

Romania: Danube Delta Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy



About the Danube Delta Region

The Danube Delta is one of the continent's most valuable habitats for specific delta wildlife and biodiversity. Established as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and a Ramsar site in 1990, it is the Europe's second largest delta, and the best preserved of European deltas.

The most significant physical and ecological feature of the Danube Delta is its vast expanse of wetlands, including freshwater marsh, lakes and ponds, streams and channels. With an area of 3,446 km², is the world's largest wetland. Only 9% of the area is permanently above water.

The Delta hosts extraordinary biodiversity and provides important environmental services. It is the home of over 1,200 varieties of plants, 300 species of birds, as well as 45 freshwater fish species in its numerous lakes and marshes.

There are 16 strictly protected areas in the delta where no economic activities are allowed, and areas for ecological rehabilitation and buffer zones between economical areas where tourist activities are permitted as long as the environment is protected.

Dual Challenge in Developing the Danube Delta

A dual challenge for the sustainable development of the Danube Delta is the conservation of its ecological assets and improvement of the quality of life for its residents.

The Danube Delta is the largest remaining natural delta in Europe and one of the largest in the world. It is also the only river that is entirely contained within a Biosphere Reserve. It is important to conserve all of its ecological assets.

Danube Delta is perhaps one of the least inhabited regions of temperate Europe, with only about 10,000 people in one town (Sulina) and about 20 scattered villages. Life for the residents of the core Delta is challenging and access to essential social and economic services is limited. Acute isolation and harsh conditions of living, based mainly on subsistence characterize the Delta. Water transport is often the only option to reach and travel from destinations in the core Delta. The area has lower access to basic services, such as piped water and sewerage, than the neighboring rural areas.

Health and education services are also constrained by inaccessibility and decreasing population. The ecological significance and economic and social challenges of this unique region of the Danube Delta makes it necessary to elaborate an integrated development strategy to guide the sustainable development of the region.

Context for the Strategy

The Government of Romania through the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (MRDPA) in Romania has requested the World Bank support.

The World Bank agreed to provide advisory services to elaborate an integrated sustainable development strategy for the Danube Delta and to identify action plans to implement such a strategy.

A Reimbursable Advisory Service agreement was signed for this purpose between MRDPA and the World Bank on September 4, 2013. The World Bank is supporting the Government of Romania in elaborating the Danube Delta Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy under the “Danube Delta Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy and Constanta ITI” Reimbursable Advisory Services project. The World Bank is also supporting the Government of Romania intends in implementing the new Integrated Territorial Investments instrument with a coordinated use of funds in the Danube Delta, in accordance with EU guidelines. The Danube Delta’s very low density of population and isolation makes it a good subject for an initial implementation of the ITI instrument.

Client

The client of the World Bank Reimbursable Advisory Services is the Government of Romania through the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration.

Stakeholders

Local – residents and private sector

- Residents, businesses and other non-governmental entities and organizations in the project area
- [Chamber of Commerce and Industry Tulcea](#)

Local – public sector

- [Tulcea County Council](#) [Tulcea City Hall](#)
- Towns of [Sulina](#), [Babadag](#), [Isaccea](#), and [Macin](#)

- Commune Councils
- [Tulcea Sustainable Development Agency \(TSDA\)](#)
- [National Association of Tourism Enterprises](#)
- [Regional water/wastewater operator for Tulcea County \(AquaServ \)](#)
- [Regional water/wastewater operator for Constanta County \(RAJA\)](#)
- Tourist Information Office
- Danube Delta Museum and Aquarium

Local Offices of National Government

- [Tulcea Prefecture Administration](#)
- [National Administration “Apele Romane” \(ANAR\)](#)
- [Lower Danube Administration Company](#)
- [Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration \(DDBRA\)](#)
- [Danube Delta National Research Institute \(DDNRI\)](#)
- [National Environmental Guard](#)
- [National Institute for Marine Research and Development “Grigore Antipa” \(Constanta\)](#)

Central Offices of National Government

- [Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration](#)
- [Ministry of European Funds](#)
- [Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports](#)
- [Ministry of Economy \(National Tourism Authority\)](#)
- [Ministry of Culture and National Cultural Heritage](#)[Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development](#)
- [Ministry of Culture and National Cultural Heritage](#)
- [Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure](#)
- [Ministry of Health](#)
- [Ministry of Internal Affairs](#)
- [Ministry of Environment and Climate Changes](#)
- [National Housing Agency \(ANL\)](#)

NGOs

- [Romanian Ornithological Society](#)
- [Save the Danube and the Delta Association](#)
- [Vox Deltae Association](#)
- [Danube Delta Friends Foundation](#)
- [Danube Delta – Catavencu Academy Association](#)

Other

- [UNESCO - World Heritage Program and MAB – UNESCO](#)
- [World Wide Fund for Nature \(WWF\)](#)

- Delta Authority in Ukraine

About the Danube Delta Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy

Objectives

The main objective of the strategy is to support the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration in planned and environmentally sensitive development of the Danube Delta region, which is an ecologically rich but economically challenged region of the eastern part of Romania.

This objective will be achieved through:

- (i) elaboration of a comprehensive development strategy for the Danube Delta region, integrating key sectors;
- (ii) preparation of action plans to help implement such a strategy during the EU 2014-20 programming and financing period;
- (iii) support for the development of a framework for implementing a new EU instrument called "Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI)" in Romania, and identification, as feasible, of pilot ITI programs/regions.

Activities

<i>Activity No.</i>	<i>Output</i>
1-1 and 1-2	Diagnostic Report for the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and the neighboring areas
1-3	Provision of resource persons for 1 workshop for consultations w relevant actors on Draft Diagnostic Report
1-4	Development of Vision Statement for Danube Delta region
2-1	Report on identification of territorial needs based on the diagnosis of the Danube Delta area. This will cover sectoral needs assessment & strategic analyses of each key sector
2-2	Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy
2-3	Provision of resource persons for two public consultations meetings on the Draft Strategy

Activity No.	Output
2-5	Formulation of ITI proposal for the Danube Delta (programming period for the 2014-2020)
2-6	Report on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
2-9	Provision of technical expertise for the elaboration of a booklet to promote the Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy of the Danube Delta
2-4, 2-6, 2-7 and 2-10	Action Plan including priority projects to implement the Strategy, institutional arrangement, and monitoring mechan.
2-11	Provision of resource persons for the final consultation for the Workshop to discuss the Action Plan
2-3, 2-11	Final report on public consultations
2-12	Provision of resource persons for the final conference on dissemination of the project results
3-1	Setting out a national methodological framework to define and implement ITI, including institutional arrangements
3-1	Elaboration of a guide for preparation of ITI funded projects
4-1	A document containing the institutional mechanism necessary to prepare ITI in Constanta Growth Pole
4-1	A strategy for the implementation of ITI in Constanta Growth Pole
	Final Report summarizing key findings and recommendations

Outputs

[The Diagnostic Report](#)

An extensive Diagnostic Report of the prevailing situation with respect to access to basic services, opportunities for job creation and growth, and constraints to development was carried out.

[A Vision Statement for the Danube Delta Region \(2030\)](#)

The diagnostic assessment was complemented with findings from participatory consultations with local residents and stakeholders on their 'preferences' of how a future Danube Delta Region would look like and was described in the Vision.

[The Needs Assessment Report](#)

The identified needs, including policy changes, to achieve the agreed vision, were documented in a Needs Assessment Report.

[Danube Delta Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy \(2030\)](#)

The Strategy identifies the recommended priority areas of intervention and key projects from the study, within each sector based on criteria of expected impact towards the strategic objectives, geographical breadth, level of preparedness, and financial and administrative sustainability. It suggests links to financial resources allocated through the ITI instrument.

Next steps

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (April 2015)

The ITI Proposal (May 2015)

The Action plan (June 2015)

Coordination with EU Policies, Strategies and Documents

At EU level, territorial cooperation and flows of technology, goods and capital are critical aspects of development and key factors for supporting sustainable development. The article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty (2009) highlights that EU promotes economic, social and territorial cohesion in response to the challenges of globalization, climate changes, demographic changes, safety and energy.

The formulation of the strategy for the Danube Delta Region (the Region) subscribes to the principles and priorities of EU policies, which create the framework for a regional territorial policy aimed at the sustainable development of the Region. The strategy addresses equally the environmental protection issues and the socio-economic needs, through provision of basic services, employment opportunities, connectivity and accessibility. It responds to the cohesion policy, and also takes into account the priorities of EU Strategy for the broader Danube Region. The following documents represent the EU context for the development of the Danube Delta Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy.

- **Territorial Agenda 2020 - Towards an Inclusive, Smart and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions**

It highlights territorial cohesion as common goal for a harmonious and balanced development. In line with the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Art. 174 and 175), all policies and actions of the Union should contribute to economic, social and territorial cohesion. Therefore those responsible for design and implementation of sectoral policies should take the principles and objectives of the Territorial Agenda into consideration. The coherence of EU and national policies is of utmost importance for territorial cohesion. Most policies have significant territorial impacts, influencing the development opportunities of territories in different ways. Co-ordination of different sectoral policies, to optimize territorial impact and maximize coherence, can significantly increase their success, and help avoid, at all territorial levels, negative effects from conflicting policies. This has been a focus of the development of this Strategy. Balance of sustainability, competitiveness, and social cohesion can be realized through such integrated territorial development. [Read more.](#)

- **Investing in Europe's future – The fifth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion (November 2010)**

The 5th Cohesion Report is the first report adopted under the Lisbon Treaty which added territorial cohesion to the twin goals of economic and social cohesion. The report: (i) analyses the territorial dimension of access to services; (ii) pays more attention to climate change and the environment; and (iii) considers how the territorial impact of policies can be measured. The Cohesion Policy is the EU's main instrument for pursuing harmonious development across the Union. It is based on a broad vision, which encompasses not just the economic development of lagging regions and support for vulnerable social groups, but also environmental sustainability and respect for the territorial and cultural features of different parts of the EU. As indicated in the EU budget review, in particular progress needs to be made in the following key areas: concentrating resources on the Europe 2020 objectives and targets; committing Member States to implement the reforms needed for the policy to be effective; and improve the effectiveness of the policy with an increased focus on results. The explicit linkage of the Cohesion Policy and Europe 2020 provides an opportunity to: (a) continue helping the poorer regions of the EU catch up; (b) facilitate coordination between EU policies; and (c) develop the Cohesion Policy into a leading enabler of growth - also in qualitative terms - for the whole of the EU, while addressing societal challenges such as an ageing population and climate change. [Read more.](#)

- **EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) endorsed by EC in December 2010, and adopted by Romania in 2011**

Debated and agreed on at Community level, these documents define the core of regional cooperation in the Danube region. The four priority axes of this EU Strategy are connectivity (intermodal transportation, culture and tourism, energy networks), environmental protection (management of water resources, biodiversity protection, and risk management), building prosperity in the Danube region (education, research, competitiveness), and improved governance (institutional capacity and internal security). There are also reflected in this strategy for the development of the Danube Delta Region. [Read more.](#)

The following documents support the objectives to increase mobility in the Danube Region, and make the best use of the river and maritime networks.

- **WHITE PAPER Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system (EC, 2011)**

Building on lessons learnt, the Roadmap takes a global look at developments in the transport sector, and its future challenges and policy initiatives that need to be considered. The Commission’s transport vision is presented together with key measures to achieve a transformation of the European transport system. One of the initiatives focuses on an European Maritime Transport Space without Barriers, to be further developed into a “Blue Belt” of free maritime movement in and around Europe, with waterborne transport to be used to its full potential. [Read more.](#)

- **Danube Transnational Program 2014-2020**

This program supports policy integration in the Danube Region in selective fields under the Common Provision Regulation (CPR) / European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), linked to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The intended “policy integration” is below the EU-level (i.e. not to duplicate efforts in policy integration at the EU-level e.g. TEN-T in the transport sector), but above the national level in the respective field. Transnational projects should influence national/regional/local policies. To achieve a higher degree of territorial integration of the heterogeneous Danube region, the program addresses common challenges and needs where transnational cooperation is expected to deliver the best results (development and implementation of policy frameworks, tools, services and concrete pilot investments). Strong complementarities with the broader EUSDR are sought. Priorities are related to improving the quality of policies and their delivery, improving institutional frameworks for cooperation, and delivering solutions through concrete investments and pilot action. The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration (DDBRA) is coordinating with Ukraine in this regard. [Read more.](#)

- **EC Integrated Maritime Policy – Blue Growth**

The Blue Growth Strategy is the long term strategy to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors as a whole. Seas and oceans are drivers for the European economy and have great potential for innovation and growth. It is the maritime contribution to achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The spatial development of the Danube Delta Region is based on the following EU documents of general planning principles for territorial development, urban or rural, to ensure a democratic process, and a balanced, sustainable development. [Read more.](#)

- **European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter - Torremolinos Charter (adopted on 20 May 1983 in Torremolinos, Spain)**

The Charter argues that regional/spatial planning should be:

Democratic: be conducted in such a way as to ensure the participation of the people concerned and their political representatives.

Comprehensive: ensure the co-ordination of the various sectoral policies and integrate them in an overall approach.

Functional: to consider the existence of regional consciousness based on common values, culture and interests, sometimes crossing administrative and territorial boundaries, while taking account of the institutional arrangements of the different countries.

Long-term oriented: analyze and consider the long-term trends and developments of economic, social, cultural, ecological and environmental phenomena and interventions.

Regional/spatial planning seeks at the same time to achieve the following fundamental objectives:

- Balanced socio-economic development of regions
- Improvement of the quality of life
- Responsible management of natural resources and protection of the environment
- Rational use of land. [Read more.](#)

- **European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) - Towards Balanced and Sustainable Development of the Territory of the EU (agreed at the Informal Council of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in Potsdam, May 1999)**

The aim of these spatial development policies is to work towards a balanced and sustainable development of the territory of the EU. In the Ministers' view, it is important to ensure that the three fundamental goals of European policy are achieved equally in all regions of the EU: (1) economic and social cohesion; (2) conservation and management of natural resources and the cultural heritage; and (3) more balanced competitiveness of the European territory. [Read more.](#)

- **Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (2007)**

This Charter sets common principles and strategies for *urban development*, recommending: (1) making greater use of integrated urban development approaches, and (2) that special attention is paid to deprived neighborhoods within the context of a city as a whole. [Read more.](#)

- **European Rural Heritage Observation Guide (CEMAT, Ljubljana, September 2003)**

The CEMAT Guide contributes to implementation of the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of fostering development of *rural areas* as life settings for both economic and recreational activity, and as natural environments. It seeks to help restore the town-countryside balance and promote the rural world's resources as a development factor. It is essential to put these principles into effect and to promote sustainable rural planning, combining economic growth and protection of heritage assets inherent in both natural and cultural landscapes. It contributes towards achieving independent development of rural areas for living and economic and recreational activities, and as physical regions, and provides guidelines regional/spatial planning for management of the heritage. [Read more.](#)

Considering Danube Delta's special status of a UNESCO site, the strategy development subscribes as well to international conventions and strategies that cover specific requirements for the protection and conservation of natural heritage.

- **Seville Strategy for Biospheres Reserves (1995)**

This document identifies the specific role of biosphere reserves in developing a vision of the relationship between conservation and development. It provides recommendations for developing effective biosphere reserves and sets out conditions for the appropriate functioning of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. It includes recommended implementation indicators, i.e. a check-list of actions that will enable all involved to follow and evaluate the implementation of a strategy. [Read more.](#)

- **Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris, 1972), adopted in Romania by Law 187/1990**

The goal of this convention is to ensure international protection of the world cultural and natural heritage, by establishing a system of international co-operation and assistance. [Read more.](#)

Cross-Border Issues

The significant cross-border issues in achieving common environmental objectives between the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve in Romania and the Danube Biosphere Reserve in Ukraine are well recognized in international conventions.

The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve in Romania and Danube Biosphere Reserve in Ukraine are recognized as "Cross Border Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Romania/Ukraine" within UNESCO MAB Program and cross-border RAMSAR site.

Several cross-border cooperation projects have been implemented or are currently under implementation in the Region. [Read more.](#)

The first Global Environmental Facility (GEF) project in Romania was implemented from 1995 through 2000 aimed to further enhance Biodiversity in Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and included activities for supporting the cross border cooperation between the two biosphere reserve authorities. The next important projects were to (i) identify the joint management objectives for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development within the Danube Delta Romania/Ukraine and Lower Prut River in the Republic of Moldova (2001-2002); (ii) elaborate the joint monitoring program (2004-2006); (iii) catalog, assess and remedy the anthropogenic sources of pollution in the Lower Danube Region of Ukraine, Romania and Republic of Moldova (2013-2015); (iv) consolidate the network of nature protected areas for biodiversity protection and sustainable development in the Danube Delta and Lower Prut River (2013-2015). An important document was published in 2004 entitled "Transboundary cooperation in the nature protected areas in Danube Delta and Lower Prut - Management Objectives for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development," financed by the EU Tacis Programme CBC (TSPF 0302/0044).

Coordination with National and Regional Strategies

At national level, the following planning documents and national strategies, as well as regional and county specific planning documents, provide the general framework and background for the strategy.

- **Spatial Development Strategy of Romania 2035**

This strategy is in progress (in the public consultation stage). It is the instrument for implementation of the spatial planning system in the country – regional development plans and general urban plans – supporting operationalization of investment programs to 2035.

- **The Spatial Plan of the National Territory**

Section 1: Transport Network; Section 2: Water; Section; 3: Protected Areas; Section 4: Human Settlements Network; Section 5: Areas of Natural Risks; Section 6: Tourist Areas – All the sections represent a spatial basis for strategic sectoral programs, determining the scope and priorities for the country's territorial development in relation to EU policies. [Read more.](#)

- **Regional Development Plan for the South-East Region 2014-2020**

This plan identifies the development needs of the region where Danube Delta is located. [Read more.](#)

- **Spatial Development Plan for the Danube Delta (PATZ Delta Dunarii, URBANPROIECT, 2008)**

This document is a statutory plan providing analysis of the current situation, trends and problems. It includes a development strategy with vision, specific objectives and development measures. [Read more.](#)

- **Spatial Plan for the Black Sea Costal Area (PATZ Zona Costiera a Marii Negre, URBANPROIECT, 2010)**

This is a statutory plan providing analysis of the current situation, trends and problems. It includes a development strategy with vision, specific objectives and development measures. [Read more.](#)

- **National Rural Development Program (NRDP) 2014-2020**

This represents the commitment by Romania towards implementation of Pillar II of the EU-Common Agriculture Policy reflected in the EC Regulation 1305/2013. NRDP is an opportunity to approach the weaknesses identified in the SWOT based on enforcement of the strengths and use of the available opportunities. A special attention would be devoted to making full use of the lessons learned and progress achieved through implementation of the previous NRDP when the basis for promoting the continuous and sustainable use of agricultural and forest land have been laid, creating thus the fundamentals for maintaining the natural and cultural patrimony, and conservation of the high natural values of rural areas. NRDP was developed in full accordance with the principles and objectives set through international agreements and EC

directives concerning conservation of biodiversity and natural habitats, protection of wild flora and fauna as well as sustainable management of natural resources. [Read more.](#)

- **Strategy for Development of the Agri-food Sector Medium and Long Term (2020-2030 horizon)**

The document provides a long-term vision of the development agriculture and rural space aiming at smart and sustainable valorization of the agri-food potential and development of non-farm economy towards establishing a right balance between economic development and the environmental impact of agriculture. The strategy is the result of the systemic sectoral approach considering the interlinks of economics, society and environment while recognizing the need for social cohesion, equality of chances, indiscrimination and diversity. [Read more.](#)

- **Partnership Agreement between European Commission and Romania 2014-2020**

The Partnership Agreement is meant to create coherence in the use of structural funds by Romania in its efforts to reach the Europe 2020 goals for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The document provides a strategic plan with investment priorities for the use of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The Romanian partnership agreement is organized around addressing five national priorities: (1) promoting competitive local development; (2) developing human capital; (3) developing physical infrastructure; (4) encouraging sustainable and efficient use of natural resources; and (5) modernizing public administration. The defined goals will require efficient collaboration of the public and private sector, as well as mobilization of further funds. [Read more.](#)

- **National Strategy for Climate Change**

The National Strategy for Climate Change is the guiding document for national climate action aimed at reaching the Europe 2020 goals – 20% reduction in GHG emissions, 20% improvement in energy efficiency, and 20% increase in the use of renewable energy sources. The strategy points out sectoral challenges and recommends appropriate sectoral adaptation and mitigation policies. It will be followed by an action plan and a refined strategy by 2015, developed with support of the World Bank. [Read more.](#)