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**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



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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



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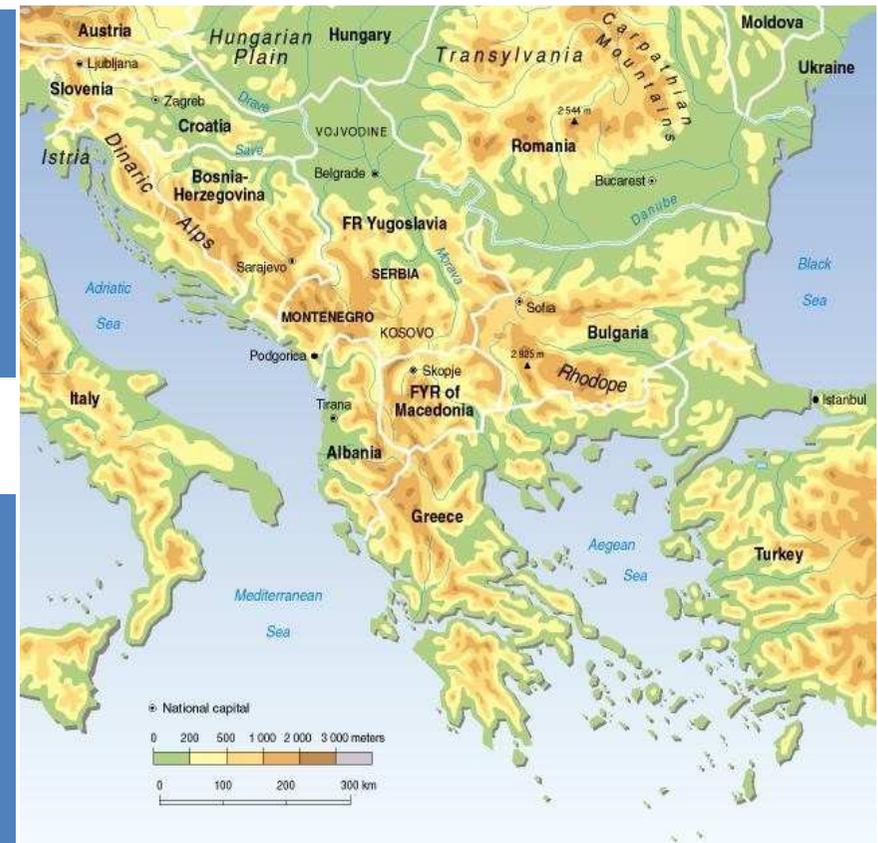
– *cont.*



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



Once river corridors belong 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.





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– *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

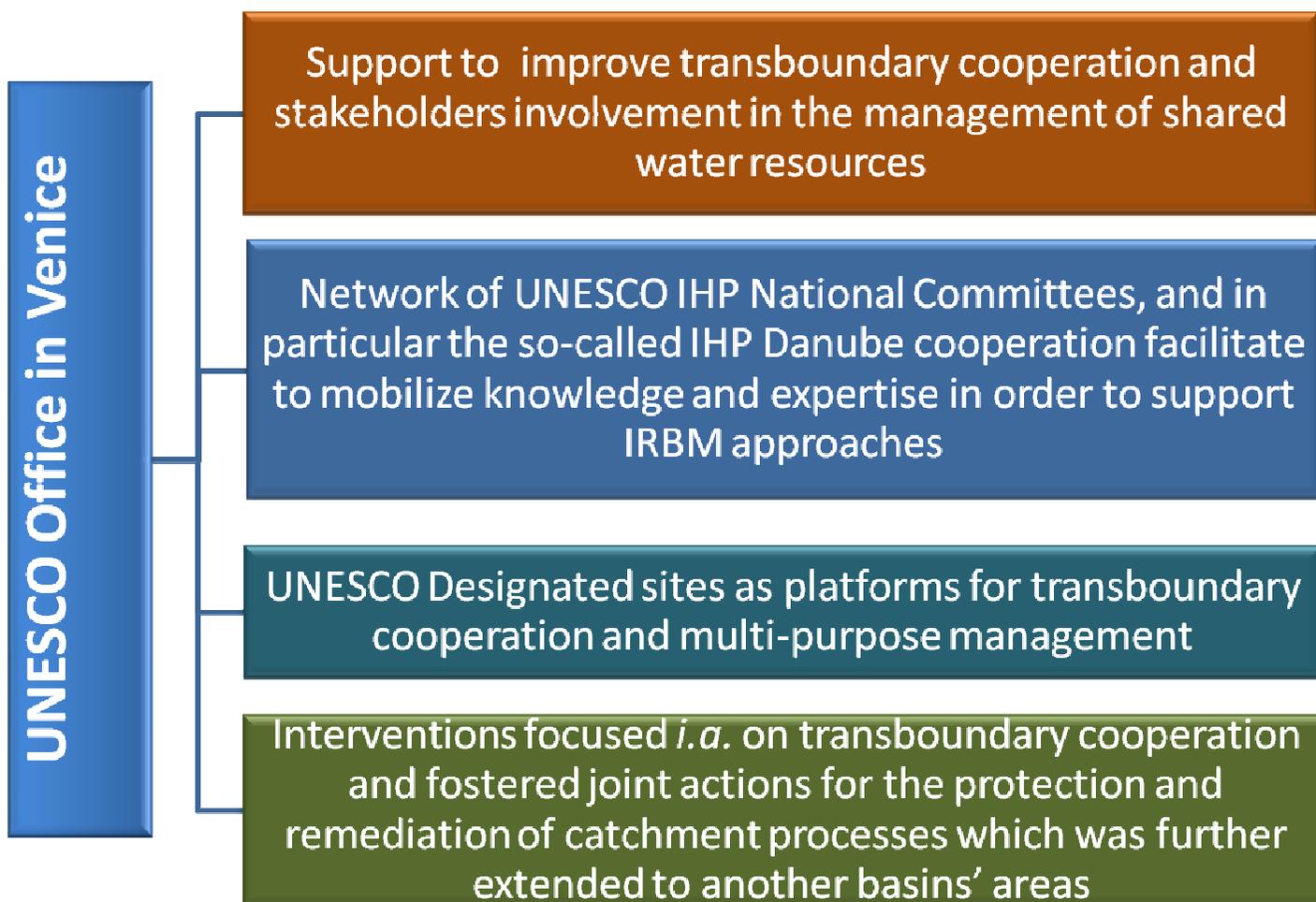


learning
from
examples



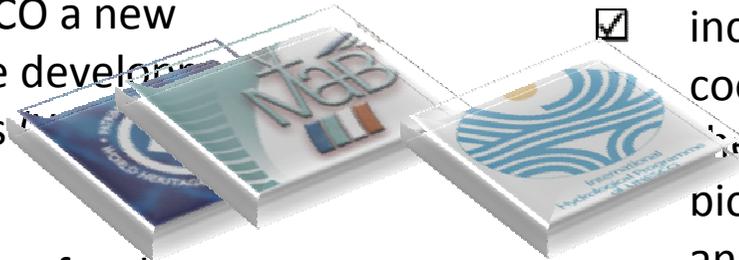
seeking
funding for
the
cooperative /
international
projects

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.

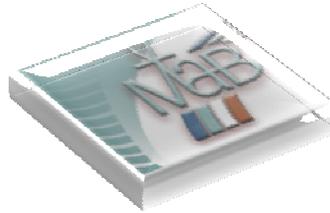


Interdisciplinary / cross-sectoral / participatory approach and long term vision are key

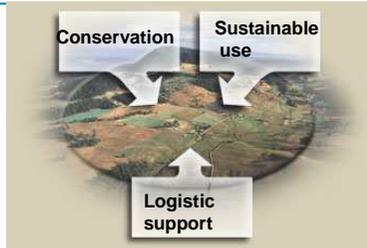
3 pillars of UNESCO's action in the Region



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

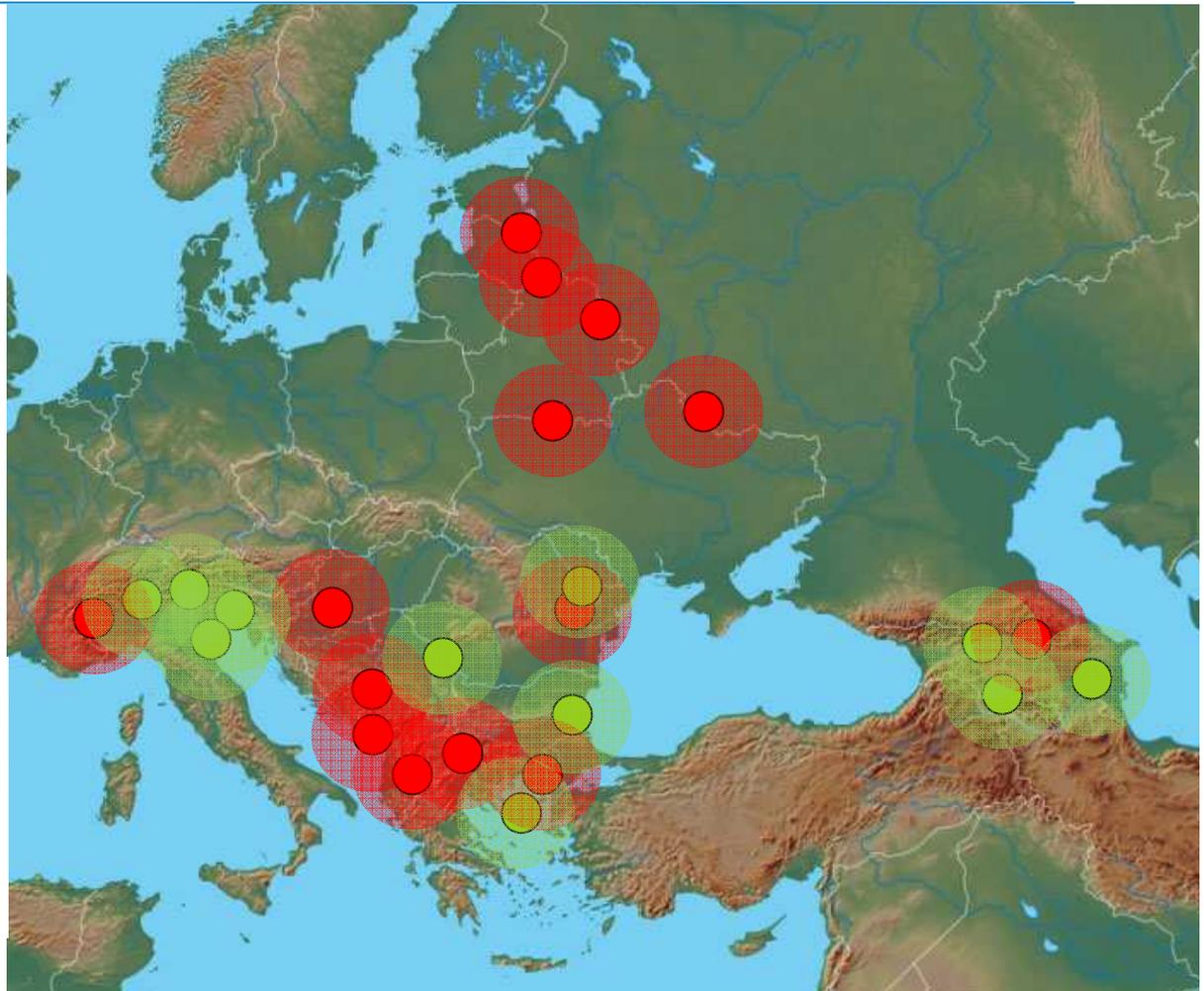


- Potential new BRs
- Potential new Transboundary BRs

Existing BRs

In SEE: 28

In Black Sea / Caucasus: 52



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
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 (later ER) are created to solve one of the most important problems that the humanity is confronting. How can you reach biodiversity conservation and get a sustainable use of biological resources? For the efficient acting of ER, it is necessary that scientists in natural and social sciences, expert groups in nature 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 MAB Programme. The purpose of ER creation are maintained by governments, each BR should satisfy certain conditions. BR should realize three functions concerning landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation. Encouraging economic development, socio-cultural 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 should allow biodiversity conservation, research etc. without important human activities;
 - a buffer zone mainly surrounding or contiguous to the core area, where activities compatible with the conservation objectives can take place including environmental education, tourism, etc.
 - a wide flexible transition area (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 ER concept is a flexible and creative approach in its implementing in a wide range of situations. Also forms of properties can be different. In most of the cases, ER 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.

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

Indicator	National de Ios	Ordnal Tichit	Ungari-Indoistrit	Landscape Park de Ios	Palarea Domestica	Plaiul Pupuzii	Cereti
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 various 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 zoning, according to the Seville Strategy, conforming to the provisions of Seville Strategy is not interfering with population interests, protected area in transboundary context (possible transboundary biosphere reserve), existence of national brands location close to an important recreational zone

Negative: period extraction, rubans (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 Dunesti, Lower Prut Lakes and then Ungari-Erdut.

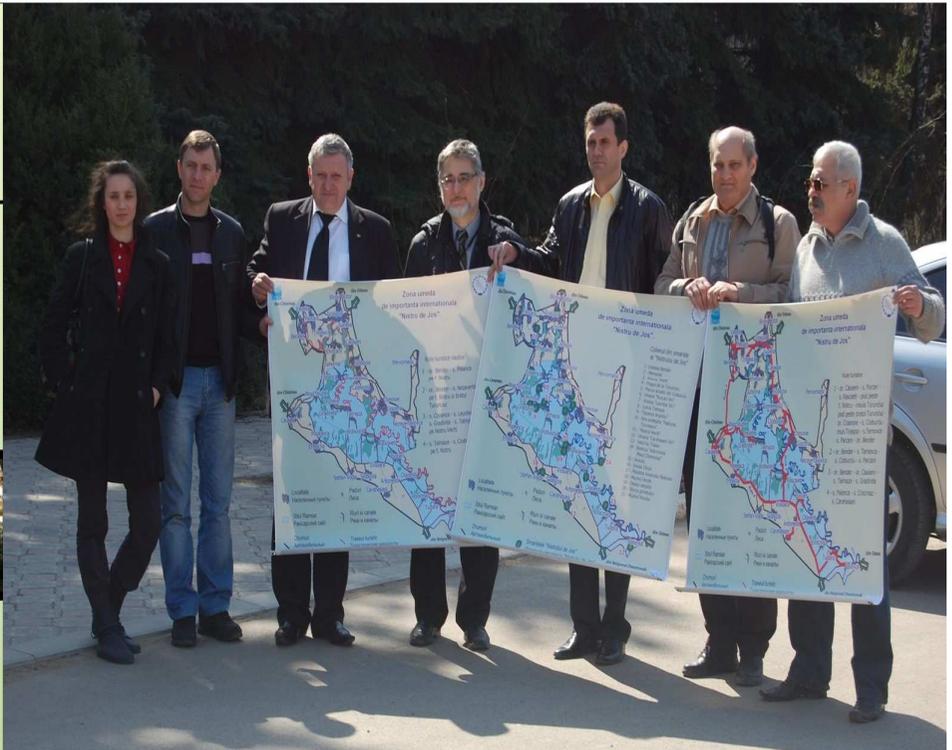
This booklet was elaborated in the frame of the project "Towards Creating the Biosphere Reserves in Moldova" with the financial contribution of the UNESCO Moscow Office (BIOTICA Ecological Society)

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Towards Creating the Biosphere Reserves in Republic of Moldova



Chisinau, 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.



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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

- ❖ 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 ,...).

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 joint 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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