

Danube/Black Sea Strategic Partnership

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The GEF Strategic Partnership on nutrient reduction was launched in 2001 in the GEF International Waters focal area with an initial commitment of \$95 million in GEF grants. The World Bank, UNDP, UNEP, and other sources of financing, as well as 18 basin countries and the Danube and Black Sea Commissions coordinated this initiative with assistance of UNDP to address pollution from excess nutrients, and the associated eutrophication in the lower Danube and the Black Sea. The Partnership was composed of the three components: The Danube River Basin Regional Project, the Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project, and a Partnership Investment Fund.

As a result of a shift away from centrally planned economies and pollution reduction efforts of basin countries, including GEF financing for this partnership, nitrogen emissions have decreased about 20 percent and phosphorus by almost 50 percent in the Danube Basin in the last 15 years. The oxygen depletion observed over broad sections of the western Black Sea in the 1970s and 1980s has been virtually non-existent in recent years. In addition, most of the upper reaches of the Danube are no longer considered "at risk," in terms of not achieving good ecological status for hazardous substances, nutrients, and organic pollutants. The EU-funded review documents the success in nutrient pollution reduction, reduced algal blooms, reduced oxygen depletion (a reduction in the "Dead Zone"), increase in water transparency, improvement in diatom species from nuisance algae species as well as improvements in benthic (bottom dwelling) organisms, and increased/improved biological diversity. Indeed, it is widely recognized that the demonstrable water quality and ecosystem improvements observed in the Danube River/Black Sea system over the last decade are unequalled by ecological improvements of any other large river and adjacent sea anywhere else in the world.

The Investment Fund (IF) with the World Bank received \$70 million in GEF funding over 3 years and was used to fund sector reforms and pollution reduction investments in the agriculture, municipal sewage, and industrial sectors and in restoring floodplain functions by removing levees/dikes. The GEF-WB IF provides a focused regional framework for country-level investments aimed at a common goal of reducing nutrient pollution in the Black Sea and helping to jump-start and further accelerate key investments in sectors such as municipal wastewater, agricultural run-off, and industrial pollution. The expected nutrient reductions will continue to help protect water quality in the basin while also promoting peaceful collaboration and increased water security for the countries.



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