



MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE
DANUBE DELTA BIOSPHERE RESERVE AUTHORITY

EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

DANUBE DELTA BIOSPHERE RESERVE

- ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2013 -

TULCEA
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DANUBE DELTA - LIFE WITH RESPECT FOR NATURE! ®

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Name of the area: **DANUBE DELTA BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Natural heritage (general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) – State of conservation

1.1. Environment: changes or deterioration in the environment, of natural or anthropic origin, accidental or permanent, actual or anticipated

The status of the environment in Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve (DDBR) is the subject of a continuously monitoring activity on the evolution of water, air and soil quality parameters, and on their influence on natural habitats and ecosystems. The Report on the environment quality for the 2013 year will be finalized in March- June 2014 and will be available on the DDBRA's website (www.ddbra.ro), where now can be found *the Report on the Status of the environment in DDBR in the 2012 year*. We appreciate that the status of environment inside the reserve is stable, comparing with previous years.

During the 2013 year period one accident on pollution occurred. The area was isolated and absorbent material was spilled.

1.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover: presumed causes

During the year 2013 were recorded *Limantria dispar* invasions in some areas covered by reed, poplar, willow.

1.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds

No changes from the previous report.

2. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

2.1. Cultural heritage

2.1.1 Changes concerning cultural heritage

There are no changes comparing with the previous report.

2.2 Socio-economic context

2.2.1 Changes concerning the socio-economic context

During the period 20th -31st of October 2011 was running the population census. The final data will be available in 2014. The population inside the Danube Delta is maintaining in the same limits.

From the socio-economic point of view, the main changes were recorded in the field of infrastructure development and especially those that support the tourism development, through building new accommodation facilities, pensions and hotels, restaurants, through developing transport facilities and continuing the works for water supply and sewerage systems rehabilitation in several localities inside the reserve (Sulina, Sf. Gheorghe, Chilia Veche, etc.).

2.2.2 Natural resources utilization, traditional activities

The main renewable natural resources used in 2013 were the fish and the reed.

The fish capture recorded a value of around 1,312 tones and was dominated by fresh water species: *Abramis brama*, *Carassius carassius*, *Rutilus rutilus*, *Aspius aspius*, *Carassius gibelio*, *Cyprinus carpio*, *Esox lucius*, *Perca fluviatilis*, *Silurus glanis*, *Stizostedion lucioperca* and *Blicca bjoerkna*.

In the 2012-2013 harvesting season, the quantity of reed harvested was of 3,019 tones.

3. Education and scientific interest

3.1. Visitors – Information policy

3.1.1 Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)

The works for the rehabilitation of the visitor Centre from Crisan started in 2012 and continued, as well, in 2013.

In 2013 DDBRA continued the implementation of the project « Improvement of the conservation status of the biodiversity in the Pontic sector of DDBR through awareness, information, visiting » (Acronym RBDD-CIV), and until the end of the year will start the works for building the new visitor centre in Sulina, under the project. As end results of the same project, RBDD-CIV, were produced many leaflets and guides and a mini photo album, that were distributed to visitors and collaborators, in the visitor centres and at different national and international events.

During the year 2013 continued the ecological education activities, in schools and visitor centres, in Tulcea and inside the Danube Delta. The most important educational program developed in 2013, launched in 2012, was “To keep the Danube Delta clean”. More than 1,700 children and students and their teachers participated in 2013 at the educational activities developed by DDBRA.

The project NaviNatur – Discover and present sustainability in a transnational way and by new media was finalised in 2013.

In view to ensure free access to information for wide public, the official website www.ddbra.ro is continuously updated and several press releases are published.

3.1.2 Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)

Based on the reports of the tourism private companies, with activity inside the reserve, during the period 01.01 – 31.10.2013 was recorded a total number of **37,865 tourists** from which 19,798 Romanians and 18,067 foreign tourists.

The DDBRA's visitor centers (Tulcea, Sulina, Crişan, Murighiol, Sf. Gheorghe) offered information, during the period 1 January- 31 October 2013, to **5,922 visitors**, (4,021 Romanians and 1,901 foreign visitors), about natural ecosystems, biodiversity, environment protection, etc.

3.1.3 Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)

During the 2013 year Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve was visited by:

- The Prime-Minister of Romania, Mr. Victor Ponta;
- The Minister of Environment and Climate Changes of Romania, Mrs. Rovana Plumb;
- The Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Mrs. Maria Damanaki;
- The Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Dacian Ciolos;
- The Delegate Minister for Waters Forests and Fishery, Mrs. Lucia Varga and the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Daniel Constantin;
- The visit of the delegates of LPO Aveyron, France;
- International and national governmental representatives, researchers, collaborators, mass media representatives, academia representatives, during two important events organized by Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, Danube Environment Forum, with European Commission support and International Danube Festival, under the DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 project.
- The World Bank missions for implementing the "Integrated Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Danube Delta - Romania", a project started in September 2013, financed from the Operational Programme Technical Assistance. DDBRA is a final beneficiary.

3.2. Scientific research

3.2.1 Current or completed research (observation, experimentation, etc.; identification or inventory of the species listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, etc.)

In 2013 were issued 20 research permits for 15 research institutes and universities, for 26 research projects, with the main objectives:

- ✓ Biodiversity evaluation – monitoring of the conservation status for marine species and coast habitats for community interest;
- ✓ Monitoring and ringing wild birds;
- ✓ Studies on herpetofauna populations;
- ✓ Reducing the use of marine bioresources;
- ✓ The impact of global changes on Danube-Black Sea geosystem;
- ✓ Fishing for scientific purpose;
- ✓ Prevention and control of the diseases of animals transmissible to humans;
- ✓ Archaeological research.

The implementation of the Project “DANUBEPARKS STEP2.0”, financed under the South-East Europe Programme 2007-2013, continued in 2013.

3.2.2 Scientific publications

No important scientific publications regarding the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve were produced in 2013.

4. Site description (vulnerability, protection status, ownership, documentation)

4.1. Changes in legislation or regulations

4.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)

No changes in ownership title since the last report.

4.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)

No changes recorded in this issue.

5. Site management (management plans, budget and personnel)

5.1. Improvements made

5.1.1 Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna

During the 2013 year continued the following civil works for improving the water circulation and the environmental conditions and for ecological restoration:

- *Civil works for clogging the channels and fishing streamlets inside the DDBR, phase II;*
- *Civil works to prevent the silting of the lakes and streamlets inside the DDBR to maintain an optimal hydrological regime, phase II (Sontea Veche channel and Litcov channel);*
- *Ecological restoration of the fish pond Murighiol.*

5.1.2 Protection against the elements (fire, water, regime)

In 2013, inside the DDBR’s territory were recorded 9 fires, affecting a total area of about 1,819 ha, covered with dry vegetation, reed, bulrush, sedge, without any important damages.

At the end of the summer season, due to the high temperatures recorded, and due to the lack of rainfalls, the level of the Danube river was very low, affecting the water circulation inside the Danube Delta. As a consequence, some streamlets, and small channels were silted or affected by eutrophication phenomenon.

Starting with 2013 is in operation the TELVERDE phone number to warn the DDBRA about extreme events inside the reserve (fires, floodings, mortalities, poaching, etc).

5.1.3 Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)

No significant changes.

5.1.4 Field equipment (hides and study facilities)

No important changes.

5.1.5 Waste management

During the 2013 year were continued the works for the implementation of the Integrated system for waste management.

5.1.6 Use of renewable energy systems

No changes from the previous report.

5.2. Management

5.2.1 Administrative department: changes made

Since the last report, DDBRA passed through two reorganization processes. The Governmental Decision (HG) 1217/28.12.2012, approved the Rules for organization and functioning of DDBRA and its structure. The maximum number of jobs was established to 171, from which were occupied at the end of the year 2012, 114 positions. The Governmental Emergency Order (OUG) 77/26.06.2013, reduced the number of free jobs at DDBRA, and to all governmental authorities and institutions, and HG 562/30.07.2013, approving the modification of HG 1217/2012, established the maximum number of jobs from DDBRA, at 133. At the end of the month October 2013, 112 positions in the organizational structure were occupied. HG 562/2013, approved as well the new organigram of DDBRA, including a new department – the Direction – “Danube Delta” Integrated Control Commissioner.

5.2.2 Wardens' department: changes made

As mentioned above, at **5.2.1 Administrative department: changes made.**

5.2.3 Internal policing measures

As mentioned above, at **5.2.1 Administrative department: changes made.**

5.2.4 Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action

The control and survey activity is permanent, and the results are reported monthly. More than 2,000 actions of control were organized in 2013, in strictly protected areas, in buffer zone and in economic zones, in fishing areas, reed harvesting zones, in camping areas, bird nesting areas, hunting areas, etc.

There were confiscated more than 7,600 fishing gears (for poaching ones), 2 boats, some traps for wild animals, and 3,086 kg of fish, and there were applied 942 fines and 266 warnings, with a total value of 203,285 ROL.

II. INFLUENCE OF THE AWARD OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA OF PROTECTED AREAS

The award of the European Diploma of Protected Areas, like as the other international designations, influenced the funds allocation for the management of DDBR. DDBRA is partner in a SEE Programme project “DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0”, whose implementation started in 2012, and is the Beneficiary of a project financed under Sectoral Operational Programme “Environment” 2007-2013, « Improvement of the conservation status of the biodiversity in the Pontic sector of DDBR through awareness, information, visiting », which will be implemented in 36 months, starting from January 2011. During the year 2013, DDBRA continued the implementation, as a partner, of other two projects: Be Natur – SEE 2007-2013 Programme and HABIT CHANGE INTERREG IVB – Central Europe Programme 2007-2013. During the year 2013 were approved new project proposals at the call for proposals 2012, under the Sectoral Operational Programme “Environment” 2007-2013: (i) Integrated Management plan for the Danube Delta area, (ii) Conservation of the Letea Forest strictly protected area from Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, (iii)

Restoration of the natural habitats and wild species inside the Natura 2000 sites: ROSPA0031 and ROSCI0065 from Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. DDBRA is also partner in other projects - Ecological reconstruction of the Carasuhat polder, Danube Delta – the paradise almost lost, and Ecological reconstruction of the Zagen polder, financed also under Sectoral Operational Programme “Environment” 2007-2013. During the year 2012 DDBRA submitted a project proposal under the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova 2007-2013 – The consolidation of the nature protected areas network for the protection of the biodiversity and sustainable development in the Danube Delta and Lower Prut River region – PAN Nature, not yet signed the contract. Starting with the year 2012, DDBRA is also a strategic partner in the project TRANSDANUBE, financed under the South-East Europe (SEE) Programme 2007-2013.

III. CONDITIONS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AWARD OR RENEWAL

Progress with measures taken in order to meet the conditions and/or recommendations defined during the award or renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas.

1. The process of coordinating the ecological management of the delta system with the three countries concerned (Moldova, Romania and Ukraine) should be continued and strengthened and the possibility of establishing a cross-border protected area should be considered in the framework of the trilateral agreement signed by the three countries concerned, under the auspices of the Council of Europe;

At the 2012 call for proposals under the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova 2007-2013, DDBRA submitted the project proposal - The consolidation of the nature protected areas network for the protection of the biodiversity and sustainable development in the Danube Delta and Lower Prut River region – PAN Nature. This project is still under evaluation.

2. The possibility of reactivating the co-operation between other European Diploma sites which are deltas (Camargue National Reserve (France) and Donana National Park (Spain)) should be explored;

During the year 2012 was finalized a draft Memorandum of Understanding for the collaboration between the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, Romania and Doñana National Park, Spain. The Memorandum of Understanding was sent to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Changes, Romania, to continue the discussions with the partners from Spain.

3. The monitoring of the ecological services and of the socio-economic activities carried out on the reserve (fishing, hunting, shipping, agriculture, forestry, logging, tourism) should be strengthened in relation with the carrying capacity of the natural ecosystems and the value of the reserve; special attention should be paid to the shipping activities (movement of boats and speeding) as well as to illegal fishing and hunting.

The integrated monitoring programme of the reserve includes monitoring of the ecological services and of the socio-economic activities carried out on the reserve (fishing, hunting, shipping, agriculture, forestry, logging, tourism) and all the other aspects mentioned above. In 2012, DDBRA prepared a draft Governmental Decision regarding the rules for navigation inside the reserve. The legal document is under approval.

4. Potential external threats should be continually monitored, especially the likely adverse transboundary impact on the ecosystem of the whole delta of the works related to the Bystroe canal in the Ukrainian sector;

The integrated monitoring programme of the reserve includes as well the monitoring of the aspects on the impact of the transport activities from the Chilia channel, as a consequence of the functioning of the navigation channel Danube- Black Sea (Bistroe), built on the Ukrainian side of the river.

5. The usefulness of banning hunting, or of managing hunting on a demonstrably sustainable basis, on the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, especially in the most sensitive areas, should be studied;

The Law 136/2011 foresees penalties for hunting inside the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve territory. No hunting activities were developed during the 2013 year in the protected areas.

6. A system for better management of natural fisheries resources should be explored for the benefit of the local people, in order to reduce the categories and number of intermediary actors/stakeholders; the fish resources should be managed by the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority;

Through the Order no. 44/1195 from 18 of February 2011, were approved the Rules regarding the access to the living aquatic resources from the State public domaine, for commercial fishing in natural fishing habitats from natural protected areas. The funds rising from the authorization of the industrial fishing activity will be incomes at the budgets of local authorities, to be used for projects for local development. By the Law 136/2011, the local population has the right of exclusiveness at the renewable natural resources use through traditional economic activities.

7. Information concerning access of boats to vulnerable parts of the reserve should be made readily available to the public;

This kind of information is available on the web page of DDBRA. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Changes, in collaboration with DDBRA, elaborated a proposal for a Governmental Decision to regulate the access and navigation inside the reserve territory. The Governmental Decision is under approval.

8. The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority should continue to bring technical and financial assistance to the local populations, municipalities and private operators in different fields (land planning, water supplies, sewage treatment) and assist with information on organizing and developing activities compatible with the aims of the reserve, such as ecotourism, bird watching and handicrafts;

In 2013, the Operational Programme for Fishing 2007-2013, launched the first call for project proposals. The applications received so far are addressed to different kind of activities and stakeholders and beneficiaries, with the same purpose – to enhance the living standards and to offere new opportunities to local communities.

9. The restoration programme of the existing buildings should be continued, using traditional materials and natural local products; the cultural value of the reserve, especially the different ethnic roots of the populations, should be enhanced with the engineering and technical input of specialized institutes,

DDBRA surveys the ways that the objectives presented by the implementation of the Building Regulation in Reserve are followed.

10. An external review and assessment of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve's Conservation Strategy (for example, priorities, management objectives, operational objectives and financial requirement) should be organized in 2010, ten years after its declaration, with the support of international expertise;

During the year 2013 were approved for financing new project proposals at the call for proposals 2012, under the Sectoral Operational Programme “Environment” 2007-2013: (i) Integrated Management plan for the Danube Delta area, (ii) Conservation of the Letea Forest strictly protected area from Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, (iii) Restoration of the natural habitats and wild species inside the Natura 2000 sites: ROSPA0031 and ROSCI0065 from Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. These projects implementation started in 2013 and will be finalized in 2015.

11. The necessary funding should be provided in order to improve the capacity/performance of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority; a feasibility study on the creation of a financial mechanism should be undertaken so that all commercial activities and uses (not only tourist activities) contribute to the financing of the reserve;

In 2013 was approved the Law 216/2013 for the approval of the Governmental Emergency Order 127/2010 for the adoption of some measures foreseen for the economic-social development of the area “Danube Delta”. This legal document offers a financial mechanism for DDBRA to use the funds from taxes, fees, permits and authorizations issuing. The Law 216/2013 brings as well some modifications to the Law 82/1993 for the establishment of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, to support DDBRA in its activity.

12. The adoption of the legal framework (master plan, Law on the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, Law on the Protected Areas) should be accelerated;

DDBRA submitted a project proposal for Integrated Management plan for the Danube Delta area, under the Sectoral Operational Programme “Environment” 2007-2013 in 2012, and in 2013 was signed the contract for financing. The project implementation started in 2013 and will end in 2015.

13. Noting that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedure is in operation, the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority should continue to analyze carefully the requests for new wind farms in the neighborhood of the reserve.

Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve surveys carefully the development of wind farms in the reserve’s neighborhood area.

14. Wild horses in the Letea forest

In 2012, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority submitted a project proposal at the call for proposals 2012, under the Sectoral Operational Programme “Environment” 2007-2013 for the protection of the Letea Forest. The project proposal was approved in 2013, and its implementation started.

15. The project of touristic development in Sulina: “Planning Sulina beach”

In November 2012, in Bruxelles, took place a meeting between the representatives of DDBRA, of the Ministry of Environment Romania and of the European Commission. The cause was not classified, but the European Commission asked DDBRA to fulfill two requests: to demonstrate, from scientific point of view, with documents, that the total surface of the Habitat 1410 inside the reserve is much more than 150 ha, as was mentioned in the book of Donita, and to be developed an appropriate assessment (environmental impact assessment) of the works. The Project “Integrated Management plan for the Danube Delta area”, financed under the Sectoral Operational Programme “Environment” 2007-2013, will offer the scientific document, having in view that one of the project results is the habitats mapping. The environmental impact assessment process was started, as well, in 2013.

**Governor,
Edward BRATFANOF**