

Advanced tools to improve the functionality of bio-corridors have to be developed. Key stakeholders from navigation, forestry and the energy sector cooperate within DANUBE-parksCONNECTED and promote the cross-sectoral approach in all work packages. International institutions, partner projects and policy drivers are part of the process and stand for long-term capitalisation of the Danube Habitat Corridor.

[www.danubeparks.org](http://www.danubeparks.org)

<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/danubeparksconnected>

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## News and Notes

### DIAS – A new network to cope with alien species in the Danube River Basin

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Invasive Alien Species (IAS) are one of the major threats of biodiversity worldwide, they are a big challenge in the global change we have to cope with in the future. The impacts of IAS affect not only the environment but also the economy and society (e.g. health care). The invasion can neither be stopped, nor can invaded species be eradicated completely. But targeted actions will help to reduce the threat to endangered indigenous species and to reduce the speed of invasion. In river landscapes there are many and important vectors and pathways for invading species. In particular, the Danube River and its floodplain are an outstanding part of the South-European aquatic invasion corridor. It links the Black Sea basin with the North Sea basin via the Danube–Main–Rhine Canal and it has been exposed to the introduction and influence of IAS. The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) acknowledges that IAS have become a major concern for the Danube River and that their further classification, analysis and management are vital for effective river basin management. The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), which was endorsed in 2011, also acknowledges IAS as a major threat to biodiversity and a liveable Danube Region. Consequently, some of the targets of the EUSDR, as defined in Priority Area 06, are to identify and prioritise IAS and their pathways, to control or eradicate priority species, and to manage pathways to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS. Further, in 2014, the European Commission set up the regulation

No 1143/2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of IAS.

As invasive species do not care about human borders, tackling the issues of IAS should also not be limited to the national scale. In contrast, networking and cooperation on IAS in different scales is crucial for the prevention and management of IAS and can facilitate the implementation of existing IAS instruments. There are already several joint initiatives related to IAS in the Danube Region. Monitoring of aquatic IAS was included in the Joint Danube Survey 3 (ICPDR, 2013). In 2016, ICDPR finished a guidance document on Invasive Alien Species within the Danube River Basin. Furthermore, the network ESENIAS (Eastern and Southern European Network on Invasive Alien Species) already exists as a regional data portal at the Lower and Middle Danube River basin. This network implemented a joint project on potential threats to environmental and economic sustainability in the Danube and Black Sea Region together with the IAD.

Therefore, at the initiative of IAD, ESENIAS, IBER-BAS (Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) and the Priority Area 06 of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (PA 06 EUSDR), a kick-off meeting for a new network took place in October 2014 in Sofia: The **Danube Region Invasive Alien Species Network (DIAS)** with ca. 38 representatives from 10 countries from the Upper, Middle and Lower Danube River basin, as well as from the adjacent Black Sea. DIAS promotes an improved coordination among all actors in the thematic field of

IAS within the Danube Region. Politically independent, it will bring together scientists, authorities and stakeholders. The members aim to support exchange of knowledge as well as to promote the transfer of knowhow and expertise to actors at all administrative levels and between regions in a transnational context. Cooperation with existing European and global IAS networks and organizations will foster the success in order to contribute to a sustainable presence of and to a liveable future in the Danube Region.

### **A few joint projects in single regions were already developed:**

#### **1. Eastern and Southern European Network for Invasive Alien Species – A tool to support the management of alien species in Bulgaria (ESENIAS-TOOLS):**

The project is funded by the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area 2009-2014, under the Programme BG03 Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and aims at networking and at the development of IAS tools within the frame of ESENIAS to support the management of alien species in Bulgaria and in the overall region, including countries in the Lower and Middle Danube River basin.

#### **2. Pilot-study (data collection) on invasive alien species in the Danube Region with a smartphone application developed by the JRC (Danube-IASapp project):**

The purpose of this project is to test the practical use of a smartphone app developed by the European Commission's

Joint Research Centre (JRC) as part of the MYGEOSS project, in order to complement environmental monitoring and early warning of IAS occurrences in the Danube River basin.

At the moment, the main focus of DIAS is to develop and harmonize a common mid- and long-term strategy to improve the situation on IAS. The strategy will provide the goals and objectives, but also possible measures and recommendations on seven key topics. Region specific requirements should be mentioned as well as relevant actors. The seven key topics are: description of IAS in the Danube River Basin (also interactions and impact), species pathways of introduction, the creation of an information system and dissemination of knowledge, the classification of IAS: early warning, risk assessment and prioritisation (like black or alert lists), early detection and rapid eradication of IAS, management of established IAS and finally, awareness raising, communication & political work regarding IAS.

After completion of this strategy in 2017, the future work of the network will be to implement the strategy step by step and to develop a living network throughout the whole Danube River Basin and the adjacent region of the Black Sea. It will develop in a flexible way to cover the heterogeneity of the region (sub-groups lower, middle and upper Danube), the huge variety of aquatic to terrestrial species and the scientific complexity of the topic (division of expert working groups).

There is plenty to do! If you would like to join the network, do not hesitate to contact us.

## **8th International Symposium on Sturgeons (ISS8)**

**From September 10-16, 2017, the 8<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Sturgeons will be organized in Vienna**

ISS8 is organised by the World Sturgeon Conservation Society, the Leibnitz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (Berlin), and the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna. It focuses on the dynamics and the drivers of the decline in sturgeon stocks worldwide, while at the same time transferring the lessons to be learnt from sustainable conservation attempts to make the investment in conservation successful.

ISS8 provides the unique opportunity to bring together sturgeon experts from all over the world to discuss and share their ideas and concepts to further improve the management of sturgeons along with their essential habitats. A second stronghold of the conference will be the aquaculture sector. Europe has a large share in sturgeon farming and caviar production. Traditionally, European traders have been the dominating distributors in caviar trade. Therefore, the European focus on caviar and caviar trade will provide a vital input for the conference topics. Quality control, alternative production methods, market trends and col-

laborative approaches in production and marketing, as well as control and enforcement are among the key issues to be addressed to meet the future challenges in this sector.

The conference will comprise scientific sessions on a variety of topics dealing with the ecology of sturgeons, status assessment and management of populations, aquaculture and human impacts. Specific sessions and workshops are dedicated to juvenile rearing, broodstock management and facilitation of large fish migration. Social events and excursions will be organised before, during and after the conference.

ISS8 intends to increase the interaction between presenters and the auditorium. A main aim is to facilitate and stimulate the discussion beyond cultural boundaries to increase the understanding of motivations and to expand on the applicability of new results under regional specific conditions.

**For further details please have a look at the webpage: [www.iss8.info/](http://www.iss8.info/)**

Abstracts can be submitted by June 30, 2017