing problems, conflict situations and the potential solutions, promoting the avoidance, alleviation and solution of conflicts. They accelerate significantly European integration and harmonization. In professional and scientific fields (education, research-development) they make participation in the activities of the EU member states possible earlier than over the official channels of international politics. Examples thereof can already be mentioned, in that Hungarian professionals are actively involved in the activities of a number of European professional and scientific organizations and in the Central-East-European working groups thereof.

Regional Environmental Centre (REC), Szentendre

The Public Participation Programme's mission of the Regional Environmental Centre is to support and facilitate access to information, public participation in environmental decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters through capacity building, networking, legal and policy analysis and assistance to various stakeholders.

The Programme has been a core activity of the REC since 1990. It undertakes projects aimed at education, public awareness raising, capacity building and training, grants, networking on the regional level, as well as providing legal and policy analysis and assistance to various stakeholders.

Examples of the activities include the following:

- supporting and facilitating the early ratification and implementation of the Aarhus Convention in CEE countries through capacity building, networking, legal and policy analysis and assistance;

- promoting initiatives under the Aarhus Convention, including contribution to the development of a legally binding instrument on PRTRs;
- contributing to the preparation of a Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Espoo Convention on Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment;
- contributing to the implementation strategy for the Aarhus Convention in Southern European countries by promoting transparency, participation and dialogues with civil society groups;
- improving the efficiency of government decision-making through a more strategic, institutional and practical approach in light of the implementation of the Aarhus Convention; and
- developing training programmes and disseminating good practices of CEE and Western countries.

Manual on Public Participation in Environmental Decision-making

The Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe has established a Legislative Task Force composed of leading legal and policy experts from Central and Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and the United States. This Task Force was established to promote legislative and institutional solutions to regional environmental problems. One of the working groups of the Task Force addressed public participation.

From the experiences some countries have gained with public participation, several general principles have been identified and formulated. These general principles are discussed in Part I of this manual: "Using Public Participation".

This Manual was developed only by the environmental NGOs to collect the principles and methods of how to plan and fulfil an effective lobby procedure. This Manual can be free downloaded from the REC website (www.rec.org) and the Hungarian version was elaborated too. The BUTE does not have information on the use of this Manual on the part of the NGOs, or about any other feedback.

“With this manual we hope the Regional Environmental Centre can contribute to an open discussion at many levels in order to identify the best solution for a healthy, safe and clean environment” (Introduction of the Manual on Public Participation in Environmental Decision-making - *Current Practice and Future Possibilities in Central and Eastern Europe* 1994).

WWF in Hungary

The WWF started its activities in Hungary in 1986, first only participating in a programme with the aim of protecting birds of prey organised by the Bird-life Hungary, without a separate representation. Following the successes of this project, in 1991 WWF opened a programme office in Hungary, and since then they are involved in the great part of the Hungarian environmental programmes. The main themes on their programmes are the conservation of the forests, wetlands, agricultural areas, and endangered species.

Beyond practical conservation programmes, the WWF lays much stress on lobbying for a better environmental legislation and informing society to increase the public's environmental awareness, which is considered as indispensable for the defence of nature in the long run.

WWF Hungary takes part in the initiatives of European nature conservation as well, including the Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative, organised by the WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme Office, which was established for the long-term co-operation of the seven countries of the Carpathians. Its aim is to conserve natural and cultural heritage and support traditional, sustainable agriculture in the Carpathians bearing global importance in Europe's heart.

WWF launched its PAN Park Programme in Europe in 1997. Its nature conservation and communication activities in Central Europe are co-ordinated from Hungary. (The name PAN comes from Protected Area Network). The programme's aim is to set up a system which qualifies Europe's protected areas independently to ensure their high level management (www.wwf.hu).

2.2.4. Public Participation in River Basin Management in Hungary

Public Participation in River Basin Management Planning according to the Hungarian Guidelines

The Hungarian RBMP Guidelines (KHVM 1994) required a two-step consultation process. First an interim meeting was held with the involved authorities and institutions and after the public-meetings were held with the representatives of the broad public. To evaluate the Guideline five watersheds were selected in the first round, the river basin of Sajó-Bodva, Maros, Hortobágy-Berettyó, Hernád and Felső-Bácska.

The Sajó-Bodva River Basin Management Plan

The Sajó-Bodva River Basin – because of the size (2568 km²), economic and social diversity – was divided into five sub-regions. Accordingly in the initial phase five public forums were organized, which were advertised in the local media. Letters and small leaflets were distributed among the representatives of all interested authorities explaining the aim and purpose of the RBMP. In the initial period there was an attempt to set up a practicable knowledge base in order to better understand what is required to prepare an effective River Basin Management Plan.

With respect to consultation outside the sphere of formal planning procedure, a Public Advisor Committee has been established consisting of representatives from the different interested institutions. Among the 11 attendants were the senior expert of the local waterworks, the mayor and members of environmental NGOs. The mandate of this Committee was to structure and conceptualise the public participation process through the continuous evaluation of the Consultation Report.

Based on the experiences of the intra- and inter-group negotiations, eleven documents were prepared particularly in terms of clarity of goals, objectives and the main environmental, economic, water management and multiple water-demand characteristics. With the support of these documents a draft Regional Water Management Consultation Plan was developed and it was circulated to the interested parties - the water authorities, water management associations and the Public Advisor Committee – for interim evaluation. The proposals and opinions were synthesized into the Consultation Report. Because of the length of this Report (160 pages) – the overall document was disseminated only among the decision-makers. In order to support the information procedure a comprehensive brief summary was elaborated and circulated among all interested parties like the industrial, agricultural and economic chambers, the professional and public NGOs and the representatives elected in the public forums.

The main objective of the forums was the exchange of the experiences, opinions and demands among the representatives of professionals, decision-makers and water-users. In the meetings the number of the participants was around 30-40, and the main topic was the price and quality of the water services.

Build on the collected opinions the final RBMP was developed. As a result of the public participation process can be defined, that via the establishment of the Public Advisor Committee a non-hierarchical network was formed between public institutions and other stakeholders. This resulted in the more effective management of multiple demands on water, facilitated to get around the failures originated from the lack of data or wrong data (Ombódi-Tóth 1999).

The Hortobágy-Berettyó River Basin Management Plan

The Hortobágy-Berettyó River Basin (5170 km²) is located in the East part of Hungary. The main objective of the planning procedure was putting into practice the Hungarian and international experiential learning principles that have been inspiring in the development of other RBMPs. The direct objective of the planning procedure was the development of the programme of measures achieving the consensus of all interested parties and selecting the most accepted alternative solution to the water management problems. The elaboration of the alternatives was based on the opinions and comments of the effected local communities.

The main steps of the RBMP were the followings:

- elaboration of the Draft Consultation Report,
- interim consultation with the water directorates, environmental authorities on the Consultation Report,
- elaboration of the final Consultation Report based on the comments gained on the interim consultation,
- public meetings with the contribution of the environmental NGOs,
- development of the final RBMP,
- review and up-dating.

The planning procedure was divided in two phases, first the Consultation Report was elaborated in 1995-'96, and in the second phase, in 1997-'98, the informal events and consultations were organized presenting the final version of the Report. The document started out by describing the general characteristics and water demands of the area and continued by proposing technical and economical solutions to these problems.

The idea of holding public meetings was considered to be extremely important both on the part of the designers and of the decision-makers. In the meetings it was agreed that in order to be goal oriented and interest based the tendency for achieving consensus had an essential importance. The direct objective of the public meetings was the exchange of explicit and implicit knowledge of all actor communities in the water demands and to facilitate the consensus-building process on the future environmental requirements.

The participating organizations in the consultation process:

- Local authorities, rural development organizations,
- Water-user societies, river basin management organizations,
- Environmental NGOs,
- Local media,
- Other local communities.

Because of the limited number of the Consultation Report (40 copies) the brochures and leaflets on the RBMP served as background to the activities. These short and comprehensive materials were disseminated in almost 1000 copies, and gave an overview of PP within the planning procedure but predominantly focused on the characteristics of the river basin.

In the public meetings 100 participants were attended, but there was a high rate of the representatives of the administration bodies. It has to be mentioned, that one third of the comments originated from the functionaries, too.

In overall context, the public meetings can be seemed successful, giving a valuable contribution to the planning procedure, and completing the RBMP with new points of views (Bögi 1999). As a result, a general outlook on the main water demands of the area and the most acceptable solutions for the public was highlighted. Based on this, the final consultation Report presented recommendations on how to develop and implement the new water requirements at the future.

The Felső-Bácska River Basin Management Plan

The Felső-Bácska RBMP fits into the five pilot projects based on the Hungarian Guidelines mentioned above, as well as the objectives and the main steps of the planning procedure (Koch-Szalay-Varga 1999). The documents prepared by the designers contained the description of the main problems in the area and the proposed solutions for them. These solutions were presented to the public like alternatives, to facilitate the selection of the most advantageous scenarios.

In spite of the analogies with the objectives of the other RBMPs, the Felső-Bácska RBMP was unique in the selection of the target group. This RBMP was elaborated principally to the stakeholders and not to the professionals. This fact determined the style and objective of the Plan, and the public consultation process was stronger than in the other cases. Because of this specialty an interesting stakeholder-internal cooperative and consultative structure had been developed, aiming to secure good information exchange.

The basic objective of the planning procedure was the establishment of a River Basin Management Strategy for the area with the consensus of all interested parties. The Strategy consisted of an inventory of most promising methods and techniques related to the river basin management. The main margins of the procedure were the environmental, economic and social characteristics of the area, but the expected requirements of the EU were taken into consideration too.

The public participation process initiated with publishing the date and place of the consultations in the local media. The citizens were also asked for co-operation in the local advertising newspaper (published and disseminated in 28 000 copies), and were informed about the accessibility of the Consultation Plan in the offices of the municipalities. The interested authorities, organizations were invited individually.

In the frame of the planning procedure three professional – interim – and three public events were organized, where the key topic was the evaluation of the River Basin Management Plan.

The main weaknesses raised by the events identified that the representatives were not able to move away from sticking to the original constituencies positions towards a more flexible one that looks for win-win alternatives. It also caused problems, that the participants did not own the necessary tools to supply their demands (financing, authorization, etc.).

The Maros River Basin Management Plan

The preparation of the RBMP of the Maros lead channel, met with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive also. All interested parties were involved from the first stage of the planning procedure, and in the public meetings realised a real two-way communication.

The planning unit was too big (1885 km²) and too diverse to consult the public in the same time on the whole area, so 3 consultations were held in different micro-regions. The location was appointed by the identified problems. This division was necessary because of the distances, the different water management problems and the different hydrological characteristics.

The process was initiated with the preparation of the consultation plans. During this phase, the original plans were shortened and the technical expressions were replaced with comprehensive expressions for the public too. The stakeholders were familiarised with the “snowball method” (every addressed stakeholder could address another one) and were informed about the location and the date of the consultation meetings via invitation cards, newspaper advertisements and flyers.

The participants of the consultation meetings were:

- Host of the meeting: usually the local mayor or well-known/famous person, but in all cases somebody who could affect the opinion of the broad public. The organizers informed the hosts in details before the meetings.
- Leader of the meetings: to lead and control the dialogue.
- The representatives of the competent authorities: to support the leaders and to make their expertise and responsibility felt.
- Other stakeholders, groups and individuals.

The organizers tried to connect the consultations with other events towards raising interest.

The process of the meetings had two main phases. In the first phase the hosts informed the public about the details, main aims and purposes of the RBMP, introduced the designers (engineers), representatives ensuring the legitimacy of the process and of the plan too. After this “information phase” took place there was a period of dialogue with the public, where the professionals, the decision-makers, the environmental groups and the public could exchange their ideas, proposals and opinions related to the river basin. To ensure the legitimacy of the Dialogue it was essential the elaboration of the minutes during the whole event.

After the completion of the planning process, the stakeholders received the brief version of the plans and were informed where to access the detailed plans and all of the planning documents. Thus the stakeholders were able to check if their opinion was considered or not.

As results of these public consultations and dialogues can be mentioned, that the relations (connections) among the interested parties – the state policy, the local competent authorities and the public - were enhanced and developed, and a two-way communication process was formed. In this way, a consensus between stakeholders was achieved and the RBMP was agreed by all parties.

The experiences and results reached during this procedure showed for all the professionals in the country, that the preparation of the consultations is very important, because inadequate preparation and dialogue could cause conflicts and set back the overall planning process, but a well-prepared public participation procedure can achieve a wild – broad consensus among the interested parties (Ijjas, Török 1998).

2.2.5. Other Public Participation Projects in Hungary

Public Participation in the Dörögđ River Basin (Balaton)

A complex public participation procedure was developed in the famous tourist area of Hungary, the Balaton Upperland. The Dörögđ basin, where this process was realized is a micro region situated some 20 km away from the northern shore of Lake Balaton. As the catchment area of the Eger stream discharging to the lake it forms an ecologic unit. Together with the Káli Basin, both belong to the Balaton Upperland National Park. The five villages Kapolcs, Ócs, Pula, Vígánpetend and Taliándörögđ with a total population of some 2100 have an aggregate area of close to 8000 hectares.

Attracted by the landscape, the intellectuals purchasing homes and moving to the Dörögđ Basin included some conservationists, who alerted to the sub-region of the Independent Ecological Centre, upon the initiative of which an environmental people's college was organised in 1991. The programme emanating from there has broadened and established, after a few years, a wide set of objectives, such as the active environmental protection, the sustainable community and tourism development, and a model approach to sustainable micro regions. All these objectives were proposed by the participants of the project.

The five villages in the Dörögđ Basin have joined forces in community development and nature conservation. The most important tools in the comprehensive development programme include education in the people's college, strategic planning, information and programmes on active nature conservation, the use of Internet and community development.

In the frame of the people's college, lectures were held since 1991, and the environmental awareness of the five villages' citizens was raised significantly. The subject covered a broad range: micro regions and communities, the viability of cooperatives after privatisation, animal farming, waste management and sewage treatment, natural medicine and health education, fruit growing, bio-gardening, land reform and compensation, landscape management, village tourism, etc. These meetings were highly popular, the "students" visiting from the five villages voted for continued co-operation in 1992 (Vásárhelyi 1999).

The IUCN Europe Programme project "Strengthening local capacities in nature conservation" was implemented so far in four countries. The representative area thereof in Hungary was the Dörögđ Basin in 1995-96. Under the programme an exhibition was organised and a brochure was published on the natural resources of the sub-region. For the young people a people's college weekend and a study excursion were organised to acquaint them with a development programme under way in a neighbouring micro region, where the traditional practice of flood plain farming, water control and conservation was demonstrated.

The first partner in the organic development programme launched in 1991 was the Independent Ecological Centre (FÖK). The programme has been continued since by a team of excellent professional and human relations, comprising the GATE Institute of Environmental and Landscape Management, the Pagony Landscape and Garden Consultants, the Swiss Stiftung pro Dörögđ Becken, Zürich, the Eötvös Loránd University of Natural Sciences, ELTE, Budapest, the Mild Technology Foundation and the IUCN. To supplement the moral and active support of the local public, funds were provided by the National Employment Fund of the Ministry of Labour, the Swiss Government, the Prima Klima, Berlin, the Soros Foundation, the Stiftung pro Dörögđ Becken, Zürich, the FÖK, the IUCN European Programme and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe.

Under the cooperation agreement signed in 1996 between the organic development programme and the Kapolcs Cultural and Nature Conservation Society, the latter participates with its own programmes in the events of the Valley of Arts. For instance a demonstration of traditional trades, an ecologic playhouse and an exhibition of the KÖRNET programme was organised and young hosts have guided the visitors to the natural assets in the vicinity of villages.

Public involvement to the land-use planning

The Szentendrei-island case is the first land-use planning project where both inter-municipal collaboration and public participation played an important role. The project was supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands through the MATRA Foundation¹ (Vári 1999).

The Szentendrei-island is a 56 km² island on the Danube, north of Budapest. The island on the regional level is a very valuable area from the point of view of recreation, drinking water supply, and nature conservation.

To reconcile the various demands, an integrated land-use planning project was initiated in January 1997. The main objectives were included the elaboration of a land-use development plan and a regional concept for sustainable development for the region, as well as the establishment of a database for future planning. The project was undertaken by Göncöl Environmental Association, a large environmental NGO which has been active in exploring the ecological values of the island for a long time. Coordination was the task of a four-member project team, the Island Development Workgroup, which included two members of Göncöl Environmental Association and two Dutch experts.

The main phases of the project were (I) setting agenda and establishing process frame, (II) producing sectoral profiles and database, (III) finding integrative solutions and deciding on joint actions, (IV) preparing the development plan and the concept, and (V) implementation. The plan and the concept were finalized early 1999, and as of August 1999, implementation of the plan was in progress.

To assure the cooperation of the affected local governments and the main land-use sectors, in the initiative stage a Roundtable was formed where the mayors of the four communities, the representatives of the forest industry, agriculture, recreation and tourism, nature conservation, and water management participated. The Roundtable served as a platform for negotiation where the parties had to agree on each major decision regarding the land-use plan. In order to inform local residents and to seek their input, public hearings and open days were organized, and presentations were held after phases (II) and (III).

Similarly, in the early stages local residents had little interest in the project. Many of them did not feel affected or did not believe that their opinion matters. Not many attended the public meetings and open days. However, their interest strongly increased after maps had been presented and inhabitants realized that they can modify the plans. On the part of the farmers there was a general distrust in the process. They appeared to be suspicious of collaborative land-use planning which they regarded as a step toward "collectivisation". In addition, farmers did not believe that a foreign government would provide assistance without any self-interest. It is an unfortunate legacy of the last few decades that they tend to assume some hidden agenda everywhere (Vári 1999).

¹ MATRA HU/96/01

In spite of the above difficulties, the planning project was successful. In addition to producing a plan, a long-term concept, and a database, it facilitated inter-municipal collaboration and public participation. As a result of the project, a new civil society organization, the Szentendrei-island Hospitality Association was established to represent individuals and enterprises involved in the recreation/tourism sector. The project was also instrumental in raising social responsibility and environmental awareness, as well as building trust between the various groups. The integrated land-use planning in the Szentendrei-island is an example for a participatory process where the interests of water management and other stakeholders were successfully reconciled (Vári 1999).

Collecting data on the views of the stakeholders on the flood risk

In the Upper Tisza Basin the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) developed a case study collecting empirical data on the views of stakeholders on policy issues concerning: (1) proposed flood mitigation measures; (2) government compensation to flood victims versus private insurance; (3) cross subsidies in the case of private insurance cover, and the role of the government as re-insurer; and (4) views of government officials and insurers on government risk-transfer instruments, such as cat bonds, to hedge against public infrastructure losses. The main conclusion of the project was, that it is important to build disaster resilient communities with a two-fold aim: to reduce the level of flood risk, while ensuring that development efforts do not increase the vulnerability to floods. Flood risk reduction is therefore emerging as an important requisite for sustainable development. (Weichselgartner and Linnerooth-Bayer 2002).

A Canadian – Hungarian Co-operation for the sustainable development of the environment

The Ráckevei-Soroksári Eco-Region covers the south part of Budapest and the areas surround the 58 km long section of the Danube River. To the '70s, the area was widely known on its wildlife, tourism and recreational function.

In the early '90s the Canadian Urban Institute initiated a nature conservation programme with the support of the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to provide assistance for the development of the regional system of services especially designed for the urban development and the environment management to rehabilitate the Eco-region and to clarify important technical issues within the administration. The target groups of the programme were the Hungarian professionals, civil servants and the general public. The programme was financed by the Canadian Cabinet with 200 million HUF (cca. 800 000 euro).

In the initial phase an evaluation report was elaborated by the ÖKO Rt. in 1993, widely involving the local governments, the organizations, the trade associations and the citizens affected in this area. By the surveys it could be considered, that the major part of the people had confidence in the process and in its prosperous impacts related to the region.

The involvement of the local governments functioning in the region started in April-September 1994 with the management of the Co-ordination Office. At this time the great part of the settlements were joined via signing a dictum and were actively participating in the procedure.

Based on the information acquired during the initial phase, in November 1994 as part of the Regional Environmental Plan, a Background Report was developed consisting the available data related to the area. The final version of the working plan was elaborated in 1995, fixing the framework, the purposes of the project, and the regional planning strategy related to the Ráckevei-Soroksári Eco-region.

The principles of the involvement of the general public were formulated in the Regional Planning Strategy, accepted by almost all local governments in the area. Based on these principles started the information campaign in 1995. While it also gives a broad overview on the characteristics and purposes of the RBMP for the general public, the campaign focused on the involvement of the schools to the environmental approach. The schools had classes, presentations on the nature conservation, tenders were announced for all age-groups and so-called forest-schools were organized, where the children could learn directly about the protection of the environment.

Almost all local and regional newspapers, oral and published media were involved in the information campaign. In the local newspapers info-letters were published continuously aiming to serve as an information instrument for involved and interested institutions. Information brochures were disseminated, which intended to raise awareness of the broader public.

The spheres of action were identified in local decrees by the local politicians. After the definition of these, an advisory board was funded by the representatives of the Strategic Working Group, Co-ordination Office and Environmental Working Group. The scope of duties of this board covered the evaluation of all acquired information, the formulation of the conclusions, and the development of the proposals, plans referring to the whole area.

2.3. Dialogue on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive in Agricultural Water Management

2.3.1 The dialogue process in CEE region

Following the first planning and design meeting for a possible global Dialogue on Water for Food and Environmental Security held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in December 2000, the GWP-CEE Region (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia) decided to run a series of relevant dialogues in the countries. Responding to the invitation of GWP, representatives of GWP-CEE, WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme and ICID European Regional Working Group formed in 2001 a temporary Working Group as an interim arrangement to take the initiative forward. The WG prepared a proposal on the CEE Dialogue on Water for Food and Environment, which was presented in August 2001 during the Stockholm Water Symposium. The proposal was further elaborated for the Bonn Conference on Freshwater held in December the same year. It was well received and was decided that GWP-CEE give priority to the Dialogue on the regional level.

The proposal stated that the agricultural impacts on water status are a major concern across Europe – both in terms of water quantity and quality. There are obvious regional differences, for example between north-west Europe, the Mediterranean and CEE countries. Apart from the impacts on the biodiversity and landscape of Europe, this 'water stress' threatens human health and the long-term sustainability of food production. Direct impacts include over-abstraction of groundwater and pollution of ground and surface waters due to excessive fertiliser application. But there are also ecosystem shifts that have resulted from intensification of agricultural practice during the last 50 years or so. Eutrophication has become widespread across the continent, causing significant damage to rivers, lakes and wetlands and resulting in economic losses. As a result of drastic physical alteration, such as loss of natural vegetation cover and regulation of river systems, the landscape now has a reduced capacity to store and eliminate nutrients and pesticides. All of the current impacts are likely to be accentuated by climate change.

It is important to recognise that not all agricultural activities are detrimental to water quantity and quality. Farming can also have a positive role in shaping Europe's landscapes and in securing valuable wetland habitats. However, true integration of agriculture and environmental objectives requires new approaches and policy instruments such as agri-environment and sustainable rural development to support and strengthen the long-term implementation of the new EU Water Framework Directive (Ijjas et al. 2001).

It was concluded that the main focus of the Dialogue in the CEE region is the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in the hope that by achieving good ecological status of waters the objectives of the Dialogue process will be reached in the agricultural regions as well.

Following the Bonn conference the GWP-CEE decided to financially support the process in the region and held a kick-off meeting to facilitate the implementation of national "Food" dialogues in the CEE countries.

The meeting (Bled, Slovenia, April 2002) attended by future facilitators of country dialogue meetings addressed some key questions related to the:

- organisational structure of the dialogues,
- dialogue purpose, principles and elements,
- action plans for initiating dialogues and
- timetables.

It was agreed that **the general objective of the Dialogue was that all waters reach at least “good status” by 2015 and to ensure the sustainable development of the agriculture, while the specific objective was the successful implementation of EU WFD in the field of agricultural water management by involving all stakeholders to the planning and implementation process.** A Knowledge Base for the country dialogues has been compiled including:

- EU Water Framework Directive,
- Common EU and National Strategies on the Implementation of WFD,
- Draft Guidelines for WFD implementation in EU - CIRCA network (approx. 900 documents),
- Other international and national documents.

2.3.2 First Phase of the WFE Dialogue in Hungary

In the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs), agricultural systems have experienced dramatic changes since the late 1980s. Probably the most important driving forces of rural change have been social and economic restructuring, prompted by the political reforms of the last decade. The transition from centrally planned economies and the preparations for accession to the EU are key drivers shaping rural transformation (Ijjas ed. 2003).

The EU enlargement poses a major political, economic and ecological challenge for the EU, and the Candidate Countries. Within the discussion on the EU enlargement, agricultural policy plays a major role. The process of the EU enlargement requires the adoption of the European sectoral policies, including the Common Agricultural Policy and also the adoption and implementation of the WFD. The implementation of the WFD requires the use of the supporting tools within the CAP with regard to the specific CEECs dimensions.

Because of all these reasons, the GWP-Hungary was looking for organizations sharing the above objectives and found very soon interested parties, like the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development, Ministry for Environment and Water Management, WWF – World Wide Fund for Nature, Hungary, ICID Hungarian National Committee, two universities and the National Union of Water Management Associations.

Water Management Associations (WMAs) are independent organizations playing important role in solving rural water management tasks. Members are individuals or agricultural companies having land or other properties within the area of interest of a WMA, and therefore being locally interested in the protection against water induced damages including excess water as well. Presently there are 72 WMAs in Hungary covering almost the whole territory of the country (figure 3). Members contribute financially according to the value of their property (Ijjas– Gayer – Kindler - Konkoly 2002).

Figure 3



The Ministries proved to be committed partners showing not only political will, but also providing financial support to the local level dialogues organized in the countryside, as well as delegating high level officers to help facilitate the meetings and draw conclusions. WWF-Hungary, the ministries and the ICID National Committee were instrumental supporters by providing keynote lecturers and facilitators at the meetings and giving professional expertise. The consortium was based on mutual interest and created a constructive atmosphere for the whole process. GWP-Hungary played a catalytic role which was appreciated by the other members (Ijjas et al 2001).

The Dialogue is a two-way process, the top-down approach (initiated by the Ministry) is well complemented by the bottom up character represented by the WMAs. The informal character of the meetings helps to develop a constructive discussion both horizontally (among representatives of the water sector, agriculture and environmental protection) and vertically (between practitioners of the field and ministerial officers).

The program of the National Meetings was organized with the aim of facilitating the formal and informal communication among the participants. All meetings have two main parts: the plenary session (at the morning) and the small-group negotiations (at the afternoon). The morning session starts with a brief report and summary of topicalities, where the requested representatives (usually of FVM, KVVM, GWP, WWF) or other invited speakers report about the important events of the last period or the ongoing processes in the agricultural water management domain. After the brief introduction of the on-going activities, presentations are held on the selected topic, which form the frame of the themes of the small-group negotiations at the afternoon.

These presentations serve as background information for the followings. The morning session is closed with the definition of the key-questions for the small – group negotiations, where the participants propose questions, in connection with the before given topics, which are interesting for them or they have stake in it introducing their motivations with the management of the keynote-speakers. From the list formed during this period are chosen the key-topics of the small-group negotiations held in the afternoon.

After a quick lunch break, which importance is that during the informal (rather friendly) conversations can form and can know the previous opinion of each other the participants of small groups, working together in the next session, start the small group negotiations. The direct objective of the small group negotiations is to give common and widely accepted answers the question defined in the morning session. But probably the indirect aim is more important, to learn the social learning, „to learn together how to manage together”. The groups work only with 10-15 members, because according to international studies, over this number the small group cannot work effectively and reach consensus.

All groups have its own leader and spokesman chosen by the members (usually a volunteer). The role of the leader is to control the group, to initiate, manage and regulate the negotiation, to inspire the participants to sound their different opinions and interests, to advance to produce the common answer. The role of the spokesman is to present the common summarized opinion in the frame of the final plenary meeting.

In the frame of the final plenary session, all groups – mainly two – present their opinion, and the others can reflect on it. Since the Dialogue is a social learning process, the aim is not to reach a common agreement, but the exchange of experiences, purpose and ideas.

Issues raised during the meetings include:

- Most important provisions of the WFD related to agricultural water management
- Obstacles hindering the implementation of WFD
- To dos in the agricultural water management for the successful implementation of WFD
- Suggestions for the EU working group preparing guidelines of implementation (in order to avoid unfavourable prescriptions from the viewpoint of the Hungarian agricultural water management)
- Future tasks of WMAs in connection with the implementation and relevant preparations.

2.3.3. Second Phase of the WFE Dialogue in Hungary

The countryside events are organized in a form of a “road show” (figure 4, box 1) in various spots of the country in four regions (figure 5 and figure 6) and starting with general presentations on the problems, prevailing trends and objectives of the Dialogue. Since the main driving force in the CEE countries is the joining to the EU and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive is a major task also for the candidate countries, the EU water policy as well as its agricultural policy was presented.

Other important regulation is the Nitrate Directive with the objective of reducing water pollution caused or induced by nitrates used in agriculture and preventing further such pollution.

box 1 List of Dialogue meetings in 2003

- First round: April 2003
 - o Celldömök
 - o Lengyeltóti
 - o Kiskunmajsa
 - o Sárospatak
- Second round: July 2003
 - o Mosonmagyaróvár
 - o Debrecen
 - o Szolnok
 - o Szarvas
- Plenary meeting, July 2003, Budapest
- Third round: October 2003
 - o Mezőkövesd
 - o Szeged
 - o Tamási
 - o Tapolca
- Plenary meeting, October 2003, Budapest
- Plenary meeting, December 2003, Budapest

The wetland restoration programme of WWF-Hungary was reported and its relation to the WFD was highlighted. This was followed by questions and answers in plenary. Key questions have been then formulated, which were discussed in small working groups of six to eight participants. While the facilitators were the lecturers of the plenary session, the reporter was one of the participants. The purpose of this was to encourage feedback from those whose opinion is the most important for decision-makers and encourage real dialogue.

The attendees of the Dialogue meetings are members of the local WMAs, farmers, representatives of agricultural companies, municipalities, professionals from district water authorities and environmental inspectorates, presenting real grass root interest in the discussions (**box 2**). In Hungary between March and November totally 14 meetings have been held with 400 participants (Ijjas ed. 2003).

box 2.

List of organizations consulted

Written comments were submitted by:

World Wide Fund for Nature Hungary,
Hungarian Association for Agro-Sciences, Session of Water Management,
Hungarian Hydrological Society,
Hungarian National Committee of International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage.

Organizations represented on the Dialogue meetings:

Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development,
Ministry for Environment Protection and Water Management,
Global Water Partnership Hungary,
WWF Hungary,
ICID Hungarian National Committee,
ICID ERWG,
ICID ERWG Drought Work Team,
ICID ERWG Water Framework Directive Work Team
GWP/WWF/ICID Water, Food and Environment Dialogue in Central and Eastern European EU Candidate Countries (Dialogue on the Implementation of the Water Framework Directive in Agricultural Water Management),
Hungarian Hydrological Society,
Hungarian Association for Agro-Sciences, Session of Water Management,
County Authorities of Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development,
Union of the Water Management Associations,
Water Management Associations (76 WMAs)

There were four written responses and five Dialogue meetings were held. Four regional meetings were organized in April and one national meeting on 10 July. The total number of the participants was over 100. There were a number of issues raised, which were outside the scope of the Working Document. Relevant comments and suggestions were considered for the purpose of the Response of Hungary, that summarized the written and oral responses received by the Ministry and reviewed, discussed and edited together with the representatives of the consortium established by the GWP Hungary, WWF Hungary, ICID Hungarian National Committee and the Hungarian Hydrological Society for the “Hungarian National Dialogue on the Implementation of the WFD in Agricultural Water Management”. The Hungarian Dialogue is a part of the Regional Dialogue process of the Central and Eastern European EU Candidate Countries on the “Implementation of the WFD in Agricultural Water Management”.

It has to be mentioned, that the 60-70% of the Hungarian proposals were adopted by the Water Directors. This result shows the usefulness and effectiveness of the Dialogue processes and of the method applied during the process, the social learning.

2.3.4. The link of the Dialogue with the political process

The EU accession is an unprecedented political step and as the likely date of joining the EU (2004) is approaching it is becoming issue number one in the candidate countries. Although by the end of 2001 the accession negotiations on the environment chapter were provisionally concluded with nine countries, the implications of becoming EU member is still unclear for many professionals of the water and the agri-food sector. On the other hand a study confirms that all candidate countries will reap significant benefits from EU environmental directives (Wallstrom, 2002).

Luckily this situation (definite support to join, uncertainties related to implication and clear signs of positive impact on the environment) helps to call the attention of senior decision makers and governmental officers to the Dialogue process in the CEE countries. The efforts of the Country Water Partnerships (CWPs) preparing the national consultations were generally acknowledged and supported by relevant ministries and the meetings were attended by their representatives. They considered the meetings as a contribution to the ministries’ public awareness campaign and usually gained good impressions. The top-down and bottom-up approaches complemented each other and resulted in trust building.

Dialogue results were well communicated to competent ministries of all the nine participating countries, where the recommendations will be considered for the EU accession negotiations. Information for decision makers on practical obstacles encountered in the field and on local preferences are prerequisites of implementing the Dialogue results. This process however is time consuming and as envisaged the Dialogue will last until 2006.

Regarding the CEE countries located in the Danube River Basin, both GWP-CEE and WWF are observers with the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), which includes governmental delegates of the countries sharing the basin (the most complex one in the world in terms of number of countries involved). ICPDR provides the multilateral setting of the implementation of Water Framework Directive. Observers are not idle parties at the meetings; they bring expertise and from time to time volunteer or are requested to contribute with issue papers, like the recent one on public participation in connection with the implementation of WFD. They are active partners in the lasting political process of joining the EU and able to influence the decisions of this international body including EU members states and associated countries as well.

The CEE Dialogue consortium (GWP, WWF and ICID) therefore can put through the ideas, recommendations and results of country and regional meetings directly by its observers and indirectly through country delegates. This is the case in the Danube basin, where six out of the ten CEE countries can be found.

The Baltic sub-region of GWP-CEE with four countries is different, mainly because instead of one large transboundary river like the Danube, there are several parallel river basins like Oder (Odra), Vistula and Nemunas discharging their flows into the Baltic Sea. Here solutions are being sought through the Baltic Sea Commission HELCOM and the recently established CEE Network of Basin Organizations (CEENBO).

2.3.5 Conclusions of the Dialogue process

In order to conduct successful Dialogue committed partners are needed from both ends of the political palette. In CEE the unique political situation of historic reunification of the European continent helps to gain political support for the Dialogue process.

The discussions revealed that to meet WFD requirements is not enough. A delicate balance has to be reached by meeting EU water and common agricultural policies and by being competitive without increasing the burden on the environment under harsh conditions of limited subsidy (average 15% compared with 40-60% in EU). To raise the relatively low living standards typical in agriculture in all CEE countries reconsideration of subsidiary policy is needed. Compensation of people living in disadvantageous areas is also needed for achieving social justice and environment-friendly investments must be encouraged by adequate incentives. Concept of integrated water resources management (or the way to implement it) is different in the world, in the EU and in the local environment. The EU WFD stipulates the planning of action plans necessary for meeting the environmental objectives and do not deal with programmes related to social and economic objectives.

Given the relatively small extent of the irrigated area and moderate use of fertilisers and pesticides in CEE (mostly because of the increase of their prices in the last 10 years), agricultural irrigation is currently not judged as important threat to natural resources or biodiversity in that part of Europe (European Commission DG Environment 2000).

In the next phase of the Dialogue the cross-sectoral dialogue process among the stakeholders, primarily at regional, national and river basin levels, that is open, clear, transparent and inclusive will continue. The national level dialogues or roundtables would form the heart of the dialogue. Central and East European regional and river basin level dialogues would complement these to exchange information and address issues affecting users directly. Special efforts would be made to connect to the local level, where the key challenge is to involve the real users of water services.

The Knowledge Base will be the scientific core of the Dialogue. An enhanced CEE knowledge base will feed the dialogue to establish credible and authoritative knowledge accepted by both agricultural and environmental constituencies. The knowledge base would focus on improving agricultural production and achieving environmental security and on impacts of past development as well as on evaluation of options for future development. The implementation process of the EU Water Framework Directive will create wealth of information, experience and knowledge.

Networking for local and basin level action-oriented projects in CEE region will focus on testing and evaluating innovative approaches that enhance sustainable water services for agriculture and environment. This would essentially be a platform for information exchange - leading to identification of “best practices”. Within the framework of the CEE Dialogue Project pilot case studies and/or pilot river basins will be selected. The selection will be based on data availability, prior studies carried out at each test site, and system scale.

The CEE Dialogue Project is foreseen as a decentralised, multi-year process, with milestones at the 3rd and 4th World Water Forum in Kyoto and Montreal. The overall co-ordination and timing of the Project is co-ordinated with the Global Dialogue activities as well as with the overall work programme of the Common Implementation Strategy of the EU Water Framework Directive. The CEE Dialogue Project is co-ordinated also with other relevant activities of the GWP CEE, ERWG ICID, WWF Danube Carpathian Programme and WWF Europe.

3. General conclusions

3.1. Conclusions on Hungarian PP processes

- Public involvement mostly come very late in the decision making process, usually just before a decision is made.
- If the public does not accept the fact that there is a problem, it will not accept the proposed solution.
- Consensus achieved through public participation processes does not necessarily lead to acceptance of a programme of measure for the implementation of a plan.
- The lack of inter-agency communication and cooperation may undermine a public participation process.
- Public participation is more beneficial than public information.
- All staff and consultants who meet with the public should have the appropriate skills.
- Adequate public involvement strategy should be developed. Sufficient time and flexibility in a schedule for adequate public participation should be provided.
- The Hungarian PP processes show no clear and simple formula for successful public involvement. The success of a participation program may be judged by different criteria. The success of PP should always be estimated according to whom and according to what outcomes. The success is a very relative matter that needs to be understood in the context of each individual river basin and issue. Because when can a PP process be considered successful? Only if the public accept the proposal (plan) of the professionals (designers)? Or can it also be considered as an effective result, when the public say no to a proposal, before the investment? In such a situation the decision-makers and the designers can save money. In another case, could the process be considered successful, if the public accept a plan even if after it emerges that the plan is not the best option? Can the PP procedure be considered prosperous, if during the process there is still the chance that the organizers fail to involve a key individual who has financial power over the plan and when during implementation he chooses suddenly to withdraw the investment?
- A monitoring program should be set up to determine what works and what does not work, and how the costs and benefits of the PP processes could be assessed. Success stories should be documented and disseminated. The specific dimensions of the PP in the implementation processes of the WFD should be considered. The failures need to be also documented.

3.2. Conclusions on PP in the implementation of the WFD in agricultural water management

There were some obstacles of the Dialogue processes on the implementation of the WFD:

- a large amount of information is covered by the guidance and policy documents,
- the difficulties of the common understanding of the provisions of the WFD with regard to the rural water management aspects,
- the difficulties of the simplification of the professional terms and provisions under the WFD making them understandable for the non-professional (sometimes also for the professional) participants of the Dialogue processes.

Issues raised during the Dialogue processes include:

- Most important provisions of the WFD related to agricultural water management,
- Obstacles hindering the implementation of WFD,
- Development of “do’s and don’ts” in agricultural water management for the successful implementation of WFD,
- Suggestions for the EU CIS and ICPDR RBM working groups preparing guidelines of implementation (in order to avoid unfavourable prescriptions from the viewpoint of the Hungarian agricultural water management),
- Future tasks of WMAs in connection with the implementation and relevant preparations,
- Response on the CAP/WFD document,
- Immediate output – an agreement was launched between WWF and the Union of Water Management Associations in Hungary on four pilot studies for implementation of WFD in large drainage systems and reactivated floodplains.

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