



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Venice Office

Regional Bureau for Science
and Culture in Europe

UNESCO designated sites as key tools for transboundary cooperation and the co- management of shared ecosystems incl. case-study of the Lower Prut area in the Republic of Moldova

**The 6th European River Restoration
Conference - the SEE River Project Final Event**

27-30 October 2014

Vienna, Austria

SITUATION IN SEE REGION

Rivers in regions under the UNESCO
Venice Office focus often threatened by



unsustainable
use



increasing
human
pressure



problems of
increased
floods and
droughts
driven by CC

SITUATION IN SEE REGION

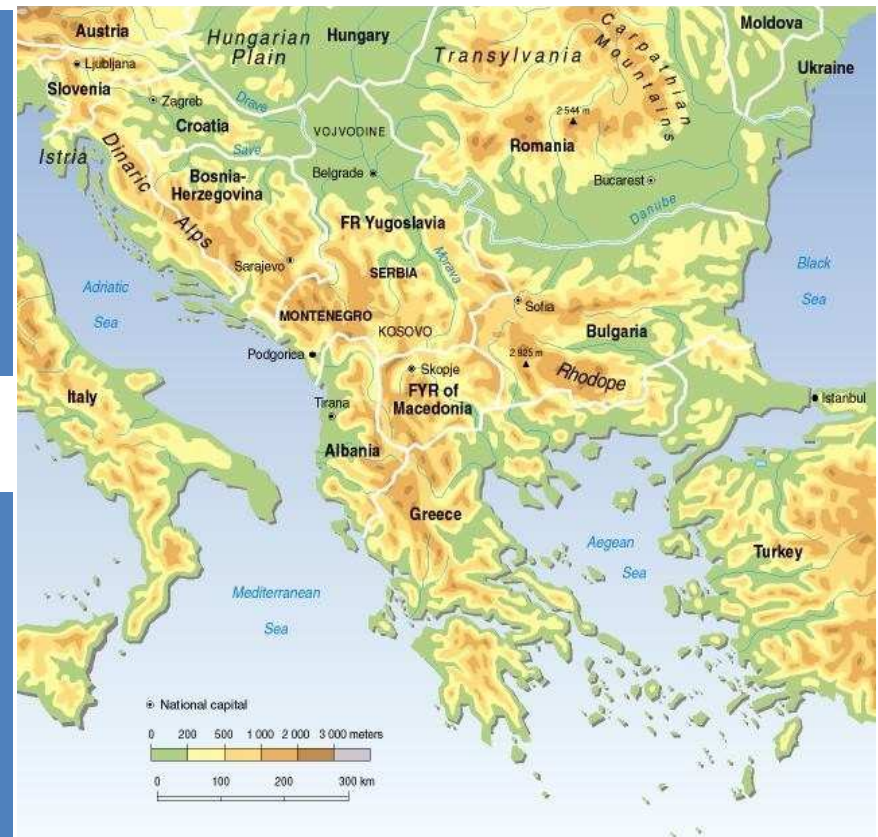
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The most pressures in a river basin occur along river corridors, challenging the sustainable water and riparian land use.

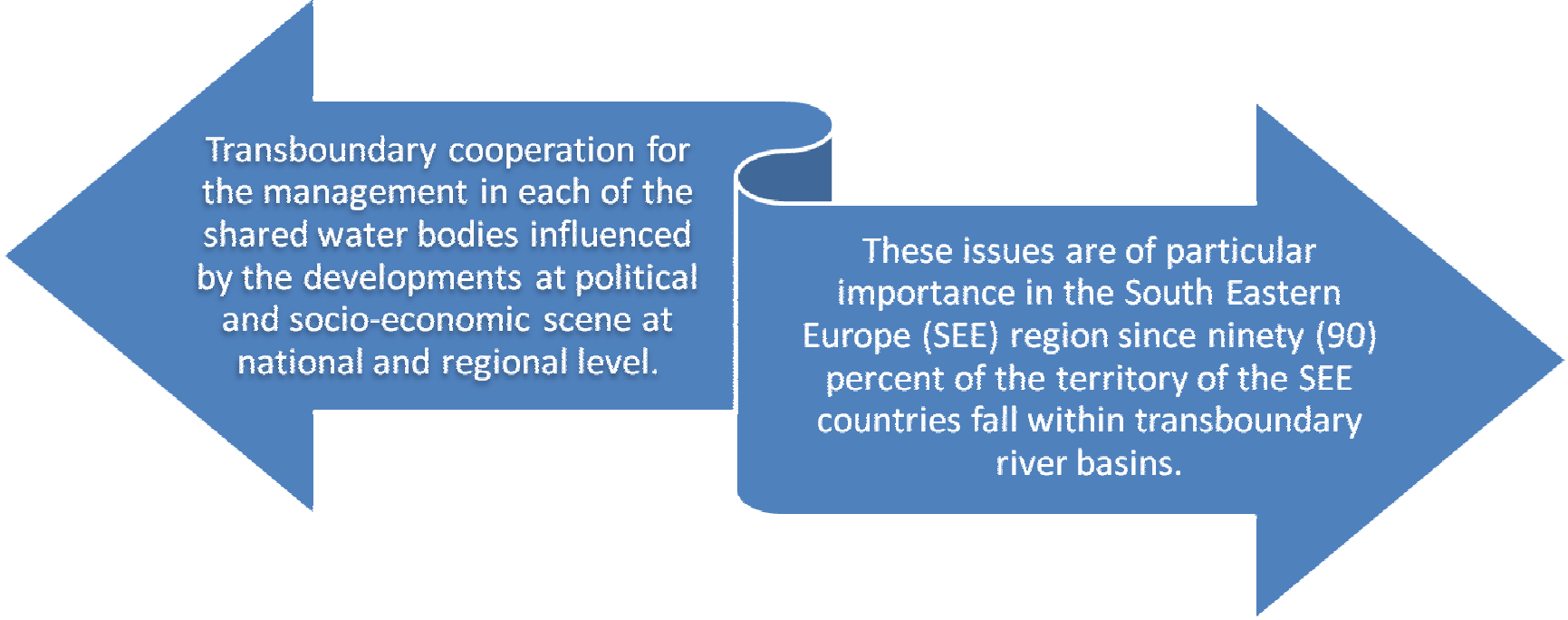


Once river corridors belongs to shared river basins (as in prevailing cases in UNESCO's regional focus) cooperative management of transboundary water bodies and the related ecosystems shall be the obligatory condition and its enhancement the essential need.



SITUATION IN SEE REGION

– *cont.*



Transboundary cooperation for the management in each of the shared water bodies influenced by the developments at political and socio-economic scene at national and regional level.


These issues are of particular importance in the South Eastern Europe (SEE) region since ninety (90) percent of the territory of the SEE countries fall within transboundary river basins.

Needs of Member States and Role of UNESCO

As follow-up on 2004 International Workshop on “MAB Biosphere Reserves and Transboundary Cooperation in the SEE Region” series of coordinated activities undertaken aiming at

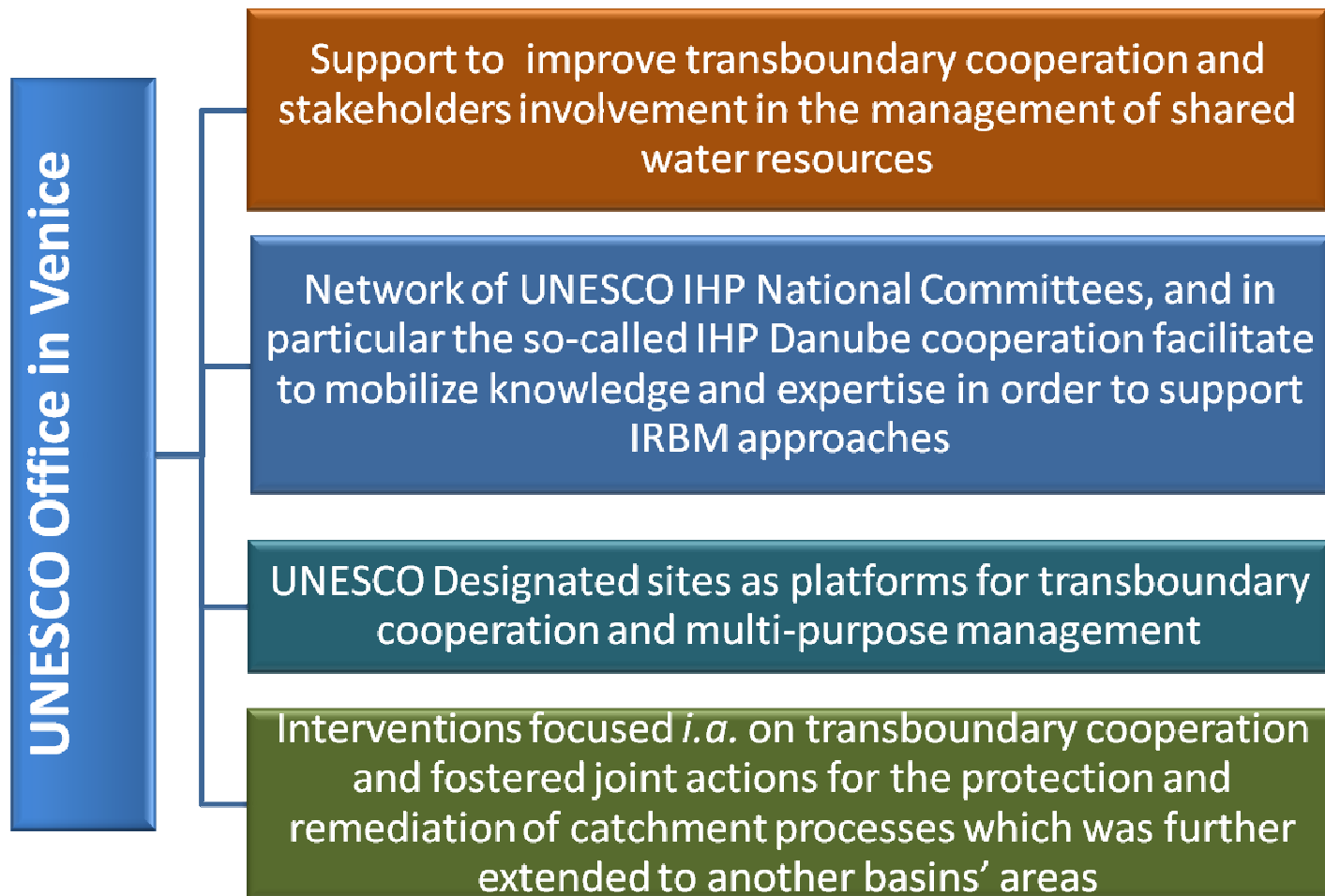

capacity
building at
national level
(institutional
training)


facilitating
the
designation
process, and
in particular
institutional
arrangements


learning
from
examples


seeking
funding for
the
cooperative /
international
projects

Needs of Member States and Role of UNESCO – *cont.*



Transboundary Cooperation

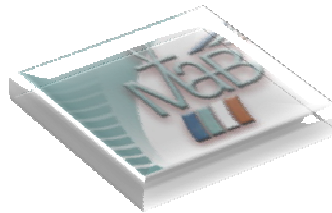
- ☑ offered for UNESCO a new dimension for the development of its designate sites (Natural WHS);
- ☑ one of key catalysts for the development of TBRs which provide a tool for common management of shared ecosystems;
- ☑ supported and facilitated transboundary nomination of BRs and management processes along river corridors/basins;
- ☑ increased opportunity for the cooperation between the MAB and the IHP linking water and biodiversity as well as landforms and hydrological systems;
- ☑ facilitated integration of ecosystem services into management of transbound. shared water systems;
- ☑ utilization and conservation of land and water resources should go hand in hand.

**Interdisciplinary / cross-sectoral /
participatory approach and long term
vision are key**

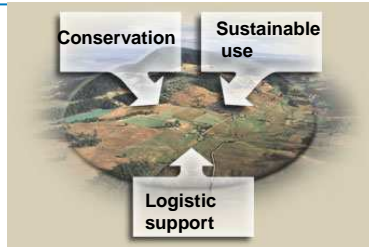
3 pillars of UNESCO's action in the Region



1. The pivotal role of the MAB Programme
-Designated Sites = Laboratories/models
2. Integration with IHP
– Shared Waters
3. ESD as a cross-cutting theme



BIOSPHERE RESERVES - MODEL SITES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

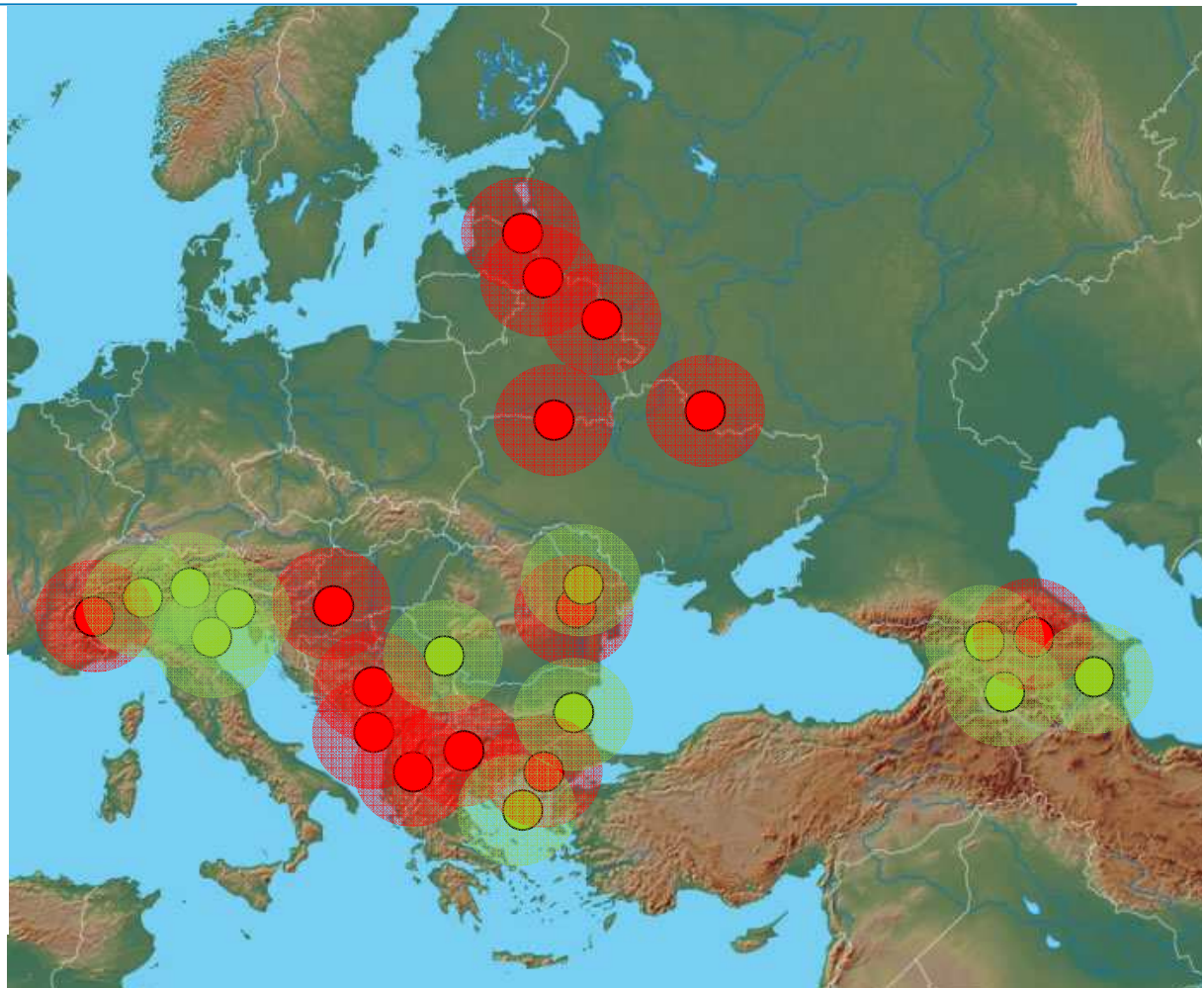


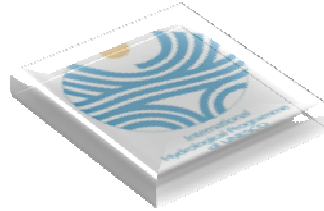
- Potential new BRs
- Potential new Transboundary BRs

Existing BRs

In SEE: 28

In Black Sea / Caucasus: 52





WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

- Transboundary River Basins of interest

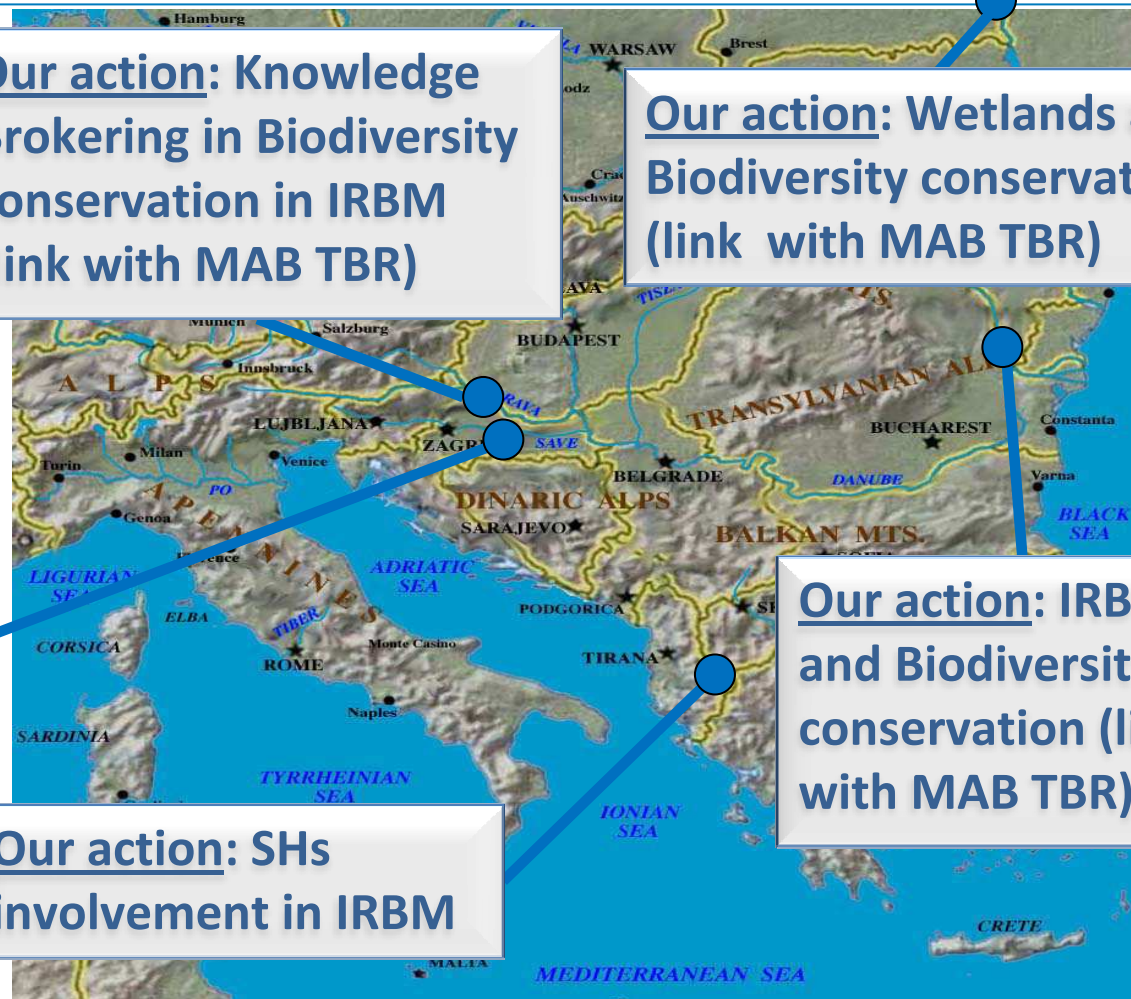
Our action: Knowledge
 Brokering in Biodiversity
 conservation in IRBM
 (link with MAB TBR)

Our action: Wetlands and
 Biodiversity conservation
 (link with MAB TBR)

Our action:
 Knowledge
 Brokering in
 Sediment
 Management

Our action: SHs
 involvement in IRBM

Our action: IRBM
 and Biodiversity
 conservation (link
 with MAB TBR)



UNESCO STRATEGIC APPROACH IN SEE REGION

**Enhancement of cooperative management of
transboundary water bodies and the related ecosystems**



Facilitating interactions
between policy-makers
and researchers in an
attempt to relate
science, experience and
insight to policy



Delivering politically
relevant knowledge to
decision makers

on issues such as
sediment transport and
management,
ecohydrology,
management of PAs in river
corridors, etc.



Improving stakeholders
involvement in governance
of water resources and
related ecosystems

Stakeholders at local, national and
transboundary levels have a
central role being among others
important for the sound
formulation, and most importantly
implementation of management
strategies and plans.

The Seville Strategy on Biosphere Reserves

Biosphere Reserves: first twenty years

The Biosphere Reserves (BR) are created to solve one of the most important problems that the humanity is confronting. How can you achieve biodiversity conservation and get a sustainable use of biological resources? For the efficient acting of BR, it is necessary that scientists in natural and social sciences, expert groups in natural conservation and development, public administration and local communities work together in order to solve this complex problem.

The International Conference on BR (about 400 experts from 102 countries and 15 representatives of international and regional organizations) was organized by UNESCO in Seville (Spain) where the Seville Strategy was elaborated. The Coordinating Council of the "Man and Biosphere" approved this strategy. BR are areas of terrestrial and coastal/marine ecosystems or a combination thereof, internationally recognized within the framework of UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme. The purpose of BR creation are determined by governments, each BR should satisfy certain conditions. BR should realize three functions concerning landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation, fostering economic development and biodiversity and ecologically sustainable supporting demonstration projects, environmental education and training, research and monitoring related to sustainable development.

Each BR should contain three elements - one or more core areas devoted to long-term protection, and that would allow biodiversity conservation, research etc. without important branches in activity.

- a buffer zone closely surrounding or contiguous to the core area, where activities compatible with the conservation objectives can take place including environmental education, tourism, etc.

- one or more transition areas (or surrounding area) where some traditional activities may be conducted, activities may be initiated, and can be used in other purposes, local public authorities, academic bodies, NGOs, cultural associations, economic agents are working together to get a rational management and sustainable reproduction of resources.

These three zones are settled in such way to be possible to adapt them to local conditions and necessities. One of the most important advantages of BR concept is a flexible and creative approach in its implementing as a wide range of situations. Also form of properties can be different. In most of the cases, BR core area is in public property, but may belong to private owners or NGOs too. In many cases, buffer zones are in the property of physical persons or local communities that, as a rule, possess these kinds of lands in transition areas also. The Seville Strategy reflects a wide range of various conditions.

The Seville Strategy's key directions were identified for Biosphere Reserves:

1. **Strengthen** the contribution of BR to the implementation of international agreements in conservation and sustainable development, especially to the Convention on Biological Diversity and other agreements (climate change identification etc.).
2. **Develop** BR that solve a wide variety of environmental, biological, economic and cultural situations, going from largely undisturbed regions and spreading towards cities.
3. **Strengthen** regional, inter-regional networks of BR as components within World Network of BR.
4. **Reinforce** scientific research, monitoring, training and education in BR, for ensuring a sound base in the cultural and social sciences, as well as the humanities.
5. **Ensure** that all zones of BR contribute appropriately to conservation, sustainable development and scientific understanding.
6. **Expand** transition zones to implement ecosystem management, explore and demonstrate approaches to sustainable development at regional scale.
7. **Reflect** more fully the human dimensions of biosphere reserves. Connections should be made between cultural and biological diversity.
8. **Promote** the management of each BR, essentially as a "part" between local community and society. Management should be open and adaptive. Such an approach will help ensure that BR and their local communities are better placed to respond to external political, economic and social pressures.
9. **Bring** together all interested groups and sectors in a partnership approach to BR, both at site and network levels. Information should flow

freely among all concerned.

In view of the future, BR should be used to further our understanding of humanity's relationship with the natural world, through programmes of public awareness, information, formal and informal education, based on a long-term, inter-generational perspectives. The World Network of BR will become a check-list of activities that will enable all World Network members to follow and evaluate the implementation of the Strategy. The Strategy includes also recommendations regarding promoting development of functional BR and social necessary conditions for World Net work functioning. Its task is rather emphasizing the specific role that BR can have in the development of a new concept of relations between environment conservation and development in general. The Strategy provides also recommendations "implementation indicators", a check-list of activities that will enable all World Network members to follow and evaluate the implementation of the Strategy.

Comparative analysis of areas proposed to be designated as biosphere reserve in Moldova

Indicator	Natural de la	Cultural de la	Urgent de la	Local de la	Palme de la	Palme de la	Centri
Diversity of ecosystems and landscapes	5	3	4	2	3	2	2
Richness of flora and fauna	5	2	4	5	5	4	4
Species with international status	5	1	5	3	5	2	2
Diversity of geological and archaeological objects	4	5	5	4	2	1	1
Diversity of human objects	5	2	5	3	3	1	1
Diversity of agricultural conditions	5	2	4	3	1	0	0
Influence of transport lines on development	4	3	4	5	2	2	1
Special conditions	5	4	4	-1	1	0	0
Perspective of inscription as a biosphere reserve	5	3	4	3	3	1	0
Total	43	25	39	28	25	13	11

Special conditions

Positive character (specific) of the territory needs (allows) a coming, according to the Seville Strategy, conforming to the provisions of Seville Strategy is not interfering with population interests, protected areas in transboundary context (possible transboundary biosphere reserve), existence of national brands, location close to an important recreational zone.

Negative period extraction, railway (poorly arranged), construction of an important economic object (with non-respecting the territory status), usual non-respecting of legislation by the population.

Recommendations:

Taking into consideration the provisions of Seville Strategy, the level of preparedness of the territories (zoning, level of the preparedness of the local public authorities, economic agents and civil society, etc.), as well as transboundary aspects, it is recommended to create Biosphere Reserves on the basis of the territories with status of Ramsar Sites Lower Danube, Lower Prut Lakes and then Ugiuș-Erdut.

This booklet was elaborated in the frame of the project "Towards Creating the Biosphere Reserves in Moldova" with the financial contribution of the UNESCO Moscow Office (BIOFICA Ecological Society).

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Towards Creating the Biosphere Reserves in Republic of Moldova



Chișinău, 2011



Prutul de Jos (Lower Prut)

- The Lower Prut floodplain has preserved many natural features despite human pressures on both sides of the river in Romania and Republic of Moldova.
- The area still holds a wide range of biotopes, supporting a high level of biodiversity of international significance, especially migratory birds.
- In 1991, an area of 1,691 ha - the Prutul de Jos Nature Reserve in Republic of Moldova - was designated as state reserve under strict level of protection and nominated as the first Ramsar site of Republic of Moldova.
- In 2003, in Romania, an area of 8,247 ha was designated as Nature Park (Lower Prut Nature Park), just across the most important wetlands in Republic of Moldova – Prutul de Jos Nature Reserve.
- Today, joint planning between Romania and Republic of Moldova is essential to ensure the long-term viability of the Lower Prut floodplain.
- A strategic partnership is therefore needed to promote the designation of a crossborder protected area that would cover 53,000 ha.
- More recently, participants from Republic of Moldova in the EuroMAB meetings in have expressed their willingness to consider the possibility to establish in this area the first BR in Republic of Moldova, then to explore the possibility to establish a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve with Romania.

Long-term goal and main objectives

- strengthening of capacity building and institutional framework for an establishment of UNESCO biosphere reserve site(s) and for sustainable environmental management;
- involvement of key decision-makers and stakeholders in an elaboration of mechanisms of cross-sectoral cooperation and partnerships towards sustainable development;
- enhancement of public/national awareness on BR concept and readiness to cooperate with National MAB Committee and other institutions in order to establish BR network in the country;
- familiarization of key decision-makers and stakeholders with principles of sustainable development using BR concept;
- sustainable development of water and wetlands ecosystems and river basin in the areas concerned;
- creation of at least one BR, preferably in wetlands area considering to be a transboundary site;
- implementation of international environmental commitments of the Government of the Republic of Moldova.

Achievements



Recently, an increased effort has been given and preparatory steps undertaken to an establishment of the first biosphere reserve in Moldova within Lower Danube-Prut river basin and Lower Dniester territories

The involvement of key stakeholders, like local authorities and communities, from the very beginning of such a process proved to be an important modality to ensure stakeholders' support and to stimulate their commitment to the designation and management processes for the concerned area.



In this regard, the recommendations to the Government developed in the Republic of Moldova with the UNESCO support has catalyzed a current effort to establish BR in the country – in particular, in the Lower Prut area.

This will provide a great possibility to establish a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve with Romania which will ensure the long-term viability of the Lower Prut floodplain.

Agreed actions and way forward

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- ❖ Establish a clear legislation on BRs.
 - ❖ Clarify legally issues of ownership and management of public lands at the local level .
 - ❖ Clarify the system of financing the BRs and apply Moldova – EU Association Agreement.
 - ❖ Promote regional and international cooperation, and to draw the advanced experience on the sustainable use of natural resources and sectoral development.
 - ❖ Initiate an elaboration of management plans for the potential BR areas, including using the "bottom- up approach".
 - ❖ Recommend to include establishments and of BRs and further management of their territories into local plans of socio-economic development (approved by local councils).
 - ❖ Improve informing the public and all stakeholders, building commitment and lobbying.
 - ❖ Use a development of agri-tourism as a tool for territorial development and stakeholders' engagement.
 - ❖ Build capacities for major protected areas, especially biosphere reserves (education of environmental managers ,...).
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CONCLUSIONS

- The TBR model is a very useful conceptual and operational framework for international cooperation on relevant shared resources (e.g. water basin, forests, etc.);
- To properly start the process, it is needed to generate a common vision;
- It is extremely important to clarify and foster a proper stewardship of the entire process;
- The TBR is expected to become an evolving system of consultation, where a special role is given to the local communities;

CONCLUSIONS – *cont.*

- The existing difficulties, mainly deriving from of the different regimes on the two sides of the borders, are not to be underestimated;
- The best way to overcome those differences is given by the necessary attempt to harmonise the management of the shared resources, in terms of defining common objectives;
- Ultimately, the TBR cooperation may be well functioning only if there's a common implementation scheme in place.

CONCLUSIONS – *cont.*

- ✓ the TBR conceptual and operation tool is a valid one to foster the transboundary relationships (within a larger ‘environmental diplomacy’ framework) and facilitate the join management of shared ecosystems;
- ✓ the fact that TBRs are still a small minority out the total BRs in the world (12 out of 681) signifies that the processes leading to their designation and, later on, proper management, are more complex that the national ones;

CONCLUSIONS – *cont.*

- ✓ the focus on the designation process aspect has been given a growing importance within the institutional governance; in fact, the new NFs (both the national and the international ones) represent a progress when compared with the previous ones, in terms of participatory planning and governance aspects;
- ✓ the experiences emerged from the analysis of the existing TBRs tends to demonstrate that the crucial aspects for a successful and long lasting experience are related primarily to the capacity of
 - a) identifying a common vision;
 - b) establishing a common management framework;
 - c) identify clear and realistic common objectives to be achieved in a given timeframe.



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Thank you

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