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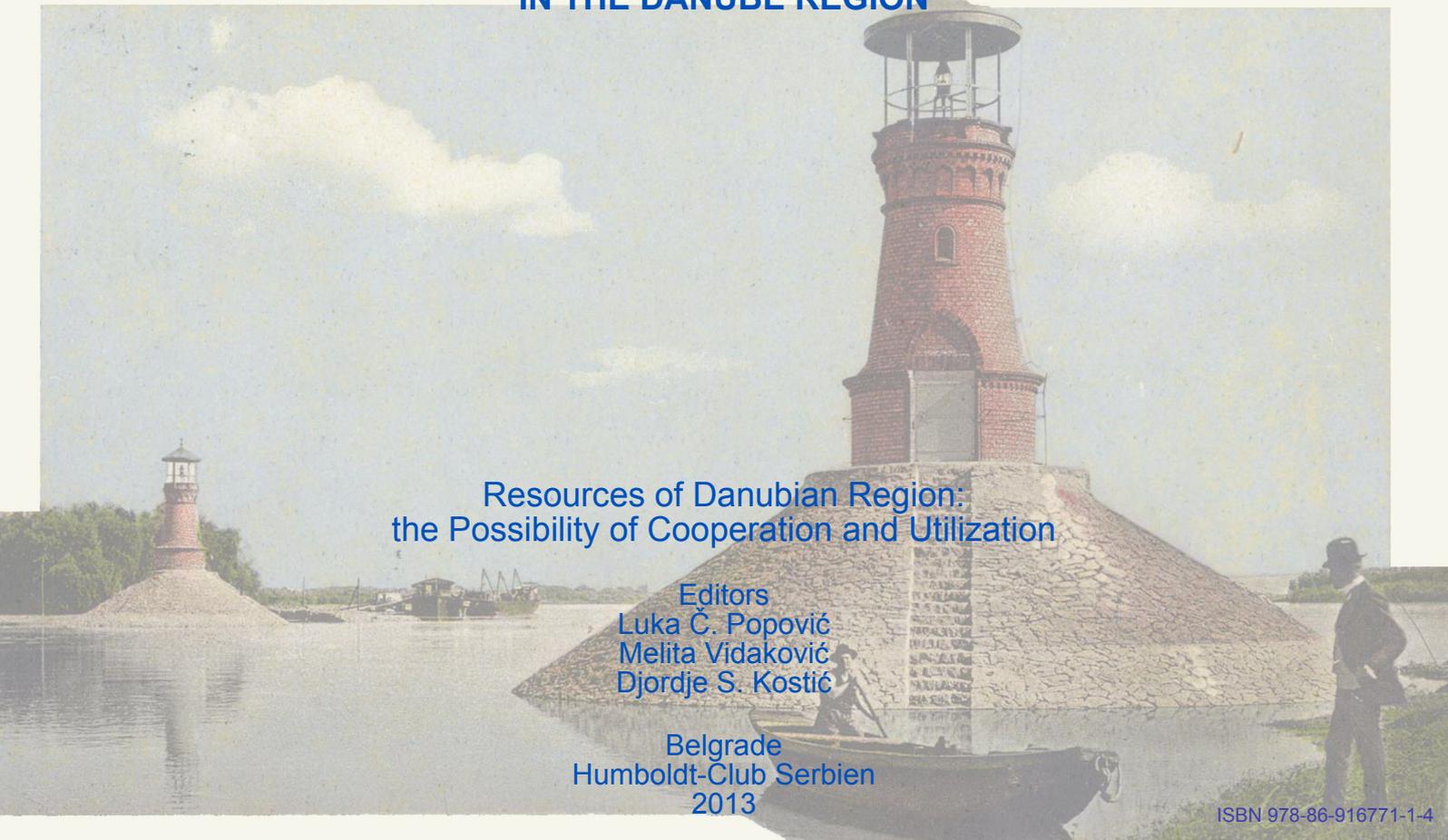
FIVE EXAMPLES OF COOPERATION PROJECTS IN THE DANUBE REGION

**Resources of Danubian Region:
the Possibility of Cooperation and Utilization**

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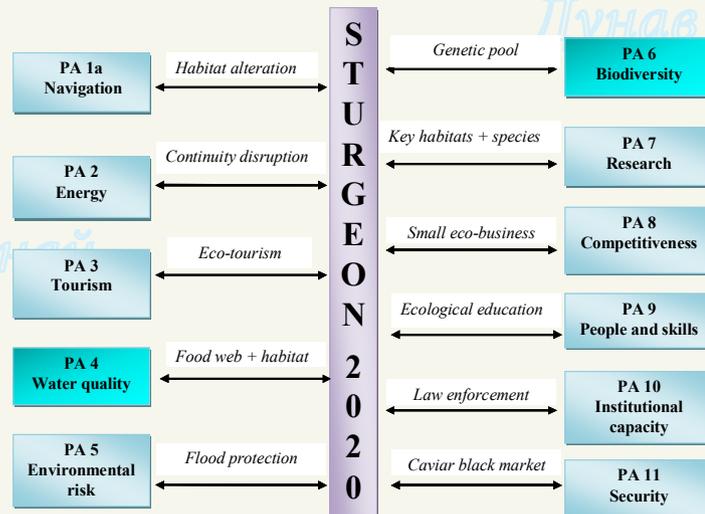
Danube Sturgeon Task Force

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The “Danube Sturgeon Task Force” (DSTF) was established through the coordination of Priority Area 6 of the EUSDR (Preserving biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils) in January 2012. The DSTF is an expert group with representatives of international organisations and NGOs, such as ICPDR, IAD and WWF, and further renowned sturgeon experts. The DSTF re-launched the *Sturgeon Action Plan* of the Bern Convention (*Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats*) from 2005 as the “Sturgeon 2020 Strategy”. This strategy defines concrete measures and activities to ensure that the above mentioned target is reached.

Danube sturgeon species have a unique value for EU biodiversity. The Danube is the only river basin which still shelters five sturgeon species; however, these species are heavily endangered and even on the verge of extinction. Sturgeon conservation is a complex task but a very rewarding contribution for improving the general environmental and natural state of the Danube river basin. Sturgeons need a certain water and habitat quality and as a migratory fish, a stable connectivity between the different habitats along the Danube river banks. The sturgeons are excellent indicators of the environmental status of the Danube and thus real flagship species.

The topic of sturgeon conservation is directly linked with Priority Area 6, however, a closer look at the related topics of the Sturgeon 2020 Strategy clearly reveals it as a cross-cutting issue that overlaps



Graphic by DSTF (Dr. Cristina Sandu, Romania)

with literally all 11 Priority Areas of the EUSDR. The EUSDR is a unique opportunity and platform to bring together the needs, demands and interests of stakeholders and “stakeholders” to one table and to develop integrative processes and solutions, combining the excellent knowledge and experience given in the Danube Region and based on mutual trust and respect. The very concrete example of the Sturgeon 2020 Strategy reveals this chance on the ground and therefore has the potential to open the next chapter of the EUSDR.

For more information, contact Priority Area 6 Coordinator Florian Ballnuss or check out the DSTF website: www.dstf.eu

Empowering Young People – Connecting Europe

“Empowering Young People” brings together students from across the Danube Region to work on joint projects and take part in international, creative, school projects. With the motto “Reshaping our life in our region,” the project fosters collaborative action on the topics of active citizenship, cultural dialogue, sustainable development and social responsibility and entrepreneurship. “Empowering Young People” supports innovative projects that are founded in trust and fuelled by inquisitiveness. Using a methodology based on discovery, teenagers are encouraged to learn by delving into their personal interests and experiences.

While focused largely on youth, a key component of the project is to support teachers of the participating 16 schools in creating an innovative environment for fostering the empowerment of their students as citizens of the Danube Region. The project also strives to involve external partners, such as NGOs, private companies, cultural institutions/artists, and teacher training institutions.

“Empowering Young People–Connecting Europe” is a pilot project within Priority Area 9 “To Invest in People and Skills” of which education and training are cornerstones. The project is implemented by KulturKontakt Austria and financed by the European Union and the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture.

For more project details, please visit www.empoweringyoungpeople.net.

Operation Clean Rivers

In recent years, the Hungarian-Romanian border region has experienced a threatening increase in per capita household waste (3-4% over the past 5 years, and 10-12% in Hungary and Romania, in general). Romanian riverside settlements and some parts of the Hungarian Southern Great-Plain falling into the area of the Hungary-Romania Cross-Border Co-operation Programme share a common problem related to municipal waste. The increased amounts of municipal waste and in some cases, the lack of organised waste collection systems result in the appearance of illegal municipal waste deposits at cross-border riverbanks and flood basins. These represent a serious environmental and health threat on local level, while river pollution holds a more international perspective, in particular as far as waste transport over

long distances is concerned.

By eliminating 5000 tons of existing illegal waste deposits at 20 Hungarian and 63 Romanian municipalities along the riverbanks of the Túr/Tur, Kraszna/Crasna, Szamos/Someş, Berettyó/Barcău and Sebes-Körös/Crişul Repede rivers, the Clean Rivers Project aims to serve as a good example in the prevention of future pollution in this area.

In addition, 83 collection containers will be placed to partner settlements and emptied twice a month for a year ensuring that less or no waste will pollute these rivers and their surroundings. Each partner municipality will receive a Waste Management Action Plan, which will help them in mapping out local waste development opportunities.

In order to quantify the results of the waste elimination and placement of the containers, laboratory tests of water samples will be performed. The test results will be used to raise awareness among locals, providing them information about the activities performed, the location of waste containers and several methods to prevent, reduce and collect municipal waste.

For further information visit www.ecocaritas.hu.

The project is co-financed by the Cross-border Co-operation Programme Hungary-Romania: www.huro-cbc.eu.

Iron Curtain Trail project – Through Europe along the former Iron Curtain

20 nations are part of the Iron Curtain Trail project, among them 14 members of the EU. For almost half a century, Europe was forcibly divided into East and West by the “Iron Curtain”, a border stretching from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea. The European cycle track *Iron Curtain Trail* invites people to retrace and experience this important part of the continent’s history.

The path starts at the Barents Sea along the Norwegian-Russian and Finnish-Russian border, passes a short stretch of the coasts of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Kaliningrad, Poland and the former GDR. From Lübeck to the three-nation border (Saxony-Bavaria-Czech Republic) the path follows the former German-German border. Then it follows the highlands of the Bohemian Forest, passes Moravia and the Slovak capital of Bratislava and crosses the Danube near Vienna.

It then follows the southern border of Hungary via Slovenia and Croatia. Between Romania and Serbia it follows in the main the Danube, and, via Bulgaria, Macedonia and Greece to end at the northernmost point of Turkey on the Black Sea coast.

The path traverses many national parks with interesting flora and fauna and connects many unique landscapes which, because they were either with the border areas or close to them are hardly touched. The path also connects many monuments, Museums and open-air establishments which remind us of the history of the division of Europe and its ending via a peaceful, a “velvet” revolution in Eastern Europe.

For more information, visit: <http://www.ironcurtaintrail.eu/en/index.html>.

CENTROPE – growing together

For two decades already, increasing social, economic and cultural interdependencies are an everyday reality in this border region between the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Austria. It is only natural to transform this space into a prospering European region that makes effective use of the available economic and social assets as well as of its linguistic and cultural variety for the benefit of coordinated, dynamic development. In 2003, leading political decision-makers thus agreed to initiate and support the building of the Central European Region CENTROPE. Since then, 16 cities and regions in four countries have been committed to forging a common future.

EdTwin is a project within the framework of CENTROPE which aims to contribute to the sustainable development of the region through school partnerships between the involved cities, thus preparing students and teachers for their personal and professional life in the inter-connected region. The cooperation in the field of education in the four-country region has been successfully developed during the past thirteen years. In order to inspire a real, stable and reliable educational standard across the region, the current EdTwin project has just elaborated a fixed framework for the identification of skills and aptitudes necessary for a flourishing communication and cooperation within the region. The three-year long research work culminated with the formulation of five core competences: communicative, social, strategic, knowledge and intercultural competence.

For more information, visit: <http://www.centrope.com/en/centrope-project/centrope-reloaded>.

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