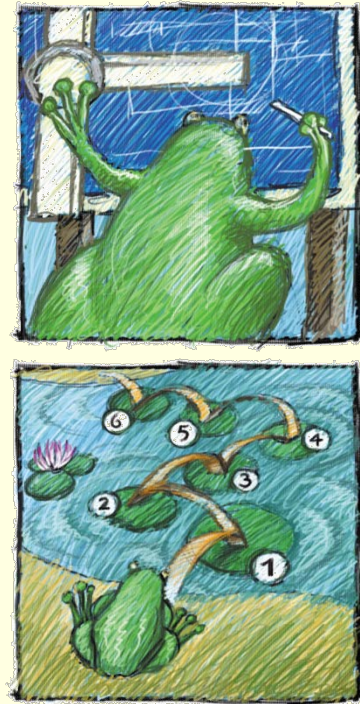


# Transboundary cooperation and partnership for the Blue Danube

*Marta Szigeti Bonifert,  
executive director  
24 March, 2011*



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# Linking to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)



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# Main environmental challenges in the Danube River Basin

- **Water quality:**
  - requires strong coordination across countries and sectors for preventing organic pollution, nutrient pollution, hazardous substances pollution, hydro-morphological alterations to rivers and lakes
- **Water quantity:**
  - Floods and Flood Risk Management and Droughts and Drought Management (water scarcity is not sufficiently addressed by the EU)
- **Environmental Risks:**
  - Baia Mare, Baia Borsa, Kolontár (shift from reactive approach to management of risks)



# Main environmental challenges in the Danube River Basin (cont.)

- Growing pressure on biodiversity, natural assets and variety of ecosystems
- Gradually disappearing species and living spaces, wetlands and floodplain areas
- Increasing deforestation, land and air pollution
- Industry, urban, transport and agriculture related development
- Over exploitation of natural resources



# Some of the socio-economic challenges in the Danube River Basin

- Lack of public awareness about ecological needs
- Insufficient use of best available practices
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of specific expertise
  - e.g. on the development of energy efficiency and renewables
- Lack of good governance... ?!
  - Multiplicity of actors (?!)
- **Conflicting interests**



# Responses of the REC

- Providing leadership, management and coordination of programs
- Raising stakeholder awareness
- Strengthening governance
- Promoting dialogue
  - e.g. between project proponents and financing organizations
- Building capacity at local, national and regional level
- Promoting appropriate environmental (water) education
- Sharing best practices
- Identifying and prioritizing environmental infrastructure projects



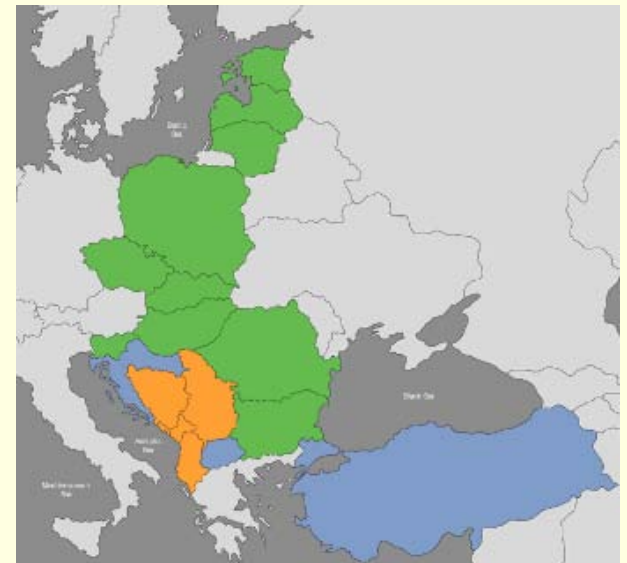
# Matching the region...





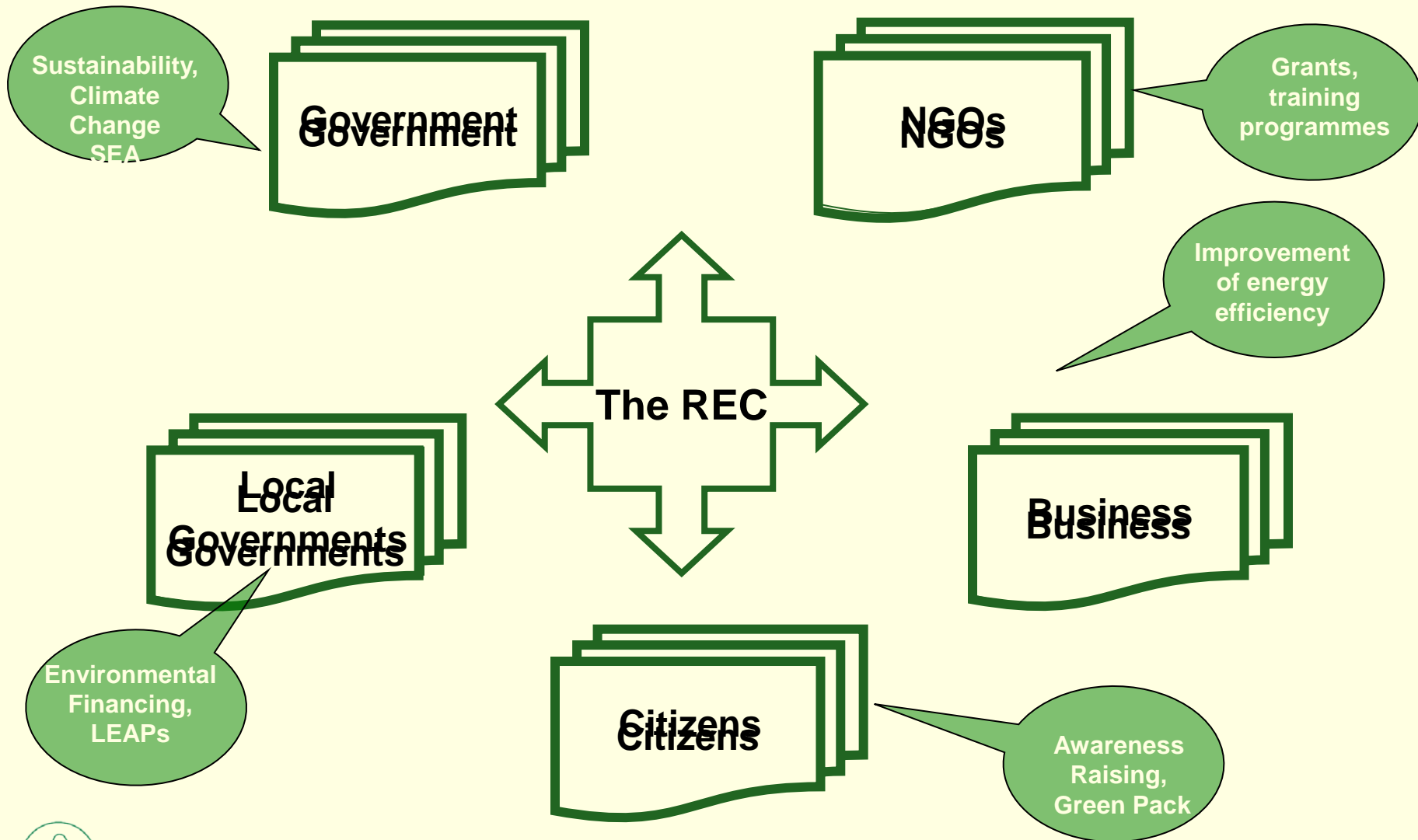
# Regional Environmental Center (REC)

- “... is an international organisation with a mission to assist in solving environmental problems (...)”
  - The **REC** is legally based on a **charter signed by the governments** of 30 countries and the EC
  - Multi-stakeholder International Board
  - **190 staff** (some 30 nationalities)
  - 100% project based organization (over **300 running projects**)
  - 10 – 12 million Euro annual turnover
  - **Offices in 17 countries**
  - Population served ~ 200 million





# Bridging – Across Borders



# Added value of the REC

- **20 years experience** in managing complex multi-country projects
- Based on 20 years of presence in **CEE/SEE region** the REC is aware of the main environmental threats that endanger the sustainable development of the Danube region
- Providing a **neutral platform** for exchanging information, experience and best practices in the Danube region between both EU and non-EU Member States
- The REC actively participates in **key global, regional and local processes** and contributes to environmental and sustainability solutions within and beyond its country office network, transferring transitional knowledge and experience to countries and regions



# Key partner and key framework

- The experts of the REC regularly participate and contribute to the expert working groups of the **ICDPR** including the River Basin Management, the Tisza and the Public Participation Expert Groups, and assist in developing river basin management plans and public participation/stakeholder strategy in the Danube, Tisza and Sava basins.
- REC has implemented various projects on **WFD** and related directives, helping in developing river basin management plans, flood risk assessments and public access to information, public participation involvement in new EU Member States and in SEE



# Key examples from the REC



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# Key examples – Rivers in focus

- **Danube**

- NGO Participation in the Danube River Basin Management Plans
- Building Environmental Citizenship to Support Transboundary Pollution Reduction in the Danube: A Pilot Project in Hungary and Slovenia
- Danube National & Regional Grants
- Enhancing Access to Information and Public participation in Environmental Decision Making, Danube Regional Project

- **Tisza**

- Tisza River Basin Integrated Sustainable Development Programme - Planning and Initiation Phase
- Tisza follow up grants - NGO Workshop "NGO response in crisis situation"

- **Sava / Drina**

- Support to the International Sava Basin Commission Initiative
- Enhancing cross border cooperation in the Drina River Basin



# I. Sava Project

SAVA RIVER BASIN



- **Formerly a river within Yugoslavia;**
  - **now an international river passing through 5 countries (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro)**
- International Framework Agreement (2003) to re-establish joint state-of-art river basin management
- Interim Commission was established (Permanent Commission is in Zagreb, Croatia)
- Issues: Navigation, Flood control, Commerce, Recreation and other Uses, Water Quality, Transboundary Cooperation, Public Participation, Biodiversity
- US State Dept/ SECI/ REC/ BAH (NL, ICPDR, OSCE)
- US support focuses on 4 areas:
  - Secretariat to the Interim Sava River Basin Commission (REC)
  - Legal drafting of basic documents for Commission and new Protocols (REC)
  - Stakeholder engagement/public participation (REC)
  - Priority infrastructure development (Booz, Allen and Hamilton)
- Increased multi-donor support – the Sava is a pilot sub-basin for the whole Danube and beyond e.g Adriatic Initiative





## II. Crossborder Environmental Cooperation

- Drina River Basin – the way it was... the way it is... 2002-2010





# III. Green Pack

- 2001 with the support of Toyota Motor Corporation, the REC developed a comprehensive environmental education programme in Central and Eastern Europe (Green Pack)
- The REC and respective local partners developed a comprehensive environmental education programme special for each country.
- A multi-media environmental education curriculum kit
  - Primarily intended for secondary school teachers and their students
  - Focus on particular aspects of environmental protection and sustainable development
- **30.000+ teachers**
- **3.500.000+ students**  
In 15 countries....

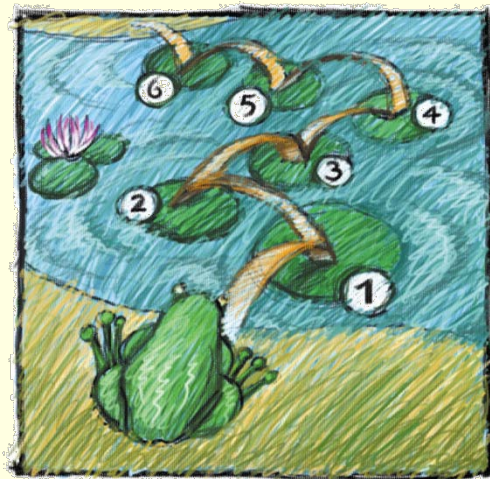


# IV. Courses for Sustainable Development

- A comprehensive (~ 1 month!) educational programme about the “three pillars” of sustainable development initiated by the Italian Government
- Target groups
  - Key senior government officials
  - Media
  - Business associations
- Members of various ministries, agencies and the business examine the major approaches to sustainable development
- In four regions:
  - SEE
  - CEE
  - Black Sea Region
  - EECCA (Kazakhstan, Russia)



# Proposed activities related to transboundary cooperation for the Blue Danube



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# Water

- Low flow management
- Working knowledge of information and reporting system for water and agriculture in the Danube River Basin
- Streams of the new EU water policy - A training for officials at local level
- Strengthen participatory approaches in water governance in the Danube countries
- Save the Danube: Reduce pollution of hazardous substances in the Danube Basin
- Transfer of the Geophysical Monitoring system (GMS) from Central Europe to Danube region



# Climate Change and Biodiversity

- Climate Change
  - Contribution to preparing a Danube Adaptation Strategy
  - Increasing awareness on climate change at local level
- Biodiversity:
  - Identification and conservation of riparian wetlands along Danube tributaries
  - Introduction of Natura2000 in education





# Energy, Legal and Environmental Financing

## •Energy

- Assessment of specific needs in terms of renewable energy in the Danube Region
- Build up of a networking and cooperation platform between national authorities in order to promote awareness and increase the use of renewable energies
- Trainings/workshops to build knowledge for local authorities, businesses and citizens in the Danube Region on energy efficiency (especially for buildings)

## •Legal:

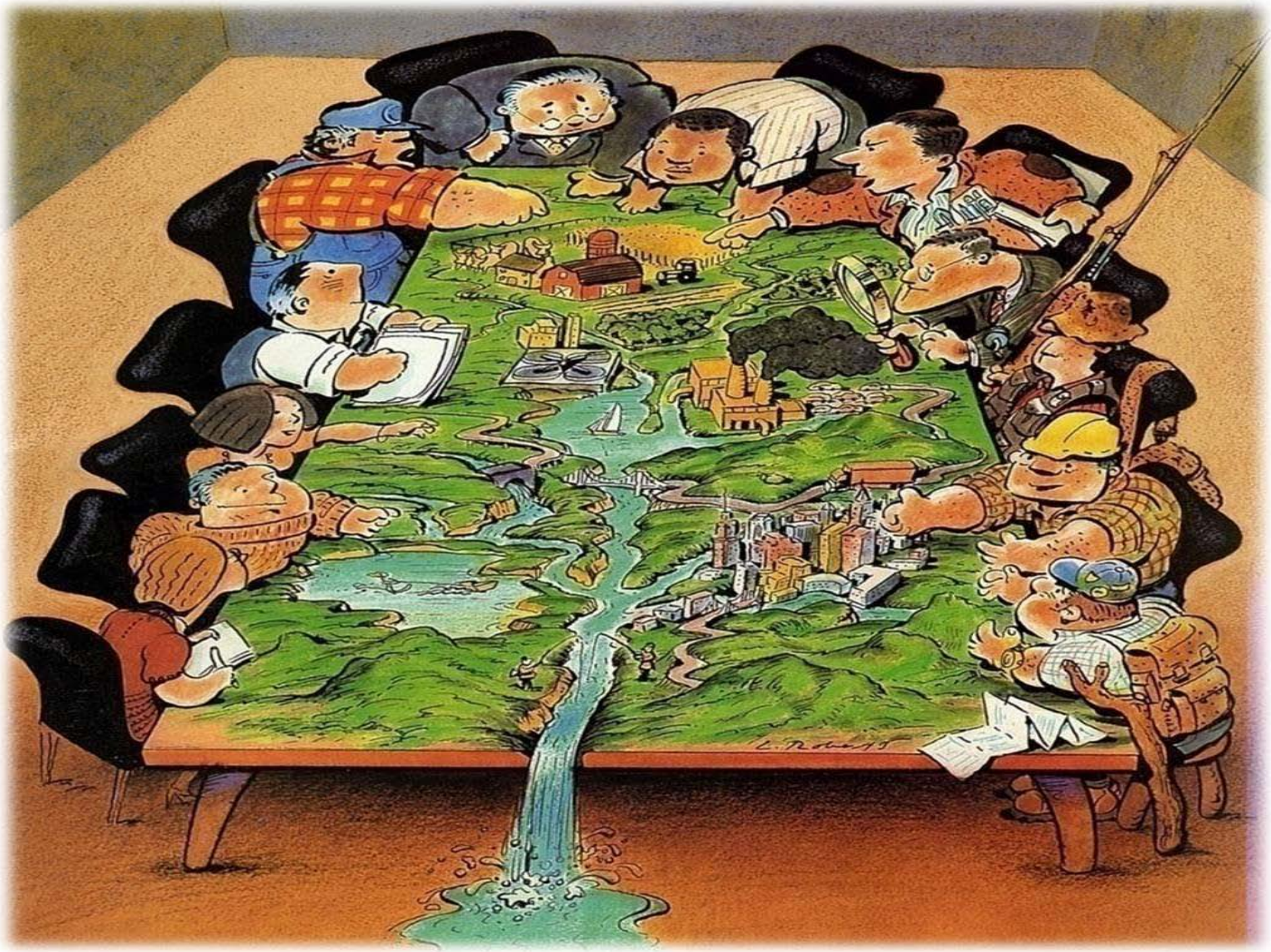
- Strengthening institutional cooperation in sub-basin level through joint peer reviews
- Protection of the environment through improvement of the implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation

## •Environmental financing:

- Regions' response to climate change and shift to a low-carbon economy
- Encouraging cooperation across borders through investing in environmental protection









# Transboundary component

- Road to cleaner water resources and successful transboundary water cooperation
  - Simultaneous implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive and the UNECE Water Convention
  - Linking to other sectoral policies which affect or depend on water e.g. Agricultural Policy
    - integrating water in the forthcoming CAP reform
  - Strengthening transboundary cooperation inside the EU and transferring lessons learned to other regions



# Transboundary component (cont.)

- Interlinking integrated water resource management with National forest programs and biodiversity strategies
  - ecosystems entirely part of water infrastructure
- Hydro-solidarity between upstream and downstream countries, regions (rewarding environmental stewardship)
- Increasing efforts in water-related capacity building for national and international institutions, including the EU and the UN
  - Europe has the knowledge and the technology + the REC has the experience to transfer it to the developing world



# REC welcomes you at the Blue Danube



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[www.rec.org](http://www.rec.org)